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Boca abierta: healing the scar-city
through the rediscovery
of its identity



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ABSTRACT

This Master Degree thesis deals with a peripheral area of one of the biggest metropolis in the world, Buenos Aires. The first step concerns the analysis of the urban conglomeration, its development and its actual problems, followed by a deeper scan of the neighborhood: *La Boca*, the first settlement of the city, is now located along the southern border and presents several problems, similar to all the occidental cities, trying to face the recent crisis and the consequential closure of all the factories activities that enhance the spread of empty places and the need to rethink these huge spaces to convert them into hubs for new functions, avoiding the expansion of the urban tissue. Other issues are related to the multicultural feature of the city, that received in the last years new flows of immigrants from the closest countries, representing a sort of South-American dream being one of the last chances of economic survival for the low-income people.

For these reasons the neighbourhood has changed its morphological features from its foundation to the last years, adapting the needs of the population through a partial reuse of existent infrastructures and buildings, decreasing the comfort to a situation of just survival.

The presence of the river *Riachuelo*, threatening the maintenance of decent living conditions, especially for the people living under the highway, can represent the starting point for the process of renewal, which is proposed by this work.

The approach chosen is not the usual in Latin America, consisting in demolishing to rebuilt something new, but it is conservative, in a way that not only provides the reuse of existent buildings, but also focuses its efforts to obtain an adaptation to the needs and

the ideas of the users. It's not a rewriting on the present but a new draw of the future aims.

Through the recreation of a waterfront as reappropriation of a public space actually almost abandoned and the conferment of social functions, the neighbourhood enrich itself with a new hope of getting out the decline and relive, especially thanks to the tourism still looking for the authenticity represented by its buildings and streets.

At the same time, the need of basic life needs is solved by turning the abandoned depots into shelters and canteens, beside cultural spots represented by museums and laboratories to transmit the traditional arts of the locals.

In this process the main role is handled by the population, that needs to be involved in all the stages of the design, from the identification of the most important characteristics that the neighbourhood has to consider and develop, to the actual and concrete realization of the works, guided by associations and stakeholders able to keep at the first place the needs expressed.

INTRODUCTION

This Master Degree thesis has been realized with the cooperation of Universidad de Belgrano in Buenos Aires, linked with Politecnico di Torino by exchange programs, and especially thanks to the course of *Trabajo Final de Carrera* led by professor Alejandro Vaca Bononato.

During the classes, in fact, students have been showed a different face of the neighborhood in analysis, usually considered only for its most pitoresque parts, considering also the importance of the most degraded areas to perceive the greatness of this periphery as the core of the real *porteña* soul, with its ideals and uses, traditions and costumes.

The approach has been to dig deep in the exterior manifestations of the neighborhood to identify and understand its problems but, most of all, its strenghts, in order to think about a process of intervention that seems coherent with the *spiritus loci*.

Thus, the chance of talking and seeing in action the representatives of the local associations, of creating relationships with the local population and to ask kids to draw how they imagine their future, enrich the process with the human point of view, necessary to propose a scenario that can be adaptable to the needs of the inhabitants and can be developed even further by the same actors to their own dimension.

01

The city of Buenos Aires,
its recent urban transformations
and issues

The city of Buenos Aires, formally *Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires* (abbreviated CABA), also called *Capital Federal* being the seat of the federal government, is one of the twenty-four federal agencies of the Argentine Republic.

It is located in the center - east of the country, at the mouth of *Río de la Plata*, the main Argentine river, in the full plain of *Pampea*. The final results of the 2010 census estimate the population of the city in 2.890.151 inhabitants, and its urban agglomeration, Gran Buenos Aires, in 12.801.364 inhabitants.¹ In this way it is possible to define the metropolitan area of Buenos Aires as the largest urban area of the country, the second in South America, and one of the 20 largest cities in the world. It is, together with Sao Paulo and Mexico City, one of the three Latin American alpha cities.

Officially, the city is subdivided into 48 districts, including the oldest ones dating back to the parishes established in the nineteenth century.

In summary, the Buenos Aires metropolis can be divided into *Capital Federal* (autonomous city, which has its own executive, legislative and legal power, as well as its own police force) and suburban metropolitan, Buenos Aires Metropolitan Region, which is subject to the Province of Buenos Aires. Its urban profile is definitely eclectic, and because of the many immigrations, elements of art decò, art nouveau, neogothic and borbonic French style, and thanks to this it is called "the Paris of America".

1. <https://data.buenosaires.gob.ar/urbanismo-y-territorio>

Figure 1. Aerial view of
the city and the Parliament
(source simferweb.net)



Figure 2. Avenida 9 de Ju-
lio and its spire (source fr.
sputniknews.com)



1.1 The foundation of the city

Even if *Rio de la Plata*'s banks were already populated by nomad populations for thousands of years the first attempt to create a stable settlement was made by Pedro de Mendoza in 1536 close to the *Riachuelo* river, the actual *barrio* of San Telmo. His expedition was composed by 1600 ships and over 6000 men and founded the camp of *Puerto Nuestra Señora Santa Maria del Buen Aire*.

Despite the large amount of resources, the expedition arrived late to plant and cultivate food so from the beginning the issue of scarcity was the main problem. At first, they tried to force the locals to obtain supplies, but these conditions led to four years of fights and a worse drought (Ulrich Schmidel, the writer of *Derrotero y viaje a España y las Indias*, reported of men eating their dead companions). Pedro de Mendoza had to escape and go back to Spain while part of the troupes moved to the actual Paraguay founding Asunción.

Only forty years later, in 1580, another expedition came to the territories of the first settlement trying to recreate it in the area of the *Casa Rosada*. Its leader was Juan de Garay and this time it had the support of the cities of Asunción and Santa Fe, in addition to the colonies founded on the Andes, rich of mines of gemstones and metals. For this reason, the first phase of the economy of Buenos Aires was mainly focused on animal breeding and smuggling.

Garay created a city with the shape of a chessboard, according to the *Codigo de las Indias*, divided in 144 blocks called *manzanas*, with the main square along the river where there were located the cathedral and the main hall/prison. Houses were made of small bricks and were characterized by tall doors and windows, flat roofs and a series of courtyards where there were located the

rooms for the owners, children and slaves, besides a rainwater collection system.²

During the colonial period the city was just a small town far from Colombian settlements and metal and mineral deposits. The flow of silver was faster than from Lima and the mountains, so the population grew from the amount of 580 inhabitants in 1580 to 7500 in 1700, surviving also thanks to the smuggling and leather tanning.³

In 1776 Spain declared capital of the Viceroyalty of the Rio de la Plata, including the biggest silver mine in the world, and this was considered the first step of the freedom from the housemother.

When Napoleon conquered Spain and left the throne to his brother in 1808, Buenos Aires started its process of independence, concluded on the 25 May 1810 when it was declared. A few years later, on the 9 July 1816, also the peripheral areas of the region claimed their independence from Spain, becoming the United Provinces of Rio de la Plata. Soon there were collisions between the owners of the lands of the provinces and the business men of the city about the control of the areas and the commerce along the river, well represented by the federalist and the unitarian sides, respectively supporting the need of autonomy of the provinces or the importance of a single political system to improve the economy. Thus some of the most peripheral areas split and founded Paraguay in 1814, Bolivia in 1825 and Uruguay in 1828.

2. J. Wilson, *Buenos Aires*, Milano, Paravia Bruno Mondadori Editori, 2005, p 8

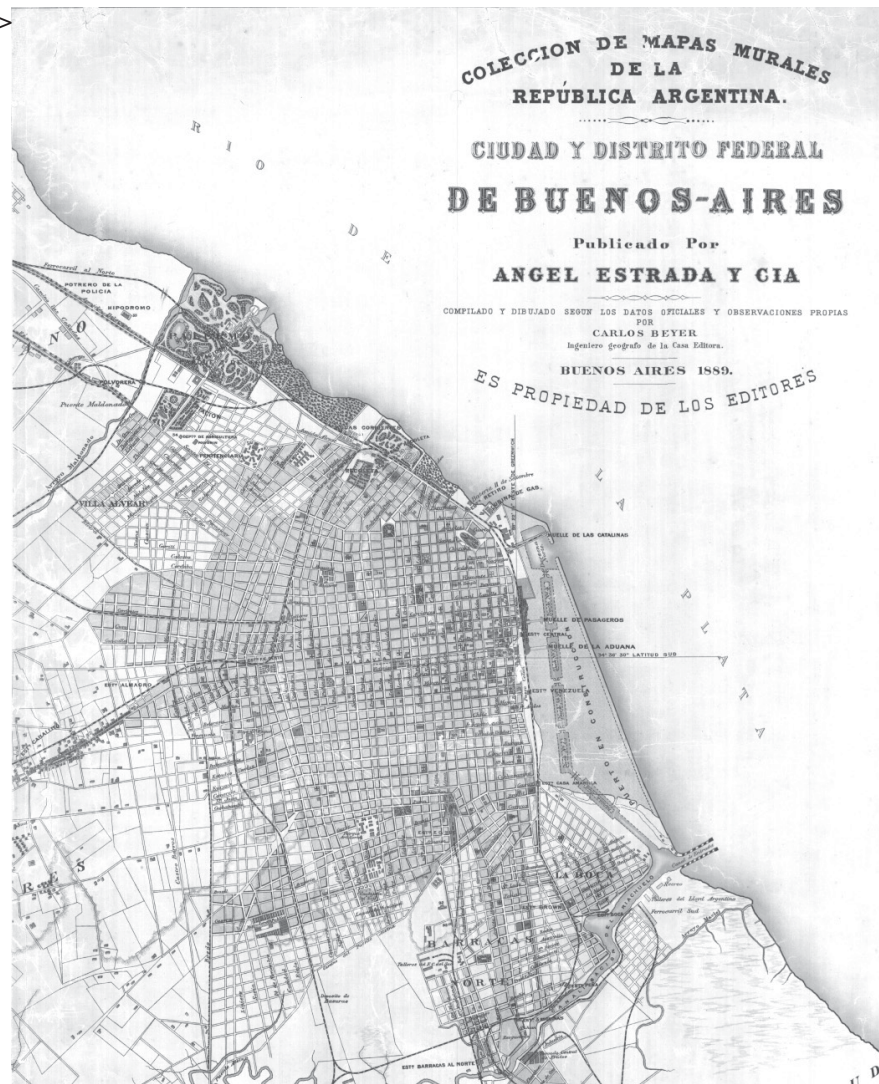
3. V. Ilari, *Storia militare dell'Argentina 1700-1824*, Zanica, Soldiershop Publishing, 2005, p 5

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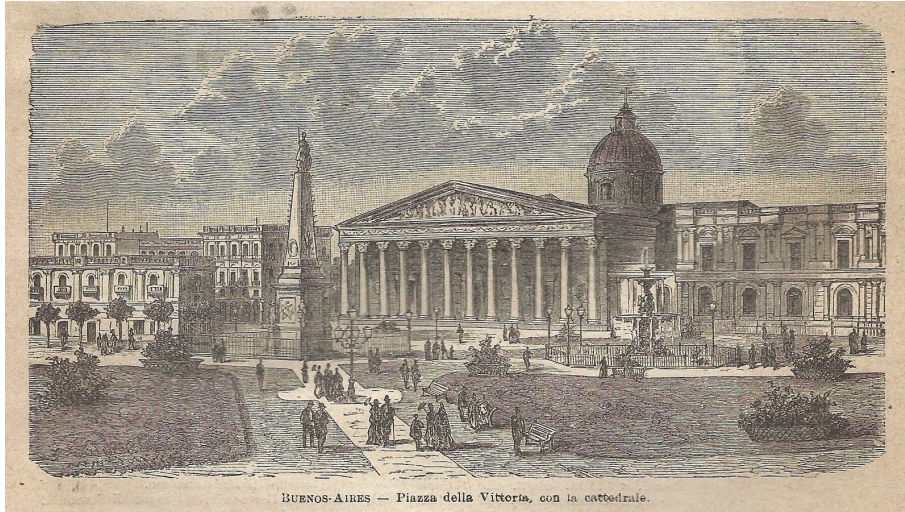
In this period the city grew and reached 90.000 inhabitants, because of people coming from Spain, Italy and Germany at first, followed by Irish, Polish and Ucrainians, overtaking in 1895 the amount of 670.000 people.⁴

The arrival of Europeans turned the city into an international capital, allowing the creation of a multicultural heritage.

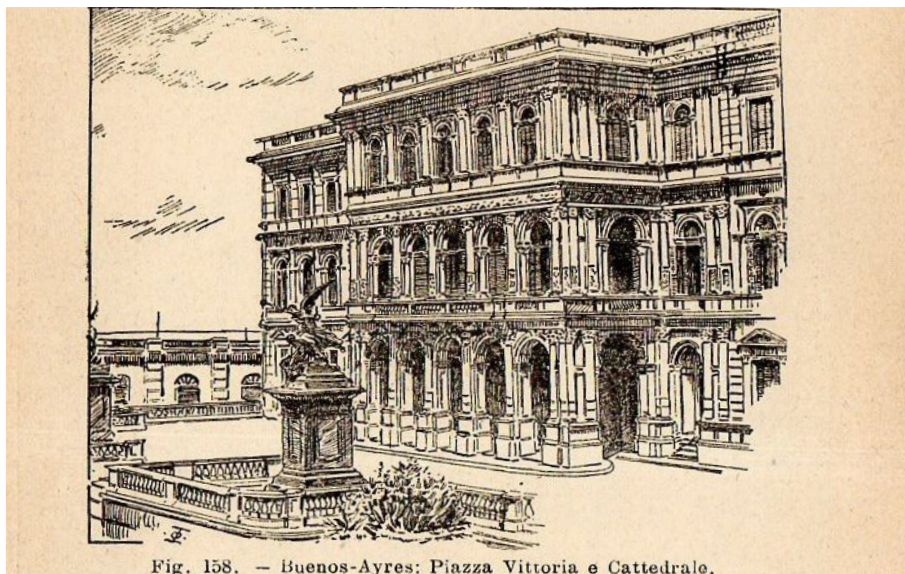
Figure 5. Ciudad y distrito federal de Buenos Aires, A. Estrada, 1889 (source Archivo CeDIAP)



4. J. Wilson, *Buenos Aires*, Milano, Paravia Bruno Mondadori Editori, 2005, p 19



<Figure 6. Victoria Square with the cathedral, 1911 (source epokamania.it)



<Figure 7. Buenos Ayres: Victoria Square and the Cathedral (source *Enciclopedia Moderna Illustrata* Vallardi, Milano, Vallardi, 1924)

1.2 The urban design

The colonial urban design followed a junction of streets and blocks called *cuadras*. One of the most important phases is the Plaza Mayor plant, currently comprised of Plaza de Mayo, Fort and Cabildo: the city developed around Plaza Mayor, organizing a quadrilateral arrangement of sixteen blocks in line on the river-side and nine blocks westward.⁵

The first important transformation took place in 1826, when several roads were opened: Corrientes, Córdoba, Santa Fé, Belgrano and Independencia. This project was conducted by Bernardino Rivadavia, who tried to drift slightly from the rigid urban system of *cuadras* of Spanish colonial heritage.

In 1853 the State of Buenos Aires was founded and the urban area extended to the west of Plaza Miserere, to the present streets of Pueyrredón and Jujuy, at north of the road Santa Fé, and south of San Juan. In the second half of the 19th century, beyond this area, only the neighborhoods of Flores and Belgrano were urbanized. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, these neighborhoods were embedded in the urban fabric of the city, and defined within the limits of Buenos Aires.⁶

The expansion of the city has seen growth within a converging radio-centric structure that still retains today. This shape has expanded along the main railway axes, allowing for the constitution of suburbs that gradually settled among them, consolidating the urban fabric of the city. In the central area, however, to improve the circulation, there have been built avenues, that still today have a fundamental importance within the city system. In this way it was possible to develop effectively the city center which became a true point of reference for all the urban agglomeration that was

5. J. Wilson, *Buenos Aires*, Milano, Paravia Bruno Mondadori Editori, 2005, p 20

6. J. Wilson, *Buenos Aires*, Milano, Paravia Bruno Mondadori Editori, 2005, p 20

forming.

Around 1860 Buenos Aires left its village character to become a true city. It was now the seat of economic power thanks to the dominance of its harbor and customs.

Only after 1890 industrial development took hold and became a key factor in the economy of the city, as demonstrated by an 1887 survey by the Industrial Union, which indicates the existence of 6200 plants and 44000 people working in this sector.⁷

Regarding the kind of activities and their location, refrigeration and metallurgical plants were concentrated in the Barracas and Avellaneda area, favored by the Riachuelo River and the new Roca railway. Other industries with less water supply needs settled in the northern areas of Barracas.

The traditional urban layout was rapidly transformed: the central area was consolidated, and the districts went on to assume various functions and hierarchies.

The population with more economic resources began abandoning its traditional position in the southern part of the city to build new residences in the north, in the neighborhoods of Recoleta and Retiro and Palermo, due to the poor hygiene that characterized the southern neighborhoods (affected by the Cholera epidemic of 1869 and the yellow fever in 1871)⁸ and the customs that privileged individual places. In the center of the traditional city commercial and banking sectors began to be located.

In 1869 the first laying of ducts for running water was realized, even if with a very limited extension. The increase of jobs and immigration led to the expansion of the city even in the southern

7. J. Wilson, *Buenos Aires*, Milano, Paravia Bruno Mondadori Editori, 2005, p 24

8. V. Ilari, *Storia militare dell'Argentina 1861-1917*, Zanica, Soldiershop Publishing, 2005, p 6

part, along the roads leading from Barracas and around Riachuelo.

The development of the center was strengthened by the position of the directional functions and the residence of the prosperous social classes, while immigrants preferred to settle in the most southern areas, close to the factories and therefore to their workplace.

At the same time, a premature metropolitan organization was being defined along the new lines of the new railway axes. In 1857, the west railway arrived to Flores, and in 1860, to Moreno. To the north, the railway reached Belgrano in 1862, and San Fernando in 1863.

At this point, the spatial configuration of the railway stations was being defined along the peripheral areas of the urban fabric: Retiro to the north, Miserere to the west, and Constitución to the South, connecting the city with the rural suburbs and the interior.⁹

Beyond these changes, Buenos Aires in 1870 still showed small urban facilities that maintained its traditional urban structure. In such a space most of the daily activities of the population took place with walking.

This situation radically changed towards the end of the nineteenth century. Between 1870 and 1880, Buenos Aires was a modern city and its transformation took place suddenly: it accelerated the construction of new roads, the paving of existing roads and the construction of hospitals and educational services.

At the same time commuting began to be a daily reality for most of the population, but despite its expansion, Buenos Aires conti-

9. J. Pando, *Historia urbana de Buenos Aires*, Buenos Aires, SCA, 2014, p 18

nued to refer to the traditional center.

The federalization of the city and the arrangements for the centenary of the independence in 1910 gave impetus to many urban developments designed to meet the growing demands, such as sanitation, sewerage, electric lighting, large buildings for railway stations, and the construction of works that transformed the city symbolically: Palazzo dei Congressi, Casa Rosada, Colón Theater and the opening of the Avenida de Mayo, in 1898. In addition, Puerto Madero was expanded in 1894, due to the increasing rise of commercial traffic, while parks and squares multiplied.

In 1913 the first subway in Latin America was opened, going from Plaza de Mayo to Plaza Miserere; in 1914, the track was extended until Caballito.¹⁰ Little by little the transport network became increasingly widespread, extending its main lines to the most important peripheral parts of the city (Belgrano, Flores and Liniers).



<Figure 8. Interiors of Retiro train station, 1915 (source wikiwand.it)

10. J. Pando, *Historia urbana de Buenos Aires*, Buenos Aires, SCA, 2014, p 20

In mid-1920s, public transport on rubber was spread.

Urban growth, if it was first driven by large public transport networks, first of all by rail, saw the growing use of cars as a further factor in expansion. Meanwhile, the population of the city continued to grow. The census data of 1914 showed that in the metropolitan complex formed by the Federal Capital and the surrounding 19 districts there were more than two million inhabitants, 78% of whom resided in the Federal Capital. While in 1904 only 26% of the Federal District's population resided more than 5km from Plaza de Mayo, only ten years later, in 1914, 46% were in this situation.¹¹

The occupation pattern of the population of the city was different depending on the context, especially due to the cultural habits and the different quality of transport offered. Benefited from good transportation services and land availability, the North axis continued its development from the 1860s. The south axis, on the other hand, remained linked to the workers in the area of growing industrial location. The West axis, although it was the first to be connected to the center, lost more and more importance.

Since the '30s, the agro-exporter model, which until then characterized the process of Argentine socio-spatial organization, came into crisis and was replaced by a purely industrial model. As a reaction, there was a profound social transformation associated with the participation of the population in the labor market, linked mainly to the industrial sector. During this time migration from abroad was decreasing, while migration from the countryside to the metropolis was growing and became the main driver of rapid growth.

11. J. Pando, *Historia urbana de Buenos Aires*, Buenos Aires, SCA, 2014, p 21

In 1947, the city of Buenos Aires reached a saturation condition and saw its population growth (3 million inhabitants).¹² This was not the case for the metropolitan area, which continued to grow and expand steadily.

Due to an approximate state regulation, it was possible to offer low-quality soils where self-construction was dominated. On the contrary, the Federal Capital saw an intense densification thanks to the construction of buildings, especially vertical, where the middle classes were located. In contrast to this phenomenon, for those bands of population whose income did not allow to pay rent, the informal city began to be an alternative settlement for living in the city. Since 1940, public land and public space began to be occupied. For greater accessibility to the city center, and therefore to work, the price to pay was to live in areas with precarious living conditions characterized by lack of water and sewers, overcrowded precarious buildings, and lack of general hygiene.¹³

The city's growth has been accompanied by a profound transformation and differentiation of society. Along the most historic axes, growth has continued; in this way real urban clusters developed, following the radial corridors that departed from the historic center of Buenos Aires and extended to the furthest territories. In particular, the North axis has seen in the '50s and '60s a strong expansion that led to the consolidation of the part of the territory that goes from the central neighborhoods of Recoleta and Retiro to that of Tigre. Such an intense growth in the northern part of the city of Buenos Aires was linked to the presence of the railway axis connecting the city with Rosario, to the historic propensity of this urban area to accommodate the richest classes and the abundan-

12. J. Wilson, *Buenos Aires*, Milano, Paravia Bruno Mondadori Editori, 2005, p 28

13. J. Wilson, *Buenos Aires*, Milano, Paravia Bruno Mondadori Editori, 2005, p 28

ce of abundant landscapes. These properties coincided with better organization of public transports and infrastructures (highways), and a better quality of housing and livability.

On the aisles facing south, there were more degraded urban and environmental conditions, dictated by the massive presence of industries.

Since 1970, there has been a crisis in the industrial field that led to the replacement of large factories with other activities of lower production intensity. This involved the dismantling of industries, with a consequent impact on small and medium-sized businesses which led to an increase of unemployment and caused much of the urban decline of the areas located in the south of the city. Significant changes at the urban level as well as the liberalization of the rental market, together with the expulsion of a significant percentage of low-income population, were summed up. Some *villas miseria* were demolished to create space for major public works such as the construction of highways. The poor spatial presence in design and public issues in general (or the shift to less-inclusive forms of management) has expanded the gap between the city's areas.

The physical manifestation of this process was the decline, disassociation and social polarization. In the metropolitan area, the mechanisms that generated the expansion (los loteos económicos) showed signs of stoppage, and population growth manifested itself in the territory through the occupation of free lots, the densification of the space already built by the division of the lots, the overcrowding of housing, and even the growth of precarious settlements and urban slums. In this way the population of Gran

Buenos Aires continued to increase until 2001, exceeding the 12 million inhabitants.¹⁴

In the outer periphery of the metropolis, served by the highways, another phenomenon has been consolidating, that of the gated communities, facing the bands of population with a high purchasing power.

Developing country clubs and closed communities, often built near areas inhabited by low-income populations, was a socio-spatial phenomenon that converted into the dissolution of the classic forms of neighbors' relationship. These types of urban spaces arose because of the search for the most prosperous areas of natural spaces, security, and thanks to the high infrastructure accessibility provided by freeways that allows easy and fast connection to the city center.¹⁵

At the same time, since the '90s, there has been a remarkable development, in specific areas, of activities related to the financial sector and business services.

Currently in the central area of the city of Buenos Aires, there are located most of the influential financial and administrative activities at a metropolitan, national and global scale.

There are also processes of renewal associated with urban revitalization and the promotion of its cultural and historic heritage, as in the San Telmo district and most of the areas around the historic center of Buenos Aires, located south of Plaza de Mayo. In 1991, normative regulations were issued to protect historic areas, combined with the need to renew the protection of areas declared Historical Heritage.¹⁶

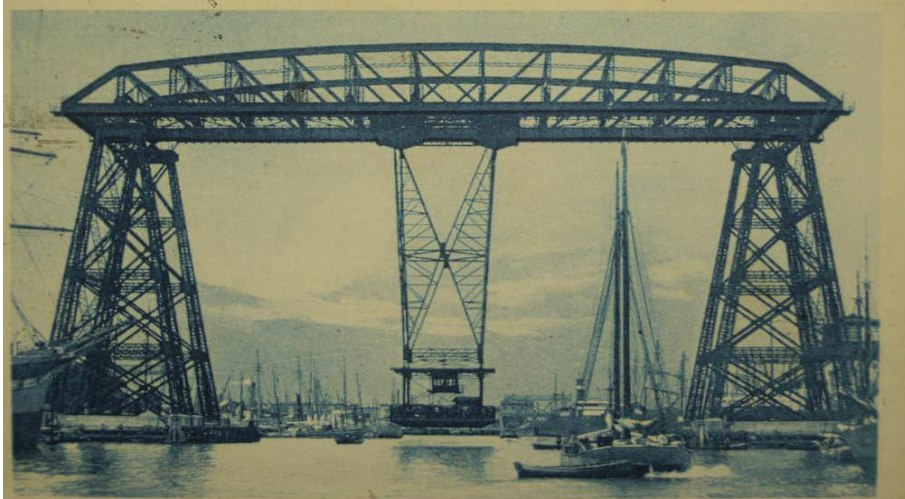
14. J. Wilson, *Buenos Aires*, Milano, Paravia Bruno Mondadori Editori, 2005, p 30

15. S. I. Sánchez, *Encrujadas en los estudios sobre vivienda y espacio doméstico en la ciudad de Buenos Aires. Una bibliografía crítica comentada*, Buenos Aires, LibrerENTRA Esquina del Arquitecto, 2015, p 91

16. J. Wilson, *Buenos Aires*, Milano, Paravia Bruno Mondadori Editori, 2005, p 31

The crisis of 2001, due to the choice of considering at the same exchange level dollars and *pesos* showed the two faces of the medal: on one side there were urban renovations with big scale works such as the requalification of Puerto Madero and the areas of Costanera Norte, emphasizing the economic power of the high classes, on the other the unemployed were forced to become *cartoneros*, people who tried to survive selling trash and paperboard, or *piqueteros*, fighting for their rights during demonstrations and strikes in front of government offices.

Nowadays there is still this situation going on, exasperated by the huge amount of people asking for money along the streets and sleeping at the open air just next to the renovated areas.



<Figure 9. Postcard of Avelaneda Bridge, 1926 (source picclick.it)



<Figure 10. Picture of Avenida Corrientes, 1930 (source picclick.it)

1.3 Urban Regulation context

The city of Buenos Aires has many elements that politically and normatively mark the planning processes. These normative frameworks are organized on different levels: from the *Constitución de la Ciudad*, to the *Plan Urbano Ambiental* and the *Código de Planeamiento Urbano*, passing through the *Plano Estratégico*.

The *Constitución de la Ciudad* of Buenos Aires was reformed in 1996 to be coherent with the most contemporary legal considerations. Given the features of this competence, articles of the Constitution not only “describe the essential issues for the rights, obligations and guarantees for the city, but also contain a set of definitions relating to environmental issues”.¹⁷ In this plan, constitutional definitions are considered as part of the first order declarations to guide planning processes.

The *Plano Estratégico* is a planning tool jointly developed by the state and the main social and economic actors of the city. Through the participation, collaboration and commitment of all public and private actors, they wanted to create a complete vision of the city that intended with key goals to improve the quality of life of the population.

The *Plan Urbano Ambiental* is the body responsible for preparing and updating the Plan, while the *Código de Planeamiento Urbano* recognizes the *Plan Urbano* as the primary law and as a reference point to which it is subject. In the context of implementation, this code applies “in all matters directly or indirectly linked to the use of land, buildings, facilities and services, the opening and enlargement of roads, the preservation of the historical, architectural, environmental issues and all those aspects that concern the planning areas of urban use of the city”.¹⁸

17. *Constitución de la Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires*, 1996, art.13

18. *Plan Urbano Ambiental*, law 2930/1997, art.1

The *Consejo de Planeamiento Estratégico* is an organization whose purpose is to advance the interaction with civil society, to propose strategically plans built by the consensus of citizens of Buenos Aires. The provisions apply to public and private property, whatever the effect on their property.

The new development plan of Buenos Aires 2010-2060 is the key instrument for the future. The internal structure of the plan is organized logically and chronologically, and sees four stages of analysis and procedure in its editing: the first, *Ciudad Producida*, which concerns the historical development of Buenos Aires; the second phase concerning the analysis of *Ciudad Actual* (current city) which is the result and consequence of *Ciudad Producida*; and finally the *Ciudad Tendencial* (expected development), that is the treatment of change and continuity expected for the future. Subsequently the plan deals with *la Ciudad Deseada* (ideal development), which wants to be an example of the ideal development and the changes needed for a proper growth of the city.

In this logical order, the model has a final part that consists of the scientific study of the changes needed to achieve the goals, called *Ciudad Sustentable* (Sustainable City).

The *Plan* has several aims but the main is, first of all, "the need to transform a centralized urban structure into a polycentric is of particular importance, which is in keeping with the decentralization process of public power in the municipalities."¹⁹ The goals are designed to consolidate the historic center, favoring the formation of new centers and at the same time strengthening neighborhood identities.

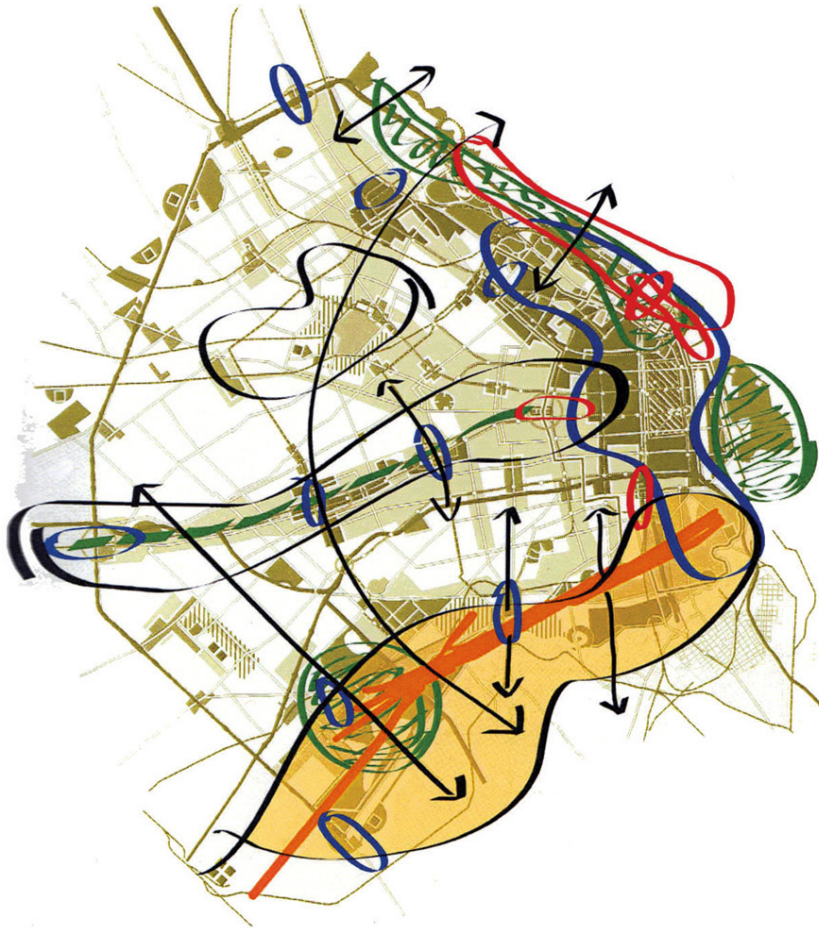
19. AA.VV., *Modelo Territorial Buenos Aires 2010-2060*, Buenos Aires, Ministerio de Desarrollo Urbano de la Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires, 2009, p 12

Another objective is the recreation of the relationship between the city and the coastal strip. To reverse the negative situations that have caused the urban fabric loss with coastal and fluvial shores, this would be a way to reinforce and enhance water resources, favoring public use.

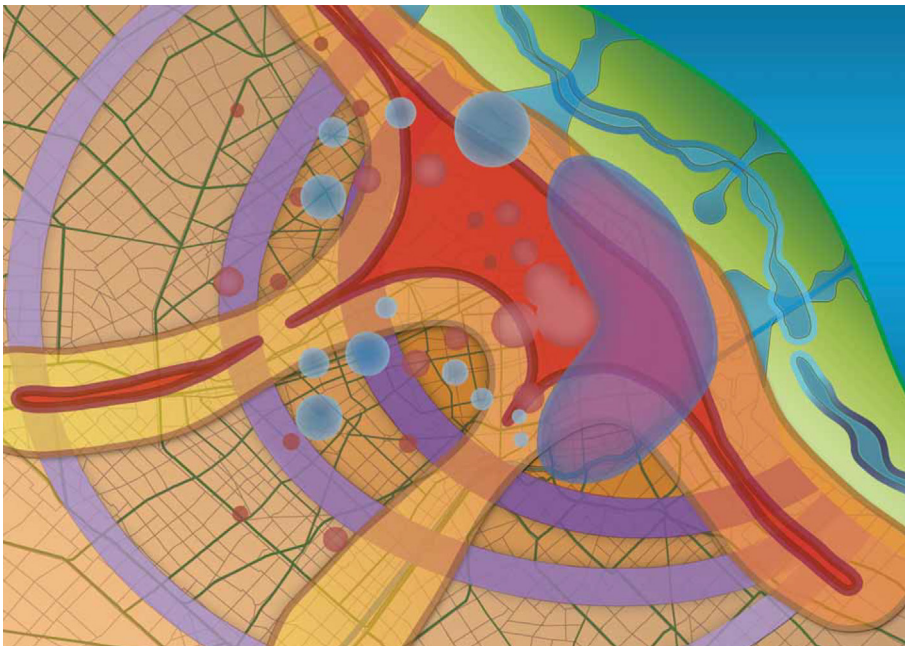
Structural inequalities between the North and South of the city are a problem to solve through the renovation, densification and urban renewal in the south, to balance displacements in the north. Several guiding principles aim at enhancing the environmental quality of Buenos Aires and sustainable development: a first step is the creation of a public space system that accompanies the recovery, expansion and improvement of green spaces, public roads and other areas, considering the environmental quality and the existing heritage.

Regarding the issue of traffic and transport, an important goal is the creation of an intermodal system that can use the benefits of each mean of transport to improve overall efficiency and safety of commercial and public transport, with the aim of deterring from the use of private means.

Finally, it is crucial to eliminate fractures of the city, facilitating the accessibility for all the people and the removal of all physical and cultural barriers.



<Figure 11. Masterplan of *Plan Urbano Ambiental*, (source buenosaires.gob.ar)



<Figure 12. *La ciudad tendencial, Modelo territorial Buenos Aires 2010-2060*, 2009 (source buenosaires.gob.ar)

1.4 The issues of the contemporary city

Residential and functional suburbation, socio-spatial disintegration, chronic crisis of urban centers and other linked situations are putting a hard test on urbanism, meaning the ability of societies to regulate and control the development of cities and regions. This condition, highlighted in lots of countries, has its main example in the city of Buenos Aires.

Different studies had facing the situation of Buenos Aires in different ways, working on new socio-spatial, geographical, territorial and political-administrative configuration but so far there isn't a common discussion on the issue, there aren't topics oriented to design an urban reaction to deal with these changes.

In 2001 Carlos de Mattos tried to define a systematic vision of the problem, identifying the polarization inversion of the '90s as a new impulse of concentration in the city due to several economic and political factors, such as a decrease of the ability in regulating the spatial development from the State, leading to a flow of foreign people established in places with a possible high density of work needed, and, at the same time, the movement of the families winning liberalization processes towards the same places.²⁰

Usually the technique adopted was to transfer urban policies from the central areas²¹, intensified during the latest decades, explaining the processes of parallel restoration of the biggest cities in the hole world.

But is there a common way to react to these new situations? Firstly there is the possibility to distinguish between two political-academic tendencies, one about the need of keeping the qualities of European or compact cities and the other claiming that today

20. C. de Mattos, *Movimientos del capital y expansión metropolitana en las economías emergentes latinoamericanas*, in *Revista de estudios regionales*, n 60/2001, pp 15-44

21. Cfr *Las transformaciones de centralidad y la metodología de su investigación* in www.fadu.uba.ar/catedras/gropius/publicacion/eventos01.html

suburbs are a reality deserving all the attention of the professionals, one trying to preserve the compact structures of the city centers and the other focusing on the suburbs.

The city of Buenos Aires has experimented in the 1990s a series of deep transformations of its urban and territorial structure. The residential suburbanization is the most spectacular of these processes, but there are also others in more central places, linked with non-residential functions. Even if the globalization had its consequences in Argentina, the way they developed is strictly connected with mechanisms *in situ*, from urban policies to ordinary daily life of the inhabitants, considering the dimensions of morphology, meaning the spatial conformation from territorial to architectural scale, of policy and socioculture, about the relationship between inhabitants subjects and the transformations.²²

Buenos Aires hasn't the only problem of not discussing about what has to be done but it has a deep identitary indecision. Nowadays there is still in the common imaginery the concept of *Queen of the Plata River*, the southern capital which hosts all European migration, without considering flows from the inner parts of the country, creating the suburbs around the city.

This city can't feel itself grafted in Latin America, but it represents almost an extension of European cities, seeing as different all that is outside these "European boundaries" and feeling as invasive the appearance of informal settlements, poverty and misery.²³

The simple, heterogeneous city, with historical paths and neighborhoods is absent.²⁴

The crisis of the 1990s emphasized the differences between a

22. Cfr *La ciudad en cuestión. Nuevos lugares, viejos espacios* in www.fadu.uba.ar/catedras/gropius/publicacion/eventos01.html

23. M. Welch Guerra, *Buenos Aires a la deriva: transformaciones urbanas recientes*, Buenos Aires, 2005, Biblos, p 21

24. M. Welch Guerra, *Buenos Aires a la deriva: transformaciones urbanas recientes*, Buenos Aires, 2005, Biblos, p 340

middle-high class and the rest of social classes, decreasing their incomes with a consequent sensible pauperization and leading to the suburbanization.

The typologies adopted were basically four, such as the *urbanizaciones cerradas*, complexes of big houses totally separated from the surrounding city through safety instruments modifying the urban landscape (i.e. high walls with vigilantes), the *country clubs*, systems of individual residences with a defined perimeter having a bizarre shape and common facilities inside (usually sport fields and pools), the *barrios privados*, groups of one-family-homes without common services but well linked to the city through the highway, and finally the *garden towers*, the most urban expression, symbolizing the arrival of the country clubs in the city.

This last type impacted the traditional condition of low-density neighborhoods, modifying daily life and relationships between neighbors, especially concerning the use of public space and urban morphology.

On the other hand, in particular in areas close to the rivers and exposed to floods, but also in the central zones, *villas miseria* spread outside the market, hosting people without any chance of improvement of their economical conditions, showing an increasing deterioration and a inhomogeneous development.

The boundaries had a substantial increase thanks to the construction of a modern system of infrastructures which center is represented by the highway. What's highlighted is the natural prosecution of the life cycle of a city, characterized by the occupation of the central core, than followed by the growth of the surrounding

areas and finally the desurbanisation.

Buenos Aires isn't an exception: it has a well identifiable center and secondary cores interconnected through daily commuters' mobility, guaranteed thanks to a transport path, with three concentric rings represented by the city itself and the Province, dissolving in archipelagos and small urbanized fragments among countryside.

In this case the economic lots create a ring around the city center while new developments, characterized by an inclusion in urban policies and different market conditions, as representative of high classes, are located behind the traditional suburbs.²⁵

Just from the '90s the massive use of vehicles and the improvement of highways let middle class members move to the suburbs but at the same time part of this sector decided to stay in the central zones defining and actualizing them through the construction of high buildings: this way phenomenon such as gentrification and ghettoization had marginal impacts.

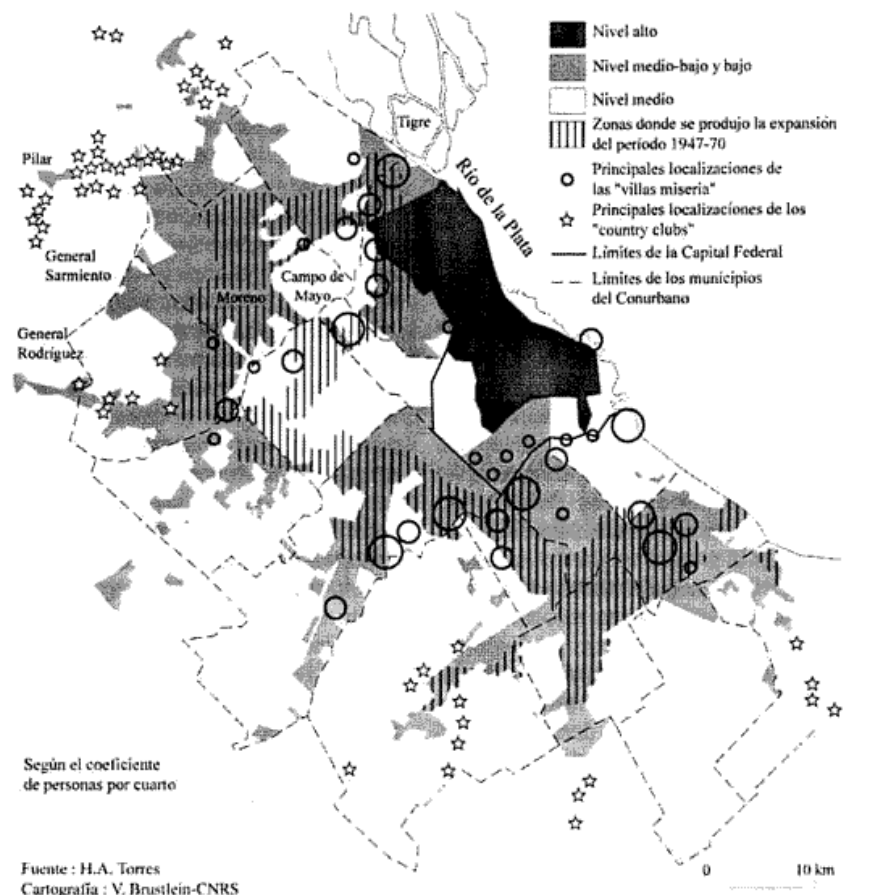
Buenos Aires had historically its main feature in the monocentric structure, with its downtown prevailing on the second level of urbanization but the new residence complexes located along the railways led to a situation with multiple effects, such as the generation of new periferical centralities realized because of a progressive commercial and residencial dislocation and the re-centralization of the existing centralities, improving financial and administrative functions.

Both these processes started from private initiatives, without any regional strategy and following an absolute laissez-faire. Result of them is the definition of a new urban shape having periferical

25. M. Welch Guerra, *Buenos Aires a la deriva: transformaciones urbanas recientes*, Buenos Aires, 2005, Biblos, p 357

dispersion, diffusion of subcentralities and territorial fragmentation. In a decade only the vanishing of industries, the commercial decentralization and the spontaneous residencial dislocation allowed the relief of central areas to let space to advanced tertiary, highlighting conflicts due to dispersion. Since this process hasn't overcome any gestational stage, at the same time it creates several questions referring the future evolution of the city and shows transcendent and irreversible consequences on the metropolitan structure.

Figure 13. Distribution of the villas miseria and the country clubs in the metropolitan area (source H. Torres, *Mapa social de Buenos Aires 1940-1990*, Buenos Aires, Secretaria de Investigacion y Posgrado, FADU UBA, 1993)



02

The *barrio* of La Boca:
analysis of its history and issues

La Boca neighborhood is located in the southern part of the Federal Capital of Buenos Aires; the *barrio* has its name for being at the *mouth* (*La Boca*) between the river Riachuelo and the Rio de la Plata.

A curious hypothesis on the origin of the neighborhood's name claims that *La Boca* was named so perhaps to remind the old *Boca d'Aze* borough of Genoa, a city where the vast majority of immigrants came from. The district is part of Comuna 4 (a total of 15 administrative units in which the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires is divided) along with *barrios Barracas, Nueva Pompeya* and *Parque Patricios*. The borders of *La Boca* are defined by *Avenida Regimiento Patricios, Avenida Martin García, Avenida Paseo Colon* and *Avenida Brasil*.

The surrounding neighborhoods are *Barracas* on the west side, *San Telmo* on the northwestern, *Puerto Madero* on the northeast, and the Southern Dock resorts and *Avellaneda* on the south. *Boca* is a renowned destination for tourists visiting Argentina, especially thanks to the typical colorful houses of the *Caminito* area, where you can admire *La Ribera* theater, tango performances and several taverns with a distinct Italian style. Among sports enthusiasts, *La Boca* is known for being the home of the *Boca Juniors* soccer team. The team plays their home games at the famous *La Bombonera* stadium (the "chocolates box" in Spanish). In the northern part of most of the neighborhood is located *Algerich* hospital, one of the most important of the city.

A map of the city of Buenos Aires, Argentina, showing its various neighborhoods. The neighborhoods are labeled in Spanish. The neighborhood of La Boca is highlighted in orange, located on the eastern tip of the city, south of the Retiro and Recoleta areas. Other labeled neighborhoods include Saavedra, Núñez, Coghlan, Belgrano, V. Urquiza, V. Pueyrredón, P. Chas, V. Ortúzar, Colegiales, Palermo, Chacarita, Agronomía, V. Crespo, La Paternal, V. Devoto, V. del Parque, V. Gral. Mitre, Caballito, Almagro, Balvanera, San Nicolás, Monserrat, Pto. Madero, San Telmo, Constitución, P. Patricios, Boedo, P. Chacabuco, N. Pompeya, Barracas, V. Soldati, V. Lugano, V. Riachuelo, P. Avellaneda, Flores, Vélez Sársfield, V. Luro, Liniers, Versalles, M. Castro, V. Real, and Floresta.

2.1 Historical framework

Historians agree to identify *La Boca* as the site where Pedro de Mendoza founded the city of *Santa Maria del Buen Aire* in 1536. Since then, for the first years, the natural creek formed by the mouth of *Riachuelo* became the natural harbor of Buenos Aires.

The historically main problem of this part of the river was its shallow depth that didn't allow large-scale ships to sail. For this reason, between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries, numerous projects on how to remedy this problem occurred; eventually Eduardo Madero's proposal was accepted, suggesting a new harbor to the north (where *Puerto Madero* stands today), which was actually inaugurated in 1897.¹ This choice marked the decline of the ancient port along *Riachuelo*.

Starting from the 1930s, a new process of industrialization of the area was activated, with different timing and modalities from the previous ones: in fact, it went from the processing of products destined for an overseas scale distribution to a condition where the size of new establishments was smaller than the major industrial buildings in the past, and where production became strictly limited to the satisfaction of the domestic market demand. Harbour-linked activities continued to flourish thanks to a good connection with the rail system that enabled efficient and fast transport of goods.

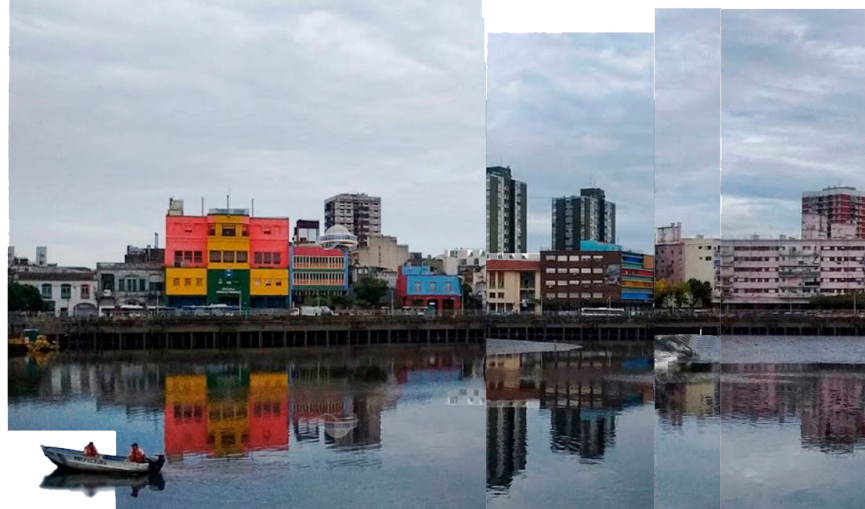
The crisis phase of the *Bocaine* port began with the strong de-industrialization of the '70s that led to the closure of many production facilities related to the city port activities that interested especially those present on the banks of *Riachuelo*. This caused a significant loss of job places and consequently a strong impact on the economic, urban and social decline of the area, with the

1. J. Pando, *Historia urbana de Buenos Aires*, Buenos Aires, 2014, SCA, p 134

disregard of the zone from a demographic point of view, favoring in the following years segregation, precarious construction and territorial fragmentation processes.²

This process can be traced back to two reasons, both relating to the governmental policies implemented during this period: firstly, urban legislation that reduced the possibility of installing industrial activities in neighboring areas or near neighborhoods; secondly, the intention to move industrial activities outside the Federal Capital and the creation of new industrial poles. Also at national level there were intervention policies aimed at improving some industrial areas from which however *La Boca* was excluded. Despite this strong decline, *La Boca* remains an area still present, although smaller than the thriving industrial past, with several activities in *Ribera del Riachuelo* and *Darsena Sur Portuaria*: the former is occupied by warehouses and spaces belonging to companies engaged in cargo and unloading activities and *Darsena Sur*, an artificial extension of the *Riachuelo*, houses the mooring points of the ships coming to and from Uruguay.

Figure 2. Photomontage of Riachuelo border (processed by the author)



2. J. Pando, *Historia urbana de Buenos Aires*, Buenos Aires, 2014, SCA, p 142

2.1.1 A *barrio* of immigrants

The district has historically been the area that received more immigrants from all over Buenos Aires. Almost all new arrivals came from the European continent (Spanish, French, German, Greek) with a predominance of Italian origin, and more particularly from the city of Genoa (*Boca* residents still define themselves as *Xenei-zes*).

The great presence of Italian immigrants is strictly linked to the formation of a strong sense of community and belonging to the neighborhood. In 1882 Genoese immigrants have even founded a separatist political-electoral movement to obtain administrative autonomy for the local management of district and harbour proclaiming *República de la Boca*, hoarding the flag of Genoa and forming an independent territory from Argentina: they signed a formal act and sent to the King of Italy Umberto I of Savoy, informing him of the constitution of the *República Independiente* but General Julio Argentino Roca, together with the President of the Republic, had to intervene personally in order to persuade the rebels to undermine the flag of Genoa and resolve the picturesque conflict.³

Besides politically, Italians were also very socially active. The first *Boca* educators, for example, were Italian; they were not really teachers, but thanks to their knowledge they were able to teach immigrants at least to read and write. All this was organized autonomously by Italian community without any help or subsidies from the Argentine Government. Even the first *Boquense* newspaper was created by an Italian in July 1875, as did the first hemistry, the first social association “El Progreso”, the volunteer firefighters association and the first theater. The fact that all these activities had

3. J. Pando, *Historia urbana de Buenos Aires*, Buenos Aires, 2014, SCA, p 135

been founded and carried on by Italians was very important, since the population of *La Boca* was almost entirely made up of people with Italian origin and therefore more attracted to institutions and services organized by their community. Always predisposed to art and cultural activities, in this neighborhood lots of artists, poets, painters and singers were born.⁴

4. J. Pando, *Historia urbana de Buenos Aires*, Buenos Aires, 2014, SCA,p 148

2.1 Historical framework

According to the 2010 census data, 46.694 people (24.590 women and 22.104 men) live in the *La Boca* district, accounting for 1.5% of the total population of the city, concentrated to 3.1% of the total area of the city (203, 2 sqkm), resulting in a population density of 15.246 inhabitants per sqkm, which is higher than the total average of the city (14.756 inhabitants per sqkm)⁵.

Boca is part of the Communes of the Capital of Argentina with the highest number of people living in poverty; according to *Necesidades Básicas*'s criterion, or unsatisfied with basic needs, 6.5% of *La Boca*'s households fail to meet one or more of the minimum requirements for this indicator.⁶

The population between the middle of the twentieth century and the first part of the 1900s grew exponentially by touching its peak between 1910 and 1950. From this decade began a steady demographic downturn coinciding with the progressive divestiture of industries in the neighborhood, according to references of census data of 1960 and 2010, losing about 40% of its population.

The trend tends to decrease with the passing of the years, not because of the decline in the arrivals of new migrants to Buenos Aires, but because *La Boca* was a saturated environment that could no longer offer employment opportunities and housing as other places in the city which were forming from the twentieth century. Such numbers are, however, not significant, as a considerable portion of the population (almost all immigrants from the neighboring countries of Argentina) are still abusive and unrecognized today by censuses carried out by the city government.

The family farm's inactivity is aligned with the average of the Capital but, despite this, the data remain worrying and make it clear

5. DGESC, based on censales

6. DGESC, based on censales

that lack of work is one of the main problems to be faced.⁷

Figure 3. Table representing the distribution of population according to the age (processed by the author)

Age	Number of people
3-4	1381
5	682
6-11	3862
12-14	1872
15-17	1872
18-24	5252
25-29	3552
30 +	22966

7. DGESC, based on censales

Census	Population of La Boca	Variation in percentage	Population of Buenos Aires	Variation in percentage
1869	4382	-	187346	-
1887	24498	559	433375	131
1895	38164	56	663854	53
1904	60878	60	950891	30
1909	65370	7	1231698	30
1909	76024	16	1575814	28
1936	-	-	2415142	53
1947	75888	0	2981043	23
1960	68462	-10	2966634	-0,5
1970	-	-	2972453	0
1980	49624	-2,7	2922829	-2
1991	46877	-7	2965403	1,4
2001	43082	-7	2776138	-0,7
2010	46694	7,7	2890151	3,9

^ Figure 4. Table representing the variation of people of the *barrio* along the years in comparison with the population of the city (processed by the author)

2.3 Buildings' typologies

The dwellings in this district were originally built using exclusively two materials: wood and metal plate. The metal façades combine with the wood decorated by various moldings that play with the folds of the plate pipes themselves; wood as a decorative element, was also used for the construction of the building's height railings, which were formed by iron grates, separated by square or rectangular elements of overlapping panels, over which modular panels were applied.

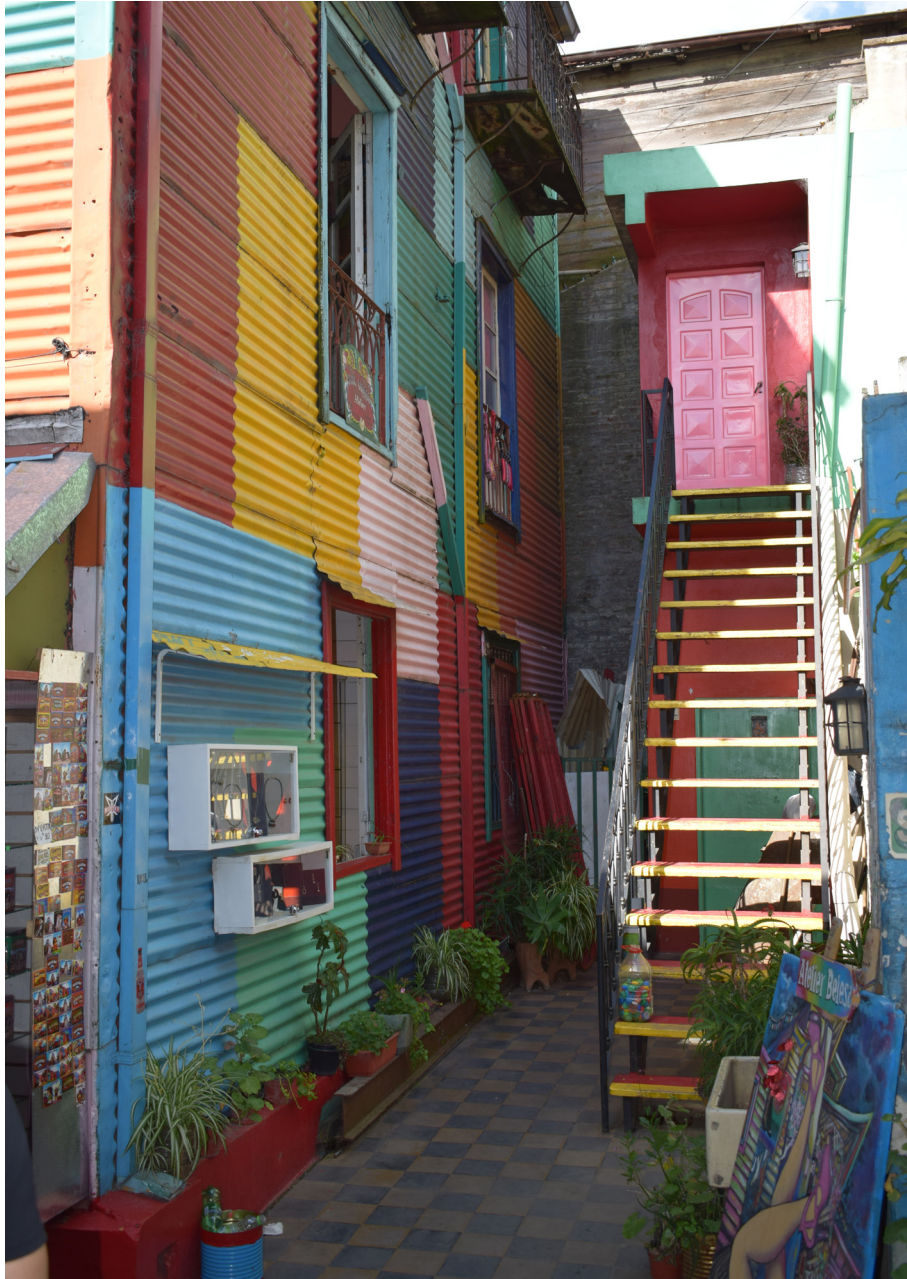
The origin of the famous colors of the façades of the buildings arises from the fact that the sailors used the ship's varnishes to paint their homes. However, since the quantities left after painting ships were not so high that all the facades of the house could be painted, different colors would have to be used.

The type of houses that came to form created the typical image of the neighborhood that still exists. In this category of building typology there were *conventillos*, constructions that, due to the overcrowding of the neighborhood, housed many families in very precarious hygienic and structural conditions; in fact, they had only one entrance door, no windows and the main light source for the kitchen, the sanitary facilities and the shared rooms coexisted in the tiny inner courtyard.⁸

With the improvement of economic conditions, the quality of housing was refined; some wooden houses were replaced by brick buildings recalling the Italian style of the moment. This new prosperity materialized in furnishing the service homes and elements that followed the latest fashion of the time: brick buildings began to appear with large windows of green, red, blue and decorated ceilings. There were thus interesting contrasts between these

8. AAVV, *La Boca, Diagnóstico y Líneas de acción de Escala Barrial*, Buenos Aires, 2007, Ministerio de Gestión Pública y Decentralización, p 9

new and imposing buildings alternating with traditional metal and wood.



<Figure 5. A typical *conventillo* with its distribution systems (picture taken by the author)

2.4 Focal points of the *barrio*

To have an idea of the elements that characterize the *barrio*, it is important to notice which are its main components.

The road system is composed by a main path where activities and transport lines are located, consisting in *Avenida De los Patricios*, a place of great activities with countless commercial premises, *Calle Necochea*, famous for its pubs, bars and trattorias, *Avenida Almirante Brown* and *Calle Benito Perez Galdos*, important for car traffic and leading to the access ramps of *Puente Nicolás Avellaneda*.

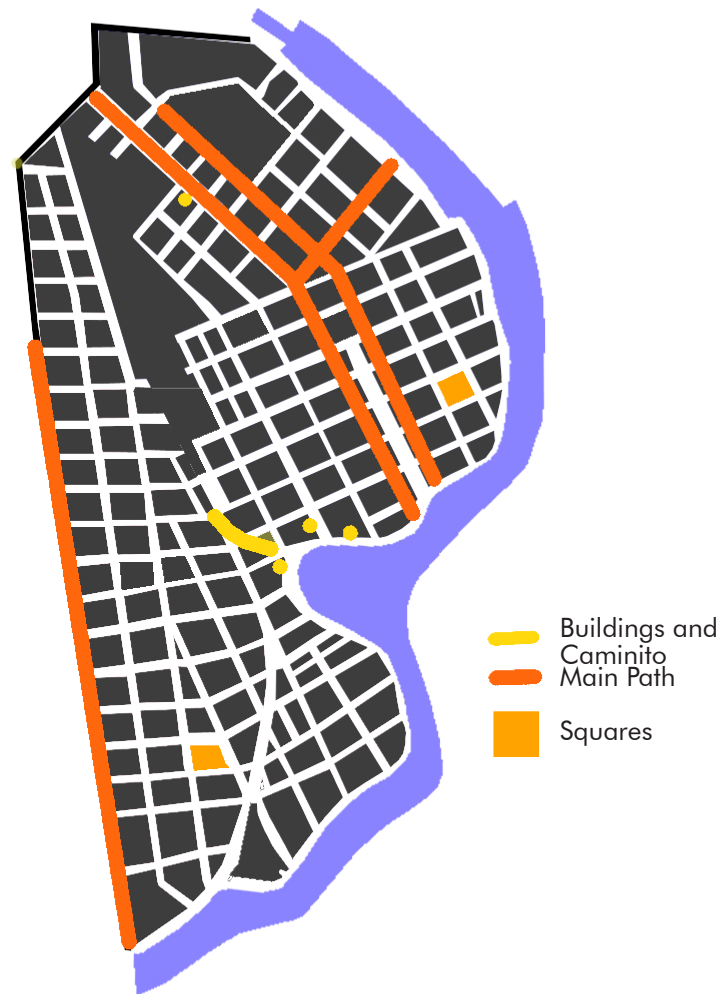
There is also another important path that can be defined as the “traditional” and is composed by *Calle Caminito*, pedestrian and just 100 meters long, with many shops of commercial artists and paseos, become so famous because it was noted that the tango composer Juan de Dios Filiberto passed through there for inspiration and because of its inauguration as *Museum of Art at Aire Libre* in 1859 , *Calle Magallanes*, chosen by great artists to live and develop their activities, including the Italian Alfredo Lazzari, master of Benito Quinquela Martín and Fortunato Lacamera, and *Vuelta de Rocha*, historical site, established as Admiral Guillermo Brown’s seat in the War of Independence, representing the most scenic and picturesque creek of Riachuelo.

There are several squares, used as meeting points and rest areas for the population, such as *Plazoleta de los Suspiros*, located at the intersection between *Vuelta de Rocha* and *Calle Magallanes*, named in memory of the sighs of the old sailors who have been agonizing past times from this land, with the peculiarity of having a form of granite and concrete ship and a semicircular bench and of being the first initiative *Aquí Patrimonio: una tarea con*

los vecinos, on behalf of the General Directorate of Heritage and Sub-Secretary of Patrimonio Cultural y Corporacion Buenos Aires Sur, *Plaza Almirante Brown*, one of the oldest in the city being inaugurated in 1897, named in honor of the first naval admiral of Argentina, Guillermo Brown, subject of a renewal designed in 2005 by the neighborhood and the *Secretaria de Produccion, Turismo y Desarrollo Sustentable*, consisting in the provision of urban furniture, urban greenery and a system of railing throughout the perimeter of the square in order to protect it from vandalism, *Plaza Solís*, historic place where the Club Boca Junior was born on Monday, April 3, 1905, when five young people from the Baroque de la Boca (Esteban Baglietto, Alfredo Scarpatti, Santiago Sana and her brothers Juan and Teodoro Farenga) met there with the intention of founding a soccer club .

Finally it is possible to identify various buildings with relevant role within the neighborhood, as *Casa de Amarilla native La Flora*, designed as a copy of the house of Guillermo Brown in 1983 by Navío Omar Verzura and Laurio Destéfani to host the naval academy beside a polifuncional area with is a large patio for children's games arranged in three spaces according to age groups (one preschooler the other for school children), a pond with aquatic plants and a source of water games, pergolas to offer shade and shelter and a soccer field, *Museo de Bellas Artes de La Boca 'Benito Quinquela Martin'*, dedicated exclusively to Argentine painters and artists, where you can find works by Eduardo Sívori, Spilimbergo, Lacámara, Juan Carlos Castagnino, Fernando Fader and of course Benito Quinquela Martin and sculptures by Alberto Lagos, Rogelio Yrurtia, Antonio Sassone and many others, col-

lections of *mascarones de proa* (grotesque figures painted, which adorned the rocks of ancient ships), *Museo Historico de la cerera de La Boca*, one of the first brick houses built in the Vuelta de Rocha in 1902 as a building typical of the Italian Renaissance, designed by the architect J. B. Rocca, and *Fundación Proa*, a building designed by Caruso-Torricella design studio with italianate facade and three floors with four exhibition halls built in 1996 to host private collections of paintings and renewed in 2008 with the opening of its new headquarters, consisting in a multimedia auditorium, a specialized library, a restaurant and terrace, plus spaces for action and opening to the public and a transparent facade to communicate experiences from inside to the neighborhood, representing an icon for the contemporary landscape of the hole city.



^ Figure 6. Scheme representing the location of the focal points of the neighborhood (processed by the author)

Figure 7. Plaza Solis and its furniture (source mapio.net)



Figure 8. Plaza Almirante Brown (source plazasenbuenosaires.herobo.com)





^ Figure 9. Caminito and Plazoleta de los Suspiros (picture taken by the author)

Figure 10.Casa Amarilla>
from the exterior (source
turismo.buenosaires.gob.
ar)



Figure 11.Museo de Bellas>
Artes de La Boca (source
turismo.buenosaires.gob.
ar)





<Figure 12.Museo de Cera Historico (picture taken by the author)



Figure 13. Fundacion Proa
(picture taken by the author)

2.5 Urban planning context

The *Boca* district refers to the *Código de planeamiento urbano*, the main legal instrument that regulates and restricts the use of land throughout the town hall.

From *Ley Organica de Communas* n 1777/2005, the article 127 declares the constitution of the Communas, units of political and administrative decentralized control, having territorial authority and its own juridical role.

These units' borders are established "according to urban, economic, social and cultural features"⁹. Their functions are "planning, executing and controlling, alone or with the contribution of the city government, without contradicting decision made for the commonweal"¹⁰.

According to the latest update of 2017 the most common urban functions in the area are the industrial ones, which correspond to 35.7% of the surface of the neighborhood. These districts are destined to areas of productive activities suitable for localization close to residential blocks. In the particular case of *La Boca*, the prevalent districts providing industrial activities are separated from other areas, consequently, there are factories located separately due to the fumes produced and others located at the southern end of La Boca in coincidence with residential and commercial uses.¹¹

The services scope is distributed over 17.9% of the area's surface.¹² It can be divided into several subgroups: local services, that are services located in proximity with residential blocks; general services that include city-wide services, which may coexist, subject to restrictions, with residential uses; special services for particular uses that require specific standards and rules: the Boca Juniors

9. Law n 71/2005, art 3

10. Law n 71/2005, art 5

11. win.storiain.net/arret/num159/artic3.asp

12. win.storiain.net/arret/num159/artic3.asp

“La Bombonera” stadium is an example.

Residential areas are distributed on over 13% of the surface of the neighborhood, differentiating in high and low density areas and locating in the central part of Boca.¹³

The scope of the grouping of locations related to administrative, financial, service-related services, and highway and pedestrian highways, also allows for residential use but with restriction.

The Areas of Future Urbanization occupy the 3.5% of the surface, while the green areas 3.1%. The former corresponds to public land not yet urbanized or occupied; the second corresponds to areas intended for green spaces and public parks. The RU area, Urban Renewal, is present in 1.9% of the territory and consists of a space with a strong need for renewal due to the obsolete situation of its structures and elements. More specifically these areas can be found near the *Riachuelo*. Finally, the APH Historical Areas are distributed in 0.7% of the Barrio, located mainly in the extreme northwest of Boca. In fact, there are areas of high historical value as they include elements that are part of the historic center.

The neighborhood of La Boca is characterized by the presence of conflicts that, due to their persistence over time, could be defined as historical.

The economic crisis of 2001 produced profound transformations in the country, materialised in a very strong degradation for loss of work support, and even in social sectors that decreased their quality of life and purchasing power.

In 2005 city government declared the Urban and Environmental Emergency of the neighborhood *La Boca*, concerning housing,

13. win.storiain.net/arret/num159/artic3.asp

services, equipment, green spaces and productive activities. In these terms the aim of the Executive Power is to create and develop a program and specific projects in compliance with urban renewal policies listed in the Urban Planning Code. In this framework, this publication is registered as a political technical instrument of the local government.

Therefore, it has several objectives, among which updating the territorial diagnosis, identifying the problems of *La Boca* neighborhood, in order to speculate proposals and design actions tending to consolidate the identity and improve the degraded sectors, highlighting at the same time problems that exceed the local government's ability to carry out negotiations and demand from the central areas their improvement.

In this sense, the law of Urban and Environmental Emergence has the aim of "renew, shore up and enhance public and private buildings to improve their integration and social value, leaving to the Executive Power the task of creating a specific program and project for the fulfillment of the objectives"¹⁴.

The critic points have such complexity that need coordinate actions in different decision and interaction levels. Because of it, and considering that there isn't a homogeneous framework, it is possible to identify two Zones of high populational risk, environmental and physical decay, called "Entorno Plaza Solis y barrio Chino" and "Entorno calle California". Other high-risk zones are "Entorno Caminito" and "Entorno calle Olavarria y Avenida Almirante Brown".

The improvement of these areas and their enhance in productive

14. Ley de Emergencia Urbana y ambiental de La Boca, 2005

and cultural terms, linked by the riverfront as construction axis with historical character, is the only chance of revitalizing the neighborhood.

From an environmental point of view, the contamination of the Riachuelo river is an important trigger to the rehabilitation of the area, imposing the need of taking into consideration its recovery together with the other towns of the Province, involving also in the process the city government, the province and the country for the matters related to the navigability.

Today just a small part of the area is exploited and overused for touristic matters, so spreading the offer to a bigger area this condition will be naturally reduced.

However the theme of a spread without a specific analysis of the peculiar especializations could put at risk the real identity and the parallel social gentrification.

In this area the main issue isn't the lack of ideas or projects but the way to convert them into reality, developing and applying them over the appearances: the difficult task is related to the definition of the obstacles impeding the recuperation of the neighborhood as a part of the huge complex of the city, original axis of the development of the urban frame.

The city of Buenos Aires inherits a solid urban system, but thought for a different economy, country and technology. It is necessary rethinking and rebuilding all the governmental instruments considering the infrastructure having a metropolitan level.

The matter of Matanza-Riachuelo River needs to be dealt through technical aspects including this relationship between political, eco-

nomical and cultural factors. The first aim should be the solution of the lack of hydraulic infrastructures, guaranteeing free access to drinkable water and safety from floodings, fundamental even if the change of governments and representants could change priorities. Secondly the need of a connection between the local and the city infrastructures is necessary because nowadays the paths had always been treated as a fragment detached from the whole. The presence of factories dealing with contaminants was one of the reasons of this segregation, constituting a negative externality for the city itself.

The role of municipalities in these situations becomes crucial: so far their policies have been generalized regarding the urban and medium level, preferring focusing on the local one. It is prior to think about the complexity of the problems and the possible solutions both dealing with the zone interconnected to the totality in different territorial scales(the neighborhood and the city, the city and the river, the river and the metropolitan area and finally the metropolitan area and the region)and most of all with the social and economical plagues such as unemployment, lack of the infrastructures, overpressure on the natural system and industrial and population policies. A group of problems with difficult solution if ordinary partial lookings to them keep working. An emblematic example is represented by the *villas miseria* settlements, located along the highway from the '40s and '50s without any attempt/chance of integration in the city, even during the periods of economical growth.

Thus it is necessary to think and develop no-contaminant economic activities , programs of renewal and modernization of existing

factories and promotion for new factories with less environmental impact and, over all, to study new urban policies considering the particular conditions of the soil.

The riverside is an area with opportunities and could be seen as a big natural reserve, hosting production project for the sustainable development of the city. Its morphological features are a common phenomenon among the world, considering cities built close to a water source. With the growth of the settlement this source started being overused and arrived to its crisis. What could help these conditions is a series of works of hydraulic engineering, similar to the ones actuated at the end of the XIX century and at the beginning of the XX, in parallel with municipal actions to complete infrastructures and with integrations to the inter-jurisdictional laws adapting them to the current needs.

The fragment of the city represented is, at the same time, the most poor place of the metropolitan area and rich of knowledge and enterprises, memory and history: the only hope is in the mobilization of these instruments¹⁵.

15. Municipalidad de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires, *Programa Recup La Boca*, Buenos Aires, 1984, Sociedad Central de los Arquitectos, pp 58-59

03

Local programs of requalification

The main reason for the processes of renewal and valorization of *barrio de La Boca*, from the 90s on, was the need of flooding control along the river bank of *Riachuelo*. These acts had the aim to decentralise the growth spreading it to the peripheral areas instead of building new clubs, simplifying the access to the neighborhood and solving several problems related to building typologies and services that could compromise the quality of life. Floods-control works created the conditions to start with urban recovery and dealt with new interventions on the public space.

Requalification programs kept going on until these years and was composed by four main projects implying the realization of important infrastructures, such as the bank towards the river and the province, the formal harbour area and the cleaning and draining of the *cuenca*, through interventions of rearrangement of touristic areas, creation of walking paths, control of the parts under the highway defined as park and improval of the historical portions.

Projects interesting the transformation of the southern area of the city and the bank were mixed management projects involving city government, national initiatives and private investors.

Funds for its realization came from a loan that the government of Buenos Aires obtained from the Inter-American Development Bank (hereinafter IDB) and public funds. Infrastructure development works were completed with cultural projects such as those carried out by the PROA Museum-Foundation and the Centre for Contemporary Architecture Studies (CEA).

3.1 RECUP-*Boca*

The fact that gave origins to the elaboration of the Program of recovery and urban development RECUP was the communication about the social diffusion of the problem of habitat in the neighborhood¹.

It was an ambitious program, proposing to give impulse to the integral development of the barrio, both from a urbanistic and a social point of view, including the participative dimension as a necessary component for the design process.²

The RECUP identified two lines of action: on one hand, the immediate actions to cure the emergencies and guarantee the minimum living conditions, while at the same time the definitive works were in progress, on the other, actions oriented to the general rehabilitation of the neighborhood through the requalification of buildings and the delivery of the dwellings to rent and regain new funds.

A fundamental role was the one covered by *Casa Amarilla*, hosting people from unrecoverable buildings while the process was going on.

The implementation of the program was hampered since the last 80s because of the economic and political conditions of the city, so the process turned into the adquisition of 21 conventillos and the requalification of 4 of them.

This program, putting in question the usual approach of the government to similar situations because of the new idea of rehabilitation couldn't change the governmental work: putting city's interests before the ones of low-income population created the expulsion of this social class from the citylife.

1. Municipalidad de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires, *Programa Recup La Boca*, Buenos Aires, 1984, Sociedad Central de los Arquitectos, p 4

2. Municipalidad de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires, *Programa Recup La Boca*, Buenos Aires, 1984, Sociedad Central de los Arquitectos, p 4

The preliminar analysis led by the technical team of the program identified different points: deficiency in infrastructures, lack of the provision of light, water and gas supplies, frequent floods, high levels of overcrowdings and buildings decay, problems in the functioning of the vehicular path, lack of green spaces and high level of pollution because of the presence of industrial activities.

The analysis established a series of indicators that put into evidence the consideration of the neighborhood as one of the most deteriorated areas of the city and one of the zones with high percentage of people living in critical conditions.

Among these there were four main factors: the municipalities didn't care about approving concrete actions for the environmental drainage of the area, the city government didn't have any interest to solve problems due to inundations, the organizations who supplied their furnitures didn't apply any renovation or modification of the obsolete structure, the urban planning instruments didn't allow the construction of new houses and factories, the owners of the lots had no interest into houses renovation even if this could lead to the increase of the loans.³

The technical team then elaborated a list of general aims, such as improving the living conditions of low-income people and recovering a degraded area for city's sake. To obtain these objectives the program defined a complex strategy of intervention that involved different dimensions producing the progressive decay of the neighborhood, including specific goals translated in projects, as the project of flood control, the rehabilitation of *conventillos*, new implants of buildings keeping the morphology and typology for unadaptable buildings, filling the urban voids and a social

3. Municipalidad de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires, *Programa Recup La Boca*, Buenos Aires, 1984, Sociedad Central de los Arquitectos, p12

plan consisting in including inhabitants and users in the social frame through different processes such as the constitution of community spaces and the participation into each stage of the program, trying to maintain and preserve the cultural and urban identity.

The previewed timeline was five years, with a gradual and progressive realization of the projects.

The program presented innovative features, especially considering the change of approach, the choice of requalification and most of all the building typology chosen, coherent with the surroundings. RECUP main intents were the integration from the design stage to the implementation of a complex institutional machine involving governmental actors and common people: in the program *manifiesto*, in fact, there were identified all the actors, including the *Consejo de Planificación Urbana* as the coordinator, the *Dirección de Políticas y Planes*, the *Gerencia de Desarrollo y Renovación Urbana* and various professionals in matter of architecture, sociology and anthropology.⁴ At the same time it was well expressed the need of approval by the inhabitants of each step proposed by the actors.⁵

From the beginning the Program was elaborated by experts with a big political and economic support to develop their plan. Their aims were coherent with the previous analysis but social issues such as the moving of inhabitants or the obstacles and difficulties were not considered as important elements affecting the realization. Even if the participation was formally included in the laws, the effective participation of the users was related with the sensibility of the main actors.

4. Municipalidad de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires, *Programa Recup La Boca*, Buenos Aires, 1984, Sociedad Central de los Arquitectos, p 23

5. Municipalidad de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires, *Programa Recup La Boca*, Buenos Aires, 1984, Sociedad Central de los Arquitectos, p 23

The implementation of the program was strictly linked to the general context in which the city was since the 90s. From the urban development point of view the most important realized work concerned the flood control, while there were no improvements in the improvement of green areas, basic infrastructures and environmental matters.

From the habitat point of view the requalification of the *conventillos* implied the purchase of transitional houses, but the process didn't obtain the primary objective, being the people still living in the temporary shelters.

At the end it is possible to identify the confluence of two specular positions into the process: the political and the technical position. At the beginning, the first one was the prevalent but reducing during the time, while the second one in all the stages perceived the presence of the first, in order to elaborate a plan "from above" and not "among".⁶

6. M. Di Virgilio, H. Herzer, M. Lanzetta, L. Martín, A. Redondo, M.C. Rodríguez, *El proceso de renovación urbana en La Boca: organizaciones barriales entre nuevos usos y viejos lugares*, in *HAOL*, 16/2008, p 59

3.2 Operatoria 525/97

From 1996-1997, the housing situation in the neighborhood of *La Boca* had become untenable, with the degradation of the general socioeconomic situation of the city and the country.

The failure of RECUP-Boca, combined with the economic opening and the arrival of foreign capital in a real estate market of depressed prices, began to press again on the most vulnerable families. As the evictions were propagated, part of the affected population and related organizations were converged into the permanent *Asemblea Permanente de Desalojados de La Boca* which, through mobilization and articulation with various actors, succeeded in the residential emergency of the neighborhood and the start up of a special operation for the purchase of the renter by means of individual credits or joint.⁷

The *Operatoria 525/97* represented a “political and social conquest” of this new organisational expression.⁸ The organizational results were positive, in the sense of allowing the crystallization of a plural space where different sectors converged.

With regard to the proposed housing solution, the *Operatoria 525/97* limited its actions to transfer the domain, without implementing mechanisms of subdivision of the property or resources for the rehabilitation, which were very deteriorated, so that it was just a brake on eviction actions, without advancing the definitive solution of the housing deficit.

Soon, however, conflicts between the assembly’s referents generated a process of fragmentation, giving rise to new organizations that “opened up” to work on their own. Hence the multiplication of organizations that took place between 1998 and 2002, with

7. M. Di Virgilio, H. Herzer, M. Lanzetta, L.Martín, A. Redondo, M.C. Rodríguez, *El proceso de renovación urbana en La Boca: organizaciones barriales entre nuevos usos y viejos lugares*, in *HAOL*, 16/2008, p 43

8. M. Di Virgilio, H. Herzer, M. Lanzetta, L.Martín, A. Redondo, M.C. Rodríguez, *El proceso de renovación urbana en La Boca: organizaciones barriales entre nuevos usos y viejos lugares*, in *HAOL*, 16/2008 p 45

diverse ideological methodologies and positioning, to the point of hindering actions together.⁹

The *Operatoria 525/97* responded to the objective of curbing the evictions of the affected buildings and alleviating the housing crisis, without anticipating a satisfactory response to the problems of housing degradation. It was a short intervention and did not have the capacity to anticipate the complications arising from the joint purchase or to incorporate the organisational dimension of the beneficiary families and the possibility of shoring up self-construction processes for rehabilitation, even if not partial, of real estate. Currently, there is no regulation to enable sustainable intervention in these properties, although an extension of the credit is being contemplated to allow its replacement and division in horizontal property.

9. M. Di Virgilio, H. Herzer, M. Lanzetta, L. Martín, A. Redondo, M.C. Rodríguez, *El proceso de renovación urbana en La Boca: organizaciones barriales entre nuevos usos y viejos lugares*, in *HAOL*, 16/2008 p 45

3.3 Programa de Rehabilitación del Hábitat

During the second half of the decade of the '90s, the local political dynamics were marked by the process of empowerment of the city, the election of the first head of government and the drafting of the Constitution. In socioeconomic terms, the worsening of the situation further narrowed the State's margins of intervention.

In this context, in 2000 the *Programa de Rehabilitación del Hábitat* was created in the neighborhood of *La Boca*, proposing the rehabilitation of habitat in the neighborhood as a whole. The objectives raised showed notable similarities with the formulation of the RECUP.

Within the group of properties that managed the program, it was possible to find different groups that gave account of the historical moments of the intervention of the city government in the neighborhood: the grounds of the plot of *Casa Amarilla*, the 21 *conventillos* of RECUP Boca, the properties purchased through *Operatoria 525/97*, 5 transit homes to temporarily relocate families and land and properties that have been acquired since 2000.

The traditional subexecution of governmental offices determined the progressive deterioration of the properties, so the population that inhabited them was in permanent housing emergency. This, together with the excessive costs for the target population, determined an important situation of delinquency in the payment of the quotas.

Irregularities and delays caused the opening of processes and as a result, justice determined that a new operation would be created for the beneficiary families to resolve their situation in the short term.

The *Operatoria 105* consisted of a special budget heading to grant individual credits to the beneficiaries within the framework of the Housing Self-management programme. Between 2008 and the beginning of 2009 they were able to allocate about 20 credits with this mechanism, but nowadays the funds of this operation are also almost paralyzed.

The *Operatoria 105* was experienced by some families as an “expulsion”, since the amounts awarded (120,000 pesos plus 10% of operating expenses) were not enough to buy any property in the neighborhood and not even in other neighborhoods of the city.¹⁰

The consequence is that families were “expelled” to the periphery, while only very slowly progress has been made in the renovation of four *conventillos*.

One of the most interesting aspects of the program was linked to the conflict over the *Casa Amarilla* project, a plot of land of approximately 12 hectares, bought by the municipality in 1981, which constituted one of the main reserves of fiscal land of the city.

For years there has been a project to build housing with public funds in the *Casa Amarilla*. However, the project as such was not made tangible until the management of Ibarra announced suddenly its bidding in 2004. This project included the construction of 1231 houses, amounted to a total of more than 90 million dollars of investment and showed strong continuity with the traditional housing policies that promoted the construction of large sets of houses. The announcement of the project mobilized important sectors of the district that through various judicial measures have

10. M.C. Rodríguez, *Políticas del hábitat en la CABA: Confrontando alternativas*, in www.sociales.uba.ar

paralyzed the execution of the work.¹¹ In the conflict, environmental arguments and real estate interests were intermingled, which sought to promote the socioeconomic recovery of a part of the neighborhood and to promote the process of valorization with the construction of the park. In addition, it was proposed as an alternative project housing construction through smaller-scale interventions involving the purchase by the government of numerous buildings and in fact a revival of the real estate market depressed after the 2001 crisis.

11. M.C. Rodríguez, *Políticas del hábitat en la CABA: Confrontando alternativas*, in www.sociales.uba.ar

3.4 Programa de Autogestión de la Vivienda

In 2000 the Law 341 was sanctioned, determining the creation in 2002 of the Programa de Autogestión de la Vivienda, which has been one of the most dynamic residential policies of the city government until at the end of 2007 the income of new beneficiaries and the purchase of land was frozen.

This program had a particularly important presence in the neighborhood of *La Boca*, although it is not a policy designed exclusively for the neighborhood.

The PAV and the *Programa de Rehabilitación del Hábitat* must be thought of jointly, from the perspective of a public intervention aimed at rehabilitating the urban fabric of an area of the city and consolidating the popular sectors that inhabited there. Its limits and contradictions were linked to the diversity of interests that converged in the neighborhood of *La Boca*, in a complex counterpoint with the urban renovation project of the south zone.¹²

The history of Law n. 341 is closely linked to the neighborhood of *La Boca* because among the various experiences that were collected for its formulation, the *Operatoria 525* was one of the most important. Thus, some of its protagonists participated in the work table that formulated the law, as the *Asemblea Permanente de Desalojados de La Boca*. It also recovered the experience of organization and self-management in occupations of buildings by organizations, such as the Movimiento de Ocupantes e Inquilinos.¹³

The PAV had two objectives, individual credits for low-income families and credits for legal people, responding to the interests of social organizations linked to the habitat. Although the collective

12. M.C. Rodríguez, *Autogestión, políticas del hábitat y transformación social*, Buenos Aires, 2009, Editorial Espacio, p 46

13. M.C. Rodríguez, *Autogestión, políticas del hábitat y transformación social*, Buenos Aires, 2009, Editorial Espacio, pp 50-52

modality was implemented intensively in the first years, it was subsequently still progressive until its virtual paralysis by the current management, that has limited to manage the works already begun, prioritizing the operative Individual.

The contradictions in the formulation of the PAV (collective credits and individual deeds, for example) expressed the limits that the political system set to the experiences of self-management of the habitat in the city and the correlation of forces with the organizations social involvement. Thus, the resulting product of the PAV responded weakly to the original objectives and was impregnated with the traditional tender mechanisms of governmental approaches. It also influenced the profile of some of the social organizations involved, who saw in self-management one more way of capturing resources and shoring up their organisational processes, but they were not interested in self-management as a counter-hegemonic experience or countercultural. In this sense, for most organizations, PAV's resources were equivalent to any other transfer from the state to which they were accustomed, such as subsidies for popular eaters.

On the contrary it is also possible recognize one of the benefits of PAV in financing for land in the credit granted. However, by not being articulated with an urban land policy, families and co-operatives had to "go to the market" to look for the land, being at the mercy of the speculative behaviors of the realtors, which greatly limits their capacity to access the ground.¹⁴

According to sources, in 2009 there were in the neighborhood of *La Boca* 38 projects under the PAV (35% of the total), belonging to more than 15 social organizations and including 516 homes

14. M.C. Rodríguez, *Autogestión, políticas del hábitat y transformación social*, Buenos Aires, 2009, Editorial Espacio, pp 50-52

(20% of the total), with a total credit of over 20 million dollars.¹⁵

The overrepresentation of the neighborhood in the total of the city not only spoke about the critical situation of the habitat, but it also reflected the path followed by the social organizations of the neighborhood in terms of processes of organization and self-management.

15. Instituto Vivienda de la Ciudad, May 2009

04

Examples of adaptive reuse of waterfronts



^ Figure 1. A map of the locations of the examples (processed by the author)



4.1 Origins of a phenomenon

Water has been an important feature of the city, offering many advantages as natural resource in growth of early settlements, means for trade and transport and further with its waterfront as resource of industrial uses.

In the process of globalization, building on the particular spatial scenery of the waterfront, cities tend to refresh their strategies of development to adapt new trends of urban life with huge urban waterfront regeneration projects. These usually focus on a target of maximum marketing and construction of a new image-vision, which aims to represent the city in the global agenda.

In this frame, urban waterfront regeneration projects with their exclusive forms of governance become a highly contested subject both locally and globally: globally, because as seen in the wide literature about urban waterfront regeneration projects, the operations of renewal of old industrial areas or harbor areas are a phenomenon which occurs all around the world, having in common an entrepreneurial government body in the run of a competitive city vision; locally, because these waterfront urban regeneration projects come as a olistic approach regardless of geographic and cultural context of the city, harming its urban identity and sense of place, consequently creating irreversible social impacts, recently raised in the discussions based on social justice, participation and democracy within property governance forms.¹

Urban waterfront regeneration started in North America in the 1960s, notably with the economic success of Baltimore, Boston and San Francisco, spread to European port cities with the case of London - in the 1970s and 1980s and along with the millennial turn became a well-known global phenomenon that varied highly

1. Cfr Boston Redevelopment Authority, *Rehabilitation Reuse Feasibility: Downtown Waterfront-Faneuil Hall Project*, Boston, 2010, parcel c-2

culturally and spatially. Therefore, since then, several waterfronts have been under regeneration process from brown fields or green belts to commercial, residential and cultural areas.

The attractiveness of the idea of regenerating the waterfront is given by becoming a tool of economical boost in the late-twentieth-century along with the marketing strategies for the city's new image.

As cities start to compete for investment and affluent residents, urban governance is defined by more flexible, fragmented and entrepreneurial forms of governance.

This approach, represented by public-private partnerships and consumption-oriented projects such as cultural, residential, offices and tourism centers, is often well exemplified through urban waterfront regeneration projects.

The first well known urban waterfront regeneration project, Baltimore Inner Harbor regeneration, has served as a successful prototype for many entrepreneurial governments around the world. Nowadays, almost every city at water's edge is engaged in regeneration projects with strong political urges and interests from various parties: authorities, developers and communities.

Contemporary urban waterfront regeneration projects represent an international undertaking in urban planning and politics. Besides local actors, other international organizations are involved as well. Some examples are: *Association Internationale Villes et Ports* [AIPV], Waterfront Communities Project, EU (WaRe *Waterfront Regeneration project*), but also international private companies providing consultancy and management services (International

Waterfront Consultants [IWC]).

An important issue in any urban waterfront regeneration project is its social dimension and the involvement of communities to improve their quality of life. The main element of criticism in these projects is the ignorance towards the socially unstable sceneries in which they occur. Former blue-collar worker- neighbourhoods, affected by the process of deindustrialization in the new global economy represent the socially and economically controversial interface left heritage between the former harbor or industrial areas and the broader urban environment.²

Therefore, urban waterfront regeneration challenges not only with the multiplicity of actors: from government representatives within territorial administration, private investors to international and local organizations representing environmental sensibilities, but also with the adjacency to a large pool of neighbourhoods characterized by unemployment and poverty.

For this reason, many scholars raised against urban waterfront regeneration projects, highly skeptical on their scope and outcomes. They have shared beliefs that these projects are not addressing the underlying, deep-rooted problems of the cities and contributing to the escalation of inequality, polarization, and deprivation within an urban area.

Often in achieving urban waterfront regeneration, legislative changes are made by local, regional and national authorities to enable, regulate and stimulate these projects and such examples are the redevelopment of London's Docks and the Coastal Zone Management Act in the USA.

2. Cfr J. Casazza, E. Smart, D.M. Wrenn, *Urban waterfront development*, Urban Land Institute, 1983, p 13

In 1980's a shift in perception of these waterfront regeneration projects has drawn attention to the influence of communities as an agent of this change and in 1990s it was clear that defined community groups were influencing the process of change in waterfront regeneration projects.

Urban social movements formalized as community groups or non-governmental organizations, coming often from the neighbouring communities and together with international forces became more influential in regeneration projects, being a source of ideas and influencing the rate and pattern of development. They encourage, restrain, warn and provide qualitative overviews for future urban waterfront regeneration agendas.

Therefore in recent waterfront regeneration case studies there is a clear focus on the governance forms, citizens' participation and politics.

It is clear that the success of urban waterfront regeneration requires profound understanding of universal processes and an appreciation of the distinctiveness of the place location and environments.

For a better understanding of the governance forms influencing urban waterfront regeneration projects, a critical overview of case studies from North-American and European cities (Baltimore, New York, London, Hamburg, Berlin) is proposed; some of them that have served also as examples for this type of interventions around the world.

4.2.1 Inner Harbor, Baltimore

In the opinion of the American Institute of Architects (AIA), Baltimore's Inner Harbor is "one of the supreme achievements of large-scale urban design and development in U.S. history", "justly celebrated [...] a model for cities throughout North America and, indeed, the world"³.

Since 1980's the city of Baltimore, located in the state of Maryland, is known as the first example of urban waterfront regeneration project and it has been promoted around the world due to its success for Inner Harbor regeneration project. It was presented by urban policy-makers as a model of how declining industrial US cities could be regenerated on the basis of advanced services, tourist attractions and downtown redevelopment.

Baltimore Inner Harbor was a commercial and passenger harbor until the 1970s when due to the economic crisis, industrial decline and the change in cargo functions, the use was replaced by grass-covered parkland.

The urban waterfront regeneration of the Inner Harbor, which lasted 20 years, was in the mind of local government since 1964, but it was implemented in 1971 when Mayor William Donald Schaefer with strong relations with the city's business communities came into power. Therefore as catalysts of this project there are the upper middle class gentrifies and an entrepreneurial local government representative.

The aim was "strengthening connections between the waterfront and the business district, to preserve and enhance the public spaces, to create additional gateways to the waterfront and to ensure traffic flow and parking options" and the outcome was a mass of

3. M. L. Millspaugh, *The Inner Harbor Story*, in *Issue of Urban Land*, 2003, 1, p 36

high-profile attractions including the World Trade Center, Baltimore Convention Center, the National Aquarium, James Rouse's Harbor place (a festival marketplace) and the Hyatt Regency Baltimore hotel.⁴

In terms of management, Millspaugh evaluated the semi-public agency linked to municipal government: Inner Harbor Management Inc that evolved to Market Centre Development Corporation and finally to Baltimore Economic Development Corporation as responsible for success of Inner Harbour waterfront regeneration project. Also in addition to Baltimore Economic Development Corporation, a steering committee called Greater Baltimore Committee was created by the local government officers and the chief executive officers of the city's 100 largest businesses.

The construction of all the projects provided significant public subsidies, but Greater Baltimore Committee had operated as a private organization because it denied any form of public access to any of the records and meetings.

Behind the economical gain promised by business leaders, there have been serious social problems caused by the project and it was argued that this development had exacerbated urban dualism by creating uneven patterns of local economical growth: on the one hand, business leaders and upper class and on the other hand, the struggling working class. The promised net job growth was absorbed by the suburban residents rather than the low-income groups. Also the economical development brought by tourism, left the existing working class population to face increase of living cost and pressure of massive gentrification.

4. M. L. Millspaugh, *The Inner Harbor Story*, in *Issue of Urban Land*, 2003, 1, p 41

Peter L. Szanton evaluated Baltimore, from the prism of Inner Harbor urban waterfront regeneration project, to be a “double-donut city”: a downtown, containing a business, cultural and entertainment center, and housing for the well-to-do, surrounded by a ring of decaying poor black neighborhoods, further surrounded by affluent white suburbs.⁵

Same critiques point to the urban waterfront regeneration of Baltimore as not creating a spill-over effect for social, economical and physical regeneration of low-income neighbourhoods.

Levine suggests equity in planning, democratized redevelopment agenda process that target residents in greatest need and policies that better link this regeneration to neighbourhood’s economic needs.⁶

Harvey concludes the story of Baltimore as “an island of affluence and power in the midst of a sea of impoverishment, disempowerment, and decay”.⁷

In a context where a large segment of society perceives legitimate dominance of private sector in urban policy formation, compared to Europe, there was not a powerful base of urban social movements or other opposition against the project.⁸

5. Cfr P. L. Szanton, *Baltimore 2000: A Choice of Futures Report to the Morris Goldseker Foundation*, Baltimore, 1986, The Foundation

6. Cfr M.V. Levine, *Response to Berkowitz: Economic Development in Baltimore: Some Additional Perspectives*, in *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 1987, 9, pp 133-138

7. D. Harvey, *From managerialism to entrepreneurialism: The transformation in urban governance in latecapitalism*, in *Geografiska Annaler*, 1989, 71B, p 21

8. S. Geambazu, *Dimensions of urban waterfront regeneration: Case Study of Halic/The Golden Horn*, Urban Management Master Studies, Technische Universität Berlin a.a.2012/2013, supervisors proff. Elkut and Misserwitz



<Figure 2. A render representation of the new project, Ayers Saint Gross, 2013 (source asg-architects.com/portfolio/innerharbor2)



<Figure 3. Plan representation of the new project, Ayers Saint Gross, 2013 (source asg-architects.com/portfolio/innerharbor2)

4.2.2 Battery Park, New York

Battery Park has a history of 200 years, being the world's immigrant depot welcoming millions of newcomers arrived from Europe.

Battery Park City is an 93 acres landfill waterfront urban waterfront regeneration project, adjacent to the World Trade Center in lower Manhattan, New York, being one of the major urban development projects in North America and known as the transformation of the Hudson River's waterfront from a derelict area into a symbol of global capital, serving as example for many policy makers in post-industrial cities.

Nowadays Battery Park City host private residential areas, offices and moreover it is visited by tourists because of its parks, open spaces and public programs.

The catalyst for this project was the State of New York which established in 1968 the Battery Park City Authority (BPCA) having great power over decision-making and which Gordon classifies as taking the role of the city authority, pointing to the great power over the planning process and the top-down character of the development.

A direct coalition between business, local government and other institutions was not encouraged, but rather the implementation was made by this semi-independent public development agency. The whole development was managed by a globalised developer (Olympia and York) and was commissioned by local and central government, which supported and offered public subsidies for the project.⁹

The integration of private interests was made through collective

9. Cfr. D.L.A.Gordon, *Battery Park City: politics and planning on the New York waterfront*, Amsterdam, 1997, Gordon and Breach

organizations like the Downtown Lower Manhattan Association.

Initially, the urban regeneration project under New York State Governor Nelson Rockefeller had a natural social focus comprising public spaces along waterfront, private, but also subsidized housing. These plans received positive feedback from the media and civil society. Unfortunately, the New York City's 1976 financial crisis led to a shift in plans towards private capital orientated strategy. This new approach was only a physical redevelopment and involved little community participation, focusing on market imperatives. Being the major development project in North America at its time, due to its neoliberal orientation was representative for the global shift in urban development practices in the last 30 years.

Therefore, while regenerating Battery Park, two master plans were approved: the final one in 1979, designed by Alexander Cooper and Stanton Eckstut forgot the socially inclusive parts of the early 1970s, not involving local community participation, providing no low-income housing for the true needs of the citizens and focusing on creating a suitable business environment. The development agency, Battery Park City Authority (BPCA) took the place of City Authority in controlling public space and regulating individual projects.

The construction started in 1980 and included World Financial Centre office complex and some private residential towers and today it is still in ongoing process of development with rising luxury buildings.

Early stage groups that mobilized against the project were construction unions and affordable housing advocates.

Gordon revealed that the BPCA considered again adding affordable housing in the 1980s, but an agreement was made to direct the funds to restoration and provision of houses in the minority neighbourhoods.¹⁰

Still, due to the protests of the citizens, the project was shaped in terms of public space. Therefore, The Battery Park City Authority was forced to redesign two major parks and also reserved the whole water's edge for public use. Both Gordon and Mayer appreciate the project for the high quality of the public space and indicate it as a model for other examples around the world that want to reconnect the city with its waterfront.¹¹

10. *Interview with Meyer S. Frucher, former President BPCA and Senior VP Olympia and York, 10 June 1992 in D.L.A. Gordon, Battery Park City: politics and planning on the New York waterfront, Amsterdam, 1997, Gordon and Breach, p 201*

11. S. Geambazu, *Dimensions of urban waterfront regeneration: Case Study of Halic/The Golden Horn*, Urban Management Master Studies, Technische Universität Berlin a.a.2012/2013, supervisors proff. Elkut and Misserwitz



<Figure 4. View of the park and the context (source thebattery.org)



<Figure 5. View of the promenade (source travel-channel.it)

4.2.3 Docklands, London

London Docklands Regeneration Project comprises 2347 ha site and is considered one of the world's largest urban regeneration projects. Docklands combines three places brought together: the Isle of Dogs, Surrey Quays and the Royals. It starts from the city center to its east end where the poorest part of the metropolis used to live.

The motivation for this regeneration was the technological change in the shipping industry which forced the closure of the massive docks in the 1960s and 1970s, working as transportation node of industrial and commercial activities until 1950s. This left a mass of unemployed workers in the adjacent communities, but the project did not respond to this problem, rather being a case of regeneration as gentrification.

As an outcome, publicly owned land was redeveloped for the purpose of private investors creating residential, commercial and office buildings, huge towers emerging and other consumption-based activities.

Public funding was used for the provision of the necessary infrastructure.

The central government had a plan to regenerate the area since the late 1970s, but all planning initiatives suffered political controversies and implementation problems.

In 1976 London Strategic Plan was declared. In the late 1980s, the project was affected by the recession in the property market. Due to the supply side of the policies and the lack of demand these kind of large urban regeneration projects fail.¹²

The central government had a big role in catalyzing and gover-

12. Cfr *Campaign against the LDDC - statement document*

ning the urban waterfront regeneration project. On 2nd July 1981 Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government established the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) with power to overrule local planning authority and a mandate to stimulate private investment. Still approvals were needed in both the House of Commons and the House of Lords. Local boroughs tried to prevent the urban waterfront project without any result.

The strong involvement of private sector was in its board membership which made it adopt developer- friendly planning approaches. The corporation had great power to purchase and use urban public land from Greater London Council (GLC), Boroughs and Port of London Authority.

In conclusion this corporation was created as a mechanism to re-structure State's power in order to use urban planning tools in an exceptional manner and bypass bureaucratic impediments.

This was possible also because the local governments had no financial means to do the regeneration themselves and because they were highly dependent to the central government.

A campaign against the LDDC was created with the role of informing and giving instructions to the citizens of how could they fight together.¹³

With the new viability of the project, interest-groups competed for larger shares of benefits: non-financial and symbolic. Still the major debates were focused on: affordable housing, employment and public access.

The central government militated for private housing, but the Labor boroughs and GLC demanded more council housing.

13. H. Hinsley and P. Malone, *London Planning and Design in Docklands*, in P. Malone, *City Capital and Water*, London, 1996, Routledge

Opposition faced was first with the harbor agencies, expropriated by a higher level of government, followed by the ignored workers community on the site who wanted gains like affordable housing, employment and public access, several of these requirements being embraced by other society groups.

The regeneration of London Docklands was the counter example of waterfront regeneration, in which planning and design intentions were over passed by concerns of capital¹⁴. Much criticized in the literature, the case of London Docklands did not respond to the problems of the neighbouring communities, rather being a case of regeneration with effects of gentrification by promoting displacement and inward migration. This indicates that London Docklands failed to achieve its development objectives both physically and socially.¹⁵

14. H. Hinsley and P. Malone, *London Planning and Design in Docklands*, in P. Malone, *City Capital and Water*, London, 1996, Routledge

15. S. Geambazu, *Dimensions of urban waterfront regeneration: Case Study of Halic/The Golden Horn*, Urban Management Master Studies, Technische Universität Berlin a.a. 2012/2013, supervisors proff. Elkut and Misserwitz



^ Figure 6. View from the masterplan for the Royal Albert Dock (source londonroyaldocks.com)

4.2.4 Hafen City, Hamburg

The urban waterfront regeneration project Hafen City is located in the north-German port city Hamburg and is the largest urban waterfront regeneration project ongoing in Europe which brings also pressure on its management and success.

The project comprises 157 ha and it aims to be finished in 2025, resulting in expansion of Hamburg with 40%. Currently two of the neighbourhoods are finished and there are 1,500 people already living in HafenCity and around 6,000 people working.

As in many other port post-industrial cities, with the technological revolution of the freight container the place was closed in 1956. The Senate aimed to create a new city since 1987, the HafenCity ("the Port City"), but this did not come into action until 2000 when along with the goals of creating a more resilient city to the flood and also bringing people to the water side, the project came back to live.¹⁶

Initially this transformation created huge conflict between two parties, because in order to be developed it had to be taken out of the port administration and put under control of city urban planning department.

In 1997, the mayor declared "a return of the city to the river Elbe" and a new municipal law was created placing the former harbor into a special trust fund: "Harbor and City". In 1999 internationals were welcomed to put their print to the project through a workshop which served as a base for the master plan made by the city planning department.

This was followed by selling individual building lots to developers and architects with limited additional urban design competitions.

16. Cfr M. Grubbauer, *Architecture and the creation of place specificity in urban development projects: the case of Hamburg's HafenCity*, in *International RC21 conference*, 2011, 12, pp 1-11.

For Hamburg, this project is a masterpiece in creating the city in line with the new paradigms in planning, as declared on the promoting web-site: "Hafen City is more than a major real estate project in which the individual undertakings need to be realized as quickly and efficiently as possible – rather, within the context of a new definition of a city for the 21st century, the end product should be of exemplary urban quality".¹⁷

For the purpose of managing the development of HafenCity, a port location development company was created and known since 2004 by the name of HafenCity Hamburg GmbH. It is responsible for administration of the new city and the port fund under the public law with power over the land, finance, real estate developers and public relations and communication. The board of HafenCity Hamburg GmbH is chaired by the mayor and other members of the senate.

Other actors who have power in decision are the Land Commission with the task of approving the land purchases, the Commission of Urban Development with the right of approving the zoning plans, Juries for the urban planning and open spaces within the project which are representatives from the Ministry of Urban Development and Environment, the District Council, HafenCity Hamburg GmbH, several politicians as well as private developers (33 investors) and independent architects.

Along with all these actors academia represented by HafenCity University plays a big role providing research.

Concerning civil societies participation and engagement, we are confronted with a strong marketing along with a lot of sources for

17. www.hafencity.com

information: the webpage, the information center in Kesselhaus created in 2000, expositions and tours made in 2009, several publications regarding the project, a community forum named NetzwerkHafenCity club and 40 events for the redefinition of the Masterplan.

Although the project is transparent in information and a wide range of citizens are involved and considered as providing feedback for the developers, it lacks the extent in which civil society would have any decision making power over the project.

It is in the cities tradition to have protest movements against the ambitious changes that the local government wants to make and this has also touched the HafenCity project, being criticized because of the high income housing developed and a future promised gentrification.

The officials, however, declare that this criticism is not valid: "HafenCity is separated by the Speicherstadt from other inner-city residential quarters and, because they are subsidized, homes close to HafenCity are better protected against increasing rents than old buildings in other innercity locations."¹⁸

Still, valid critiques raised according to the socially exclusiveness of this urban waterfront regeneration project, the transfer of revenues to refinance the new port infrastructure instead of investing in socially depressed areas, the investment in the Elbphilharmonie, aiming to be an icon of the new city image.¹⁹

This case reveals a long strategic thinking, early public discussions and complex governance forms involving a wide range of stakeholders from high levels of government to district councils, pri-

18. www.hafencity.com

19. Cfr M. Grubbauer, *Architecture and the creation of place specificity in urban development projects: the case of Hamburg's HafenCity*, in *International RC21 conference*, 2011, 12, pp 1-11

vate investors, professionals, academia and civil society. Still there is no true empowerment of citizens in decision making process which reflects on the critique raised around the project.²⁰



<Figure 7. View of the area
(source hafencity.com)



<Figure 8. View of the promenade
(source kcap.eu)

20. S. Geambazu, *Dimensions of urban waterfront regeneration: Case Study of Halic/The Golden Horn*, Urban Management Master Studies, Technische Universität Berlin a.a.2012/2013, supervisors proff. Elkut and Misserwitz

4.2.5 Mediaspree, Berlin

This case relates to Habermas concept of reasoning in line with “making sense together while living differently”,²¹ as an urban social movement representing citizens’ right to the city and waterfront stopped the urban waterfront regeneration project, Mediaspree.

Mediaspree is a case of urban waterfront regeneration program in the eastern downtown of Berlin with 180 hectare covering the river Spree’s both side along approximately 3.7km.

The district Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg covering the largest part of the “Mediaspree” urban waterfront regeneration project, has become one of the most scenic areas in town since 2000s providing the perfect image of uncertainty and freedom of the postmodern society with a chain of different clubs like Berghain, Watergate, but also squatters and many other nonconformist creative initiatives which made the area a hotspot for Berlin.

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, this area was occupied by industry while after the WWII it was blessed with a large scale of empty plots, which subsequent demolition of the Berlin wall has made them vulnerable or opportune for regeneration.

The former dividing line of the wall marks now a perceived barrier in the governance forms around this urban waterfront regeneration project, the economic and social tensions in the pressure between new and established residents, private investors, immigrant communities and the so called “creative class” who made the area their home.

In the case of Mediaspree, as mostly other urban waterfront regeneration projects, the government itself attracted the private

21. P. Healey, *Collaborative planning- Shaping Places in Fragmented Societies*, New York, 2006, Palgrave Macmillan, p 147

investors, the international music enterprises like Universal and MTV to regenerate the waterfront, a typical case of public-private partnership between private investors, authorities and the local chamber of commerce.

In 2002 the Senate Department adopted the land-use plan in order to facilitate the renovation of old warehouses and development of empty properties to be used for offices, lofts, hotels and a new 17.000-seat multi-functional event arena completed in 2008. The purpose of the authorities was to induce economic development, focusing first on mainstream entertainment and the media industry, which would later attract further developments including businesses and luxury housing.²²

This produced fear and anger within the existing neighbourhoods following the principle of one man's economical gain is the other man's displacement.

The public-private partnership represented by Regional Management Mediaspree (originally, Mediaspree Berlin GmbH) had 21 members, including the Anschutz Entertainment Group, Behala (a dock and storage company), Berlin's waste management agency, Deutsche Post Property Development, GASAG, IVG Real Estate and TLG Real Estate.

Director Christian Meyer clarified the goal of this association: "We are doing a lot to promote this neighbourhood. We want to have attractive and young tenants who watch MTV and Viva!, and can be defined as sexy".²³

The large scale urban waterfront regeneration project is a prime example of a citizen's struggle against neoliberal development

22. Cfr J. Novy and C.Colomb, *Struggling for the Right to the (Creative) City in Berlin and Hamburg: New Urban Social Movements, New Spaces of Hope?*, in *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 2013, 37, pp 1816-1838

23. Sosin, 'Media Spree' on Berlin's river: swim next to offices, 2008, in <http://www.cafebabel.co.uk/article/media-spree-on-berlins-river-swim-next-to-offices.html>

and was highly criticized by many parties.

Kristien Ring, representative of the German architecture centre, declared skeptical: "This is just one of these fast developing areas in the very centre of Berlin, next to Alexanderplatz this area has an excellent geographical location. It should offer something interesting for inhabitants. Unfortunately, Media Spree is investor-oriented and won't leave any space for creativity."²⁴

The project addresses to the needs of international companies and their employees; it is a development driven by private interests and real-estate speculation, subsidized with public funds in a private-public partnership form of urban governance.

Although benefits such as jobs were expected for the neighbouring areas, at the same time there was an ignorance towards the actual needs of the local population and the specific characteristics of the area, replacing complex and rooted social structures and grassroots temporary developments with global newcomers within a top-down approach.²⁵

A chain event of welcoming new higher-income second-stage gentrifies threatening the stability of the existing neighbourhoods faced strong resistance movements and protests from 2008-2010.

In the end two urban social movements "AG Spreeufer" (Spree riverside) and "AG Spreepiratinnen" (Spree pirates) combined forces and collaborated in establishing citizen's initiative "Media-spreeVersenken", (Sink the Mediaspree) a web-page was created for informing citizens about the project, several protest marches were conducted.

24. Sosin, 'Media Spree' on Berlin's river: swim next to offices, 2008, in <http://www.cafebabel.co.uk/article/media-spree-on-berlins-river-swim-next-to-offices.html>

25. Cfr J. Novy and C. Colomb, *Struggling for the Right to the (Creative) City in Berlin and Hamburg: New Urban Social Movements, New Spaces of Hope?*, in *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 2013, 37, pp 1816-1838

A referendum was made in 2008 winning with 87% against the project (30.000 people). Ahfeldt points at the main driving reason to be along with the anticipated displacement pressure or increase in housing cost, the loss of specific cultural amenities.

Another initiative of the government was impossible to hope for majority. This event it is said to have led to the closure of Regional Management Mediaspree.

After the referendum, there was still no mutual understanding regarding the plans, but a big gain was the growing public awareness concerning urban waterfront regeneration projects, being clear that this kind of projects are not feasible nor serve the needs of the local inhabitants.

Through collaboration between urban social movements and other actors like academia and neighbourhood community an idea of democracy was reached through the referendum, reclaiming waterfront for all the citizen: "Spree fur alle!" (Spree for all) and giving voice also to the ones invariably excluded.

But maybe the most important lesson is that success in a legal and conciliatory approach to protest is reached when public movements are backing citizens' demands, creating pressure on the local government to act.²⁶

26. Cfr J. Novy and C.Colomb, *Struggling for the Right to the (Creative) City in Berlin and Hamburg: New Urban Social Movements, New Spaces of Hope?*, in *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 2013, 37, pp 1816-1838

4.2.6 Rheinuferpromenade, Dusseldorf

This is one of the most significant waterfront developed area in Germany, one of the most successful, vibrant waterfront transformations anywhere else in Europe.

The Promenade was designed in the banks of the Rhine, such as the districts known as Old town, Carlstadt and Unterbilk.

The Rhine was built in 1900 and at that time there were two levels, the lower used for handling of shipping traffic and the others facilities and the upper used as a Promenade. After second world war the entire promenade was transformed as a multilane highway which separate the Rhine with the inner city.

In 1990s this multilane highway, the most important north/south connection has been placed in 1928 meters underground tunnel. The cars are completely displaced from the area and the lower level, a former port area, and the parking area of 1000 car has now become a large open space for pedestrians, cyclists, skaters and streetperformers.

The design implemented the architect Niklaus Fritschi, B. Stahl and G. Baum.

They were inspired by the historical design of the architect John Radke from the year 1900. Thus, the separation into an upper and a lower ground yard has been maintained. On the Upper Yard was carried out the erection of 120 seats and the planting of 600 plane trees that line the avenue. This separates a walk and a bike path from each other. The remaining elements of the historic waterfront experience, such as the Pegeluhr or large terraces, have been incorporated into the plans.²⁷

In October 1997 the Rhine Promenade adds another attraction,

27. Cfr www.pps.org/reference/greatwaterfronts

The Rhine Bridge.

The areas along the Rhine promenade are now reserved primarily for pedestrians and cyclists.

North/south vehicular traffic runs in a tunnel to make car access very limited and restricted in the area. Many people nearby use the space, for example office workers and employees of nearby government buildings. The promenade itself is largely pedestrian, for the cyclists is on the upper yard parallel to the plane trees designated a cycle path and there is a subway/tram station nearby.

The lower level is entirely paved and used by skateboarders, inline skaters and cyclists. Several simple and temporary restaurants, beer bar, gardens with colorful awnings in front have been integrated into the flood wall (permanent structures are not allowed due to flooding). The upper level has two continuous rows of plane trees with benches in between. The southern stretch is wider and has a sloping lawn down to the river. The northern stretch is more urban and features a redesigned square (Burgplatz) with steps down to the river. This is the place where people congregate in summer, sitting on the steps and watching the ships on the river pass by.

Openair cinemas in summer, sunbathing, and occasional public events (markets, exhibitions, concerts).

Vibrant and active water front project, without doubt this is a meeting and celebration place, popular destination for visitors and locals' people.²⁸

28. S. Geambazu, *Dimensions of urban waterfront regeneration: Case Study of Halic/The Golden Horn*, Urban Management Master Studies, Technische Universität Berlin a.a.2012/2013, supervisors proff. Elkut and Misserwitz

Figure 9. View of the pro-
menade (source commons.
wikipedia.org)



Figure 10. View of the pro-
menade and the rest areas
(source wikiwand.org)



4.2.7 Circular Quay, Sydney

Circular Quay is one of the most famous waterfront area and a national focal point.

It is the transport hub of Sydney Harbor, gradually built up at the side of Sydney Cove: it was originally used for shipping and slowly developed into a transport, leisure and recreational centre.

Circular Quay was originally known as "Semicircular Quay", this being the actual shape of the quay. The name was shortened for convenience. The railway station was opened on the 20th January 1956 and the elevated Cahill expressway was opened on the 14th March 1958.

Nowadays it represents a focal point for many community celebrations, for both its historic significance as the birthplace of the Australian nation, and for its closeness to the Sydney icons such as the Sydney Opera House and the Sydney Harbor Bridge. It is one of the main celebration points for the New Year's Eve and Australia Day fireworks displays.

Circular Quay is also the home of Sydney's Museum of Contemporary Art and soon the City Library, in the historic Customs House. It is a public space connecting transit, pedestrian and civic elements.

It represents a major Sydney transport hub, with a large ferry, rail and bus interchange. The Cahill Expressway is a prominent feature of the quay, running from the east, over the elevated railway station to join the Sydney Harbor Bridge in the west. It is located on the northern edge of the Sydney central business district on Sydney Cove, between Bennelong Point and The Rocks.

A majority of downtown commuters live across Sydney Bay and

use ferries to travel to work. With its aesthetic, practical and efficient qualities, the Quay functions as an effective transition space between the docks and the downtown.

Circular Quay is made up of walkways, pedestrian malls, parks and restaurants. Both locals and tourists alike delight in the comfortable and well-maintained space that the Quay provides. Small cafes and restaurants serve light lunches to office workers, who also make use of the benches and walls situated along the Quay. Tourists and families are attracted by spectacular views and details of landscape. On the east side of it there are many restaurants and stylish boutiques, along with the large Dendy Cinema. On the western side there is the famous Rocks area with a number of quaint shopping arcades and pretty restaurants. Under white canvas sail canopies, more than 150 stalls set up for hawking everything from food to jewelry to souvenirs, to indigenous arts and crafts.²⁹

One of the most popular tourist destinations, used as a recreation and commercial space, this is the place for New Year celebration and street performers. Whether people are walking the Bay, waiting for a hotdog, or shopping from pedestrian mall, they share the experience with people next to them and feel connected to them, as well as to people who have shared the experience before. While direct interaction between strangers is common, for the most part people enjoy watching view and others, being watched and merely participating in the vital social life.³⁰

29. Cfr www.theurbandeveloper.com/10-major-projects-reinvigorating-sydneys-cbd/

30.S. Geambazu, *Dimensions of urban waterfront regeneration: Case Study of Halic/The Golden Horn*, Urban Management Master Studies, Technische Universität Berlin a.a.2012/2013, supervisors proff. Elkut and Misserwitz



<Figure 11. View of the area
(source sidney.au)



<Figure 12. View of the pro-
menade (source pinterest.
com)

4.2.8 Ribeira District, Porto

Ribeira means in Portuguese “Minor River” or a river with little flow of water. It is also a place where the city was born and developed due to trade in the river mouth.

This is the historical district of Ribeira, part of the São Nicolau parish. It is located alongside the Douro River, and used to be a centre of intense commercial and manufacturing activity since Middle Age. The alluring district of Ribeira is made up of medieval streets and sleazy alleyways. It is a collapse but fascinating place, ending at a riverfront square (“Praça da Ribeira”).

Ribeira is now a tourist area with many bars, touristy restaurants and terraces, particularly in its main square, Praça da Ribeira. It is the site of different kind of shops like fish, bread, meat and other goods. The area gained a pavement made of spatial stone slabs.

In the mid of the 18th century the city needed new urban improvements to provide for the swift flow of goods and people between the Ribeira neighborhood and other areas of Porto. There was a square enclosed on its north, west and east sides by buildings with arcades, and south side of the square it was enclosed by the mediaeval walls of Porto. These walls were turned down and opened the square to the river.

Nowadays the Ribeira Square is one of the most favourite waterfront spot for tourists and neighbors. This waterfront place is simple, compact and attractive and has the flexibility to support a wide variety of activities.

Most of the public area has been redesigned with contemporary materials and recreation and leisure amenities. The new design features are very attractive, functional, and in no way affected,

serving as a sort of flexible platform for activities and supporting a range of gathering options for groups. Children play, pub and cafes, elderly friends talk and leisurely walk. Automobiles pass through on a narrow channel with a low curb, so that drivers move through the space with less priority than pedestrians.³¹

31. Cfr www.gooporto.com/porto-sights/ribeira.html

4.2.9 People's Park, Copenhagen

It is a harbor front area in central Copenhagen, Denmark, located on the north/western coast of Amager. The neighborhood is noted for its waterfront park.

Located in a former dockland area, the park has retained a number of features from the zone's industrial past, including unused railway tracks and an abandoned railway car used as an exhibition space, while an old ship hull turned upside down serves as an idiosyncratic bandstand and pavilion. The park is also the location of the Islands Brygge Cultural Centre and the Islands Brygge Harbor Bath.

This simple and authentic park has grown organically with new activities and amenities with users need. It is one of the most popular places in Copenhagen to enjoy good weather and the quay-side serves as an esplanade popular with strollers. Apart from swimming at the harbor bath, the park also contains facilities for a number of other sports. These include facilities for skateboarding and street basket as well as beach volley and a playground. The park is also home to many open air concerts, either performed at the bandstand or a variety of other locations.

In the city most of high design waterfront is virtually empty of active public destinations, this small, recent addition stands in total contrast. For its success six more are going to be developed in the near future.³²

32. Cfr nextcity.org/features/view/copenhagen-park-design-includes-dark-corners



<Figure 13. View of the playground (source architecturenor.co.nz)



<Figure 14. View of the playground (source nextcity.com)

4.2.10 Aker Brygge, Oslo

It is a former industrial zone converted into a vibrant waterfront district.

The wide promenade of Aker Brygge runs lined with cafes, restaurant, Festival Square and cruise boats. For winter use there are interior walkways, protected pockets, attractive indoor space and a plaza within the project is animated with outdoors cafes in good weather. Major roadway in a tunnel about 7 kilometers running beneath the site and the adjoining city hall plaza.

This tunneling feature made entire area a car free zone. There is a pedestrian link with the prominent districts.

Most of the buildings have shops on the first level, office space at the intermediate level and apartments on the top with spectacular views of the harbor. A parking garage runs beneath the project and has 1600 spaces.

This area is visually unified, its buildings are different in color and scale. For the public, the streetscape is free-flowing and inviting; the space has a feeling of intimacy and there are numerous passageways through and between buildings.

A view of Oslo bays never far away, and along the quay a handsome forty-footwide walkway steps down to the water.

Aker Brygge (the Aker River) is now a vibrant and densely packed new district: by adaptive reuse all industrial buildings were converted into highend boutiques and that kind of stuff. Its public promenade is one of the best used public spaces anywhere, an area for strolling that has become the focal point of the harbor and the entire city of Oslo.³³

33. Cfr www.archilovers.com/projects/126146/the-water-front-promenade.html



<Figure 15. Plan of the intervention (source spolar-chitects.com)



<Figure 16. View of the riverfront (source visitoslo.com)

05

Survey and schemes

In this chapter there is a collection of schemes and representations derived both from a direct survey of the project area and from a research in the city archives.

Through this kind of investigation it was possible to notice the physical features of the neighborhood, such as the hierarchy of the road system, with the linear services of connection and light mobility, the position of the local facilities, especially related to education and health, and the conformation of the urban tissue in blocks with peculiar shape and inner organization as for the *conventillos*.

Thanks to the historical cartography and photographs stocked in the archives, in particular in the one belonging to the *Sociedad Central de los Arquitectos*, there was the chance to redraw the development of the area with the spread of the constructed land throughout the centuries and the modification of the riverbanks of *Riachuelo*, showing how the use of the space changed according to the needs related to the function given to the different blocks and to the deployment of surface and water for manufacturies producing and transporting goods to all Latin America, expressed through the extension of the water borders to accomplish the expansion of the harbor and the deposit areas.

This way of showing the results of the investigative work is immediate and intuitive and for that reason it is a very useful starting point for the conception of the project proposal, allowing to identify the lacks and the positive aspects to improve, making easy to individuate the zones on which it is crucial to intervene.

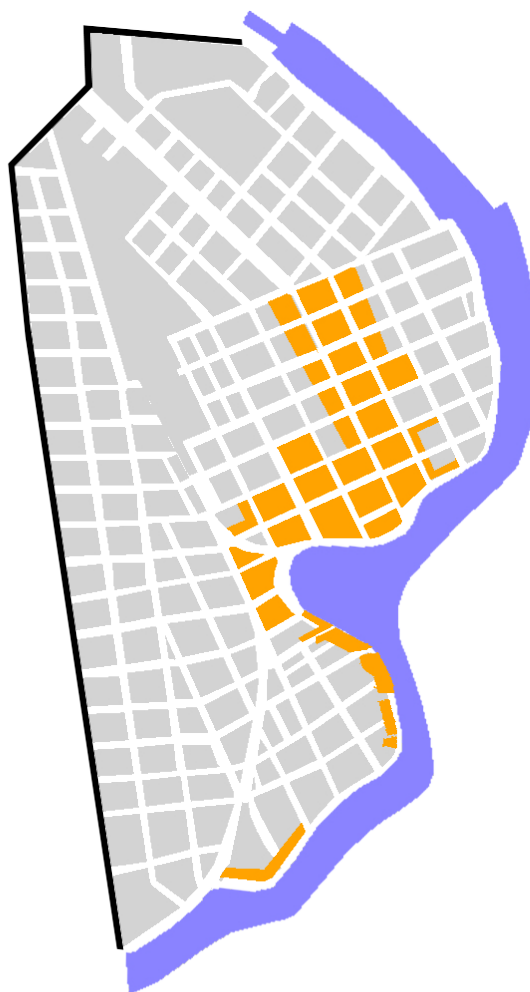
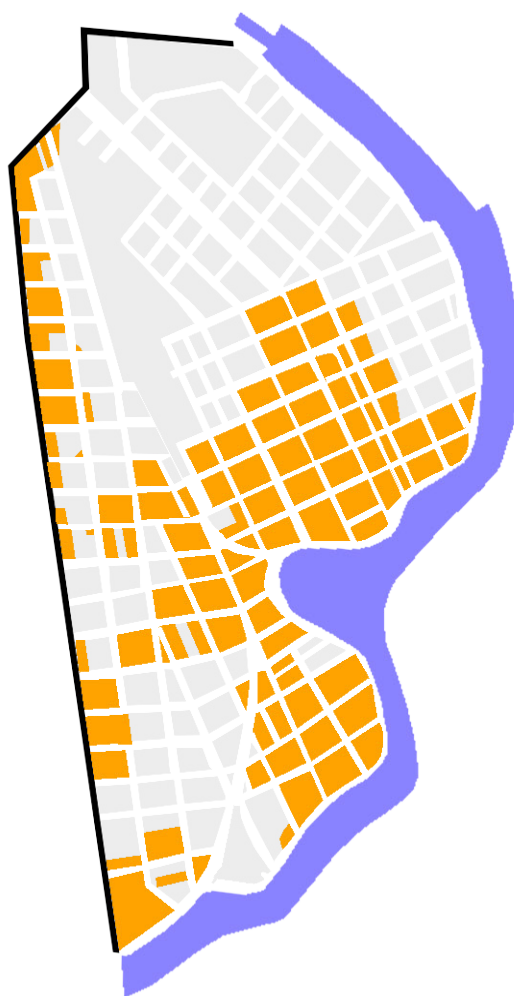


Figure 1. Scheme representing the first settlements of the neighborhood in 1867 (processed by the author)



^ Figure 2. Scheme representing the settlements of the neighborhood in 1895 (processed by the author)

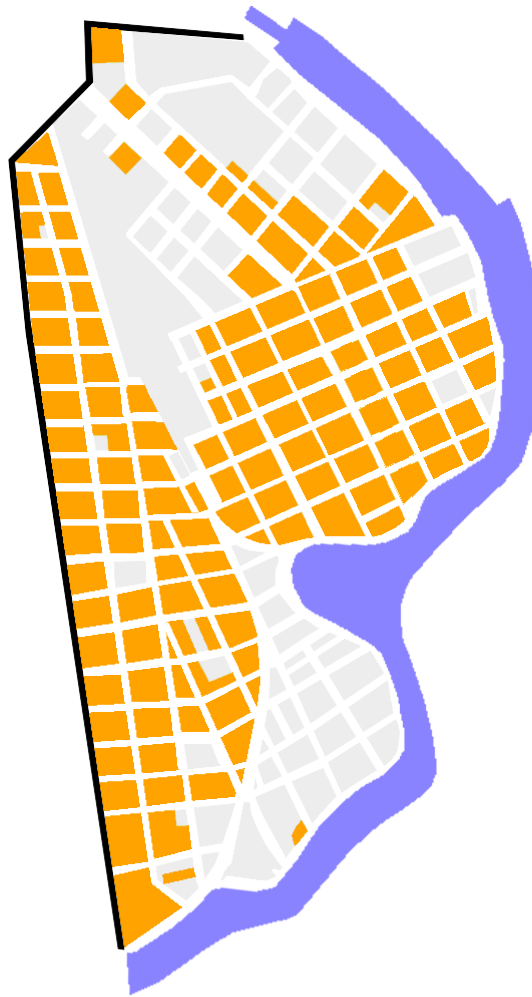
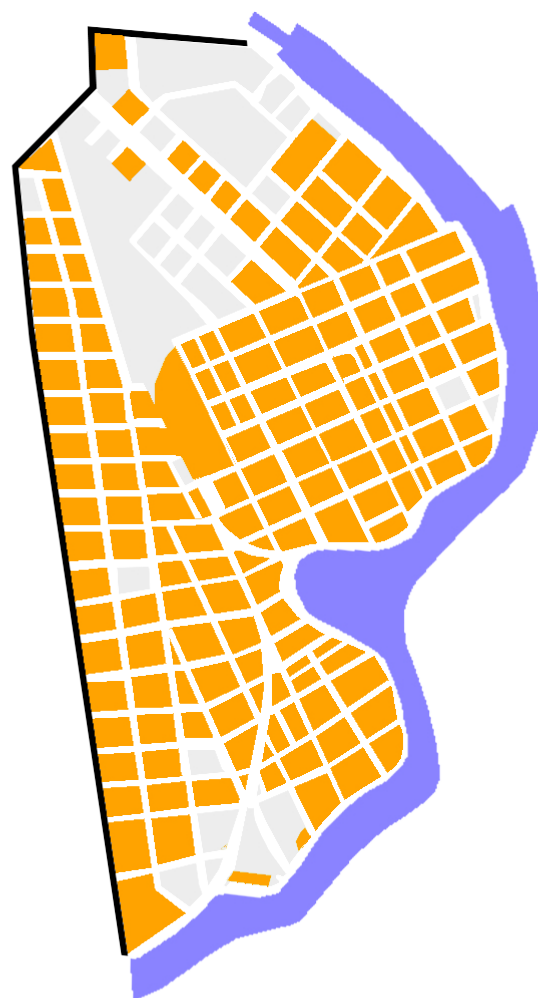
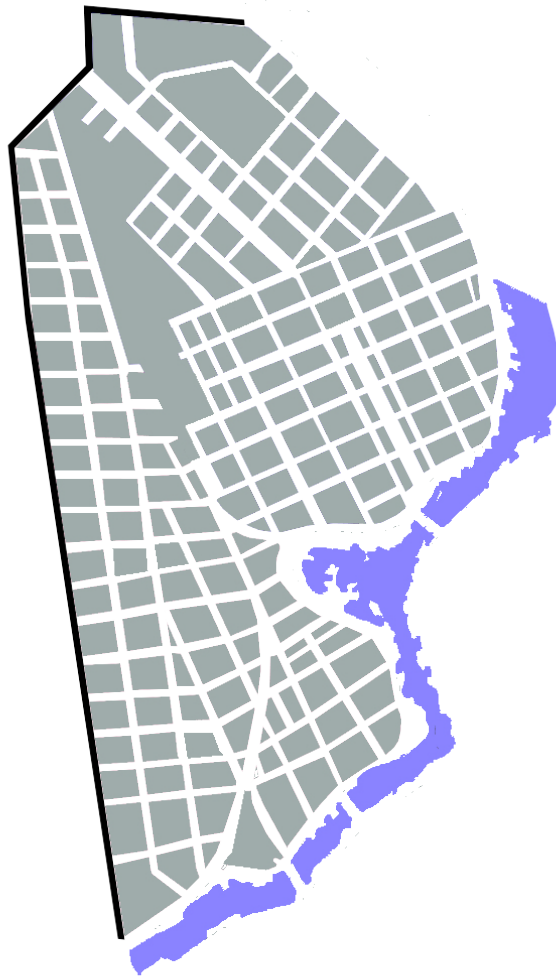


Figure 3. Scheme representing the settlements of the neighborhood in 1916(processed by the author)



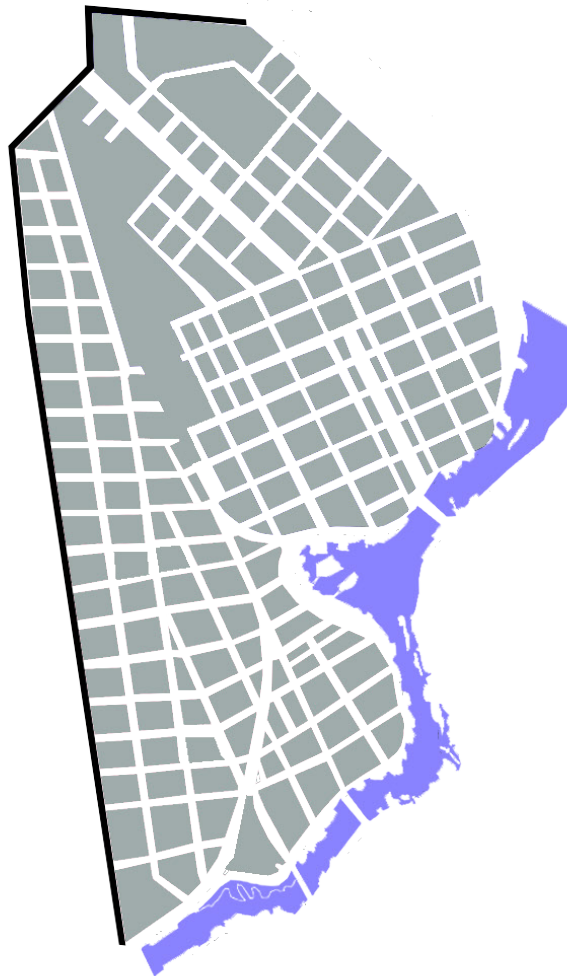
^ Figure 4. Scheme representing the settlements of the neighborhood in 1942 (processed by the author)



Edgewood

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Figure 5. Scheme representing the riverfront in 1929 (processed by the author)



^ Figure 6. Scheme representing the riverfront in 1940 (processed by the author)

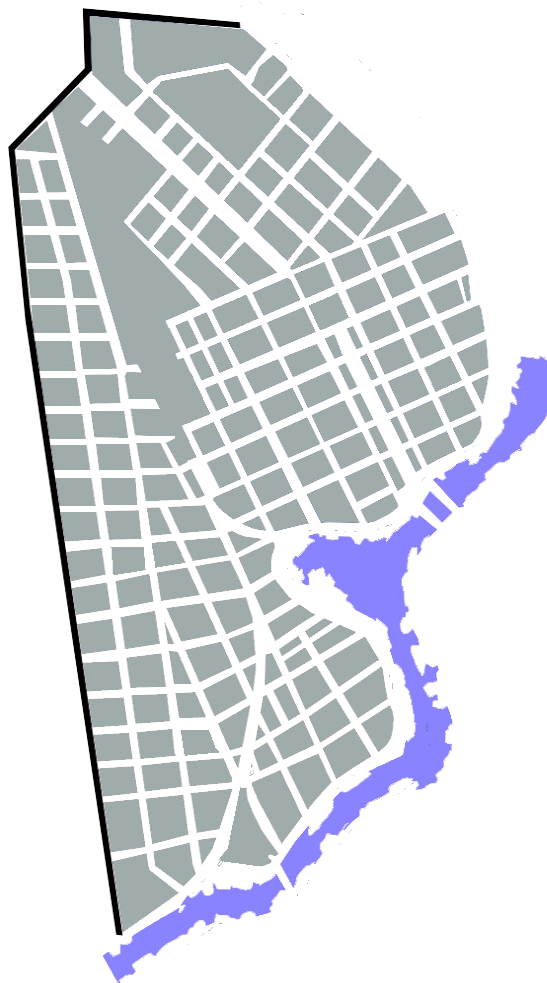
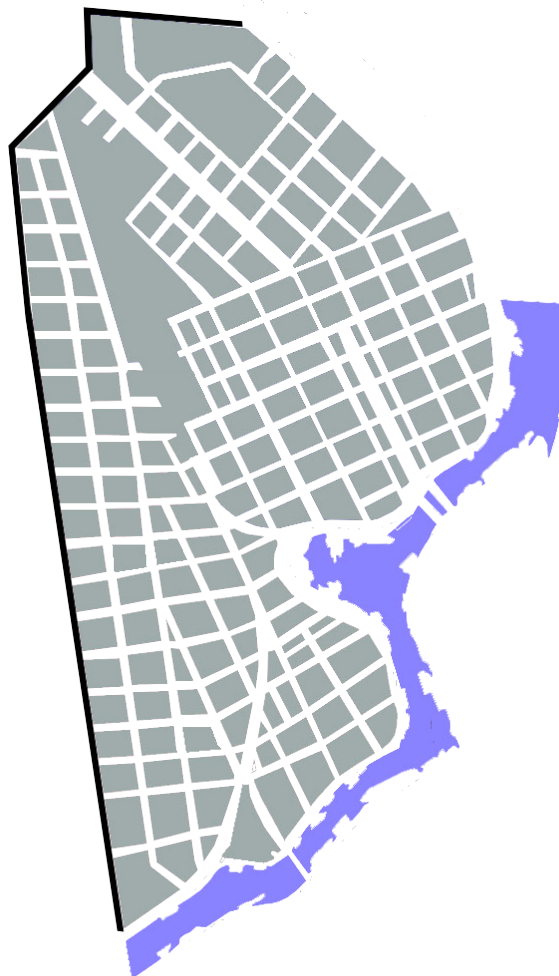


Figure 7. Scheme representing the riverfront in 1965 (processed by the author)



Waterway

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^ Figure 8. Scheme representing the riverfront in 1989 (processed by the author)

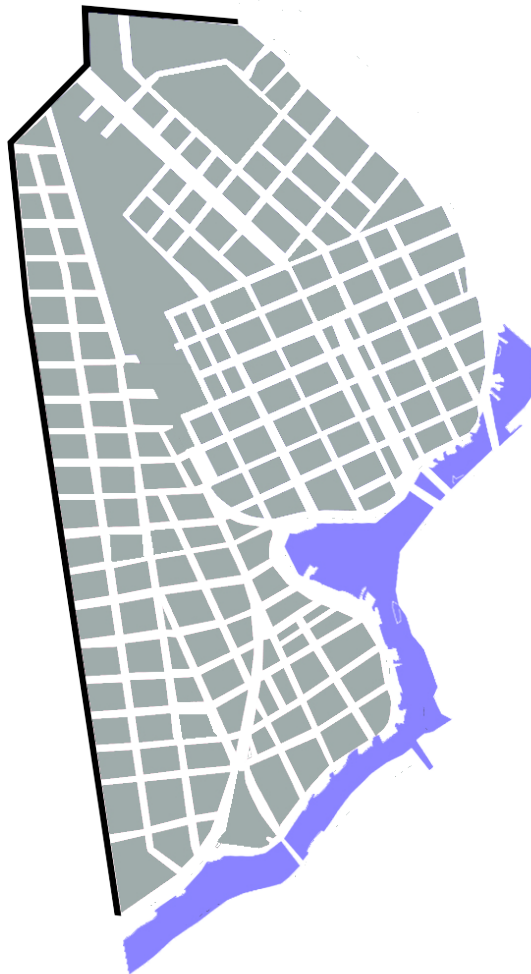
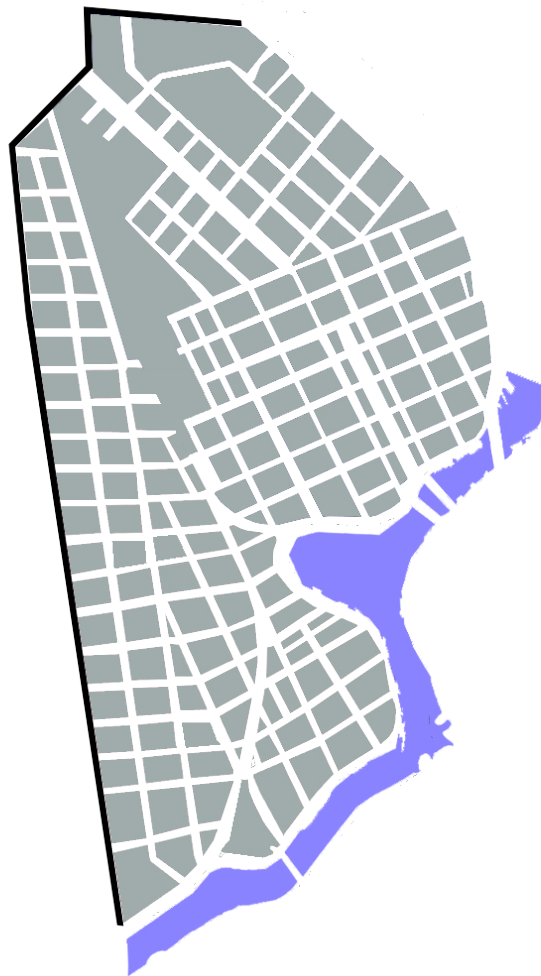


Figure 9. Scheme representing the riverfront in 2004 (processed by the author)



^ Figure 10. Scheme representing the riverfront in 2009 (processed by the author)

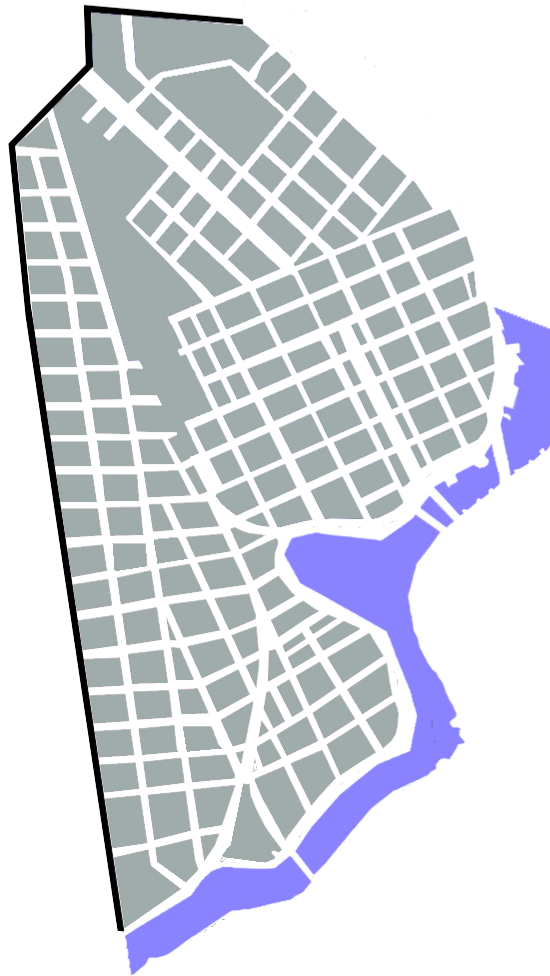
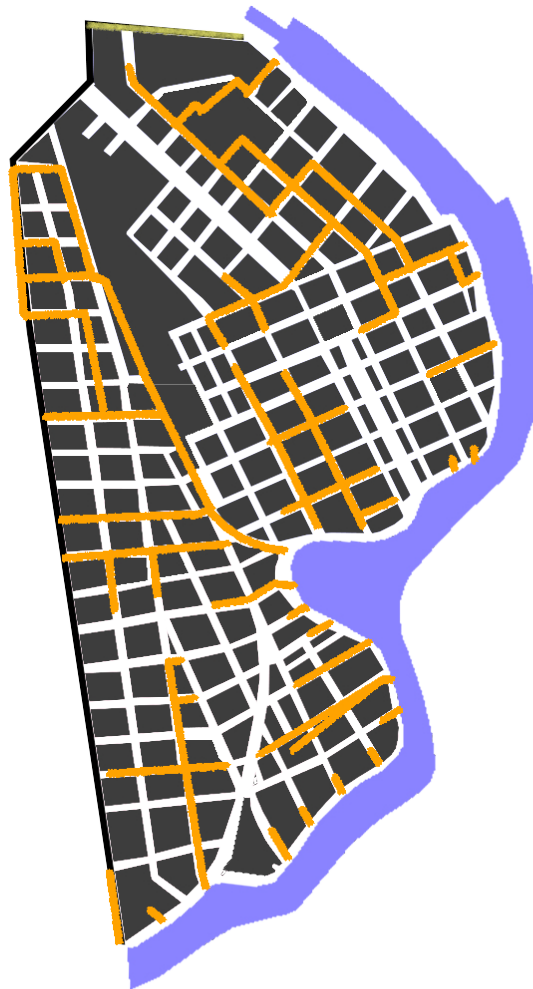


Figure 11. Scheme representing the riverfront in 2017 (processed by the author)



^ Figure 12. Scheme representing the drainage channels present in the neighborhood (processed by the author)

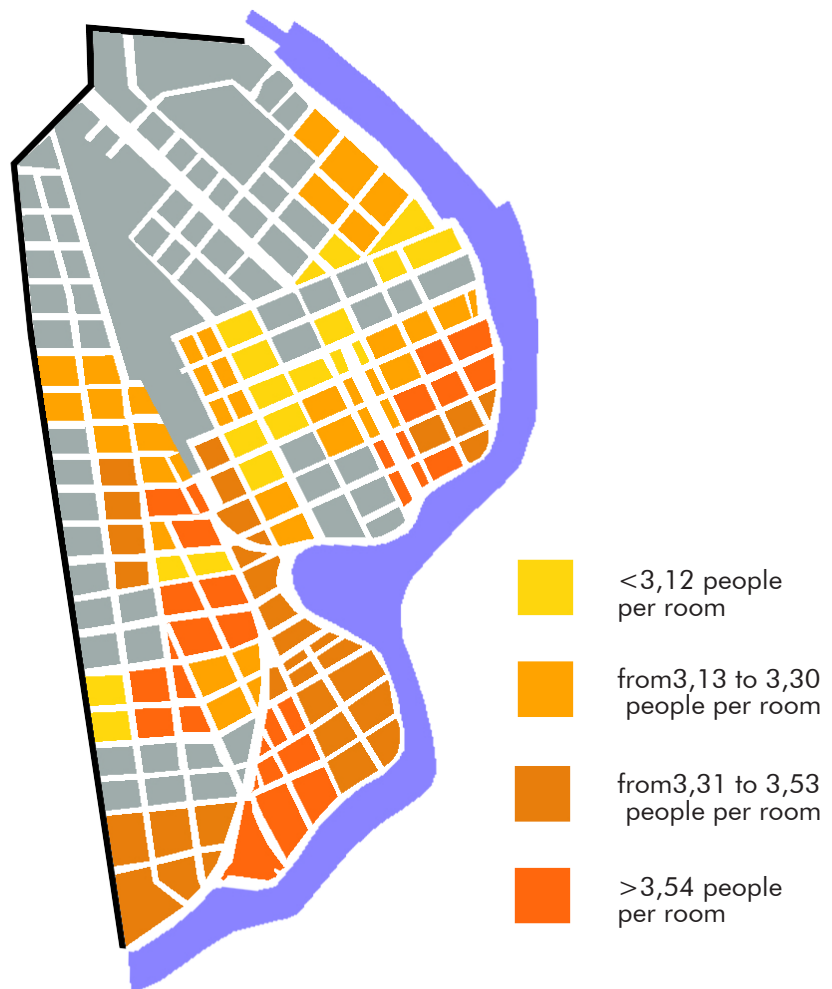
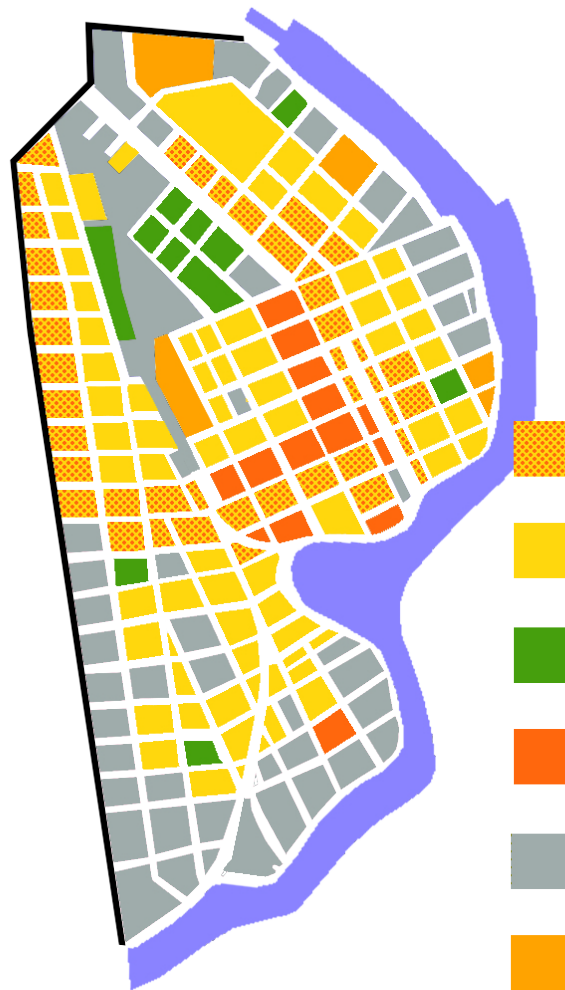


Figure 13. Scheme representing the density of population and the distribution for each room (processed by the author)



Polstman

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^ Figure 14. Scheme representing the main functions (processed by the author)

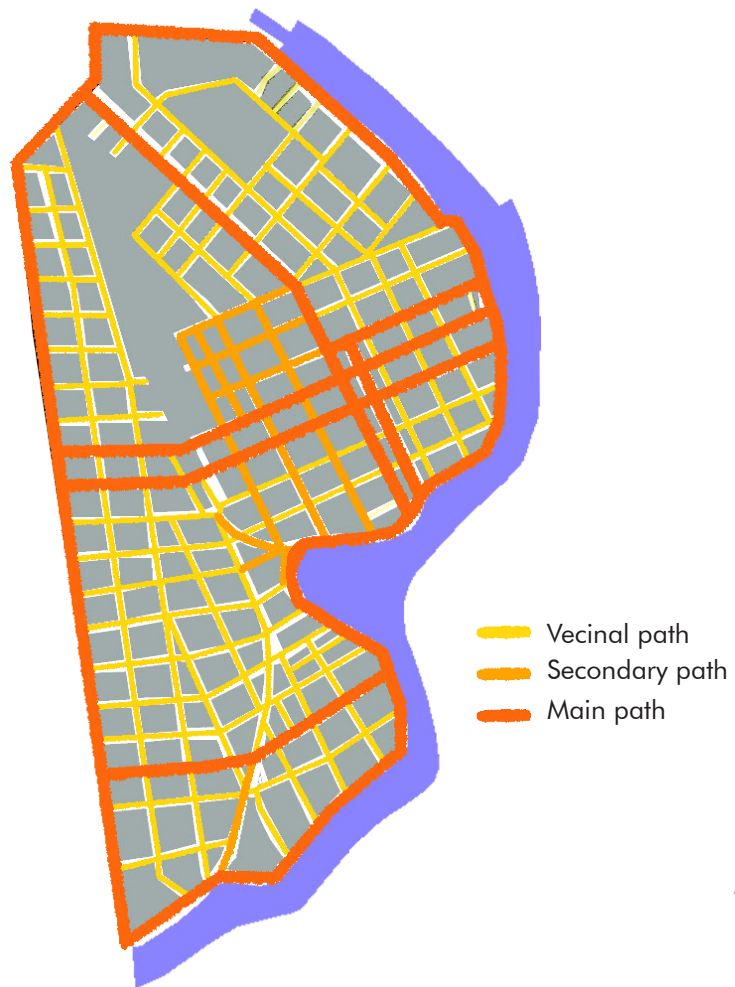


Figure 15. Scheme representing the viability (processed by the author)



^ Figure 16. Scheme representing the transport and bike paths (processed by the author)

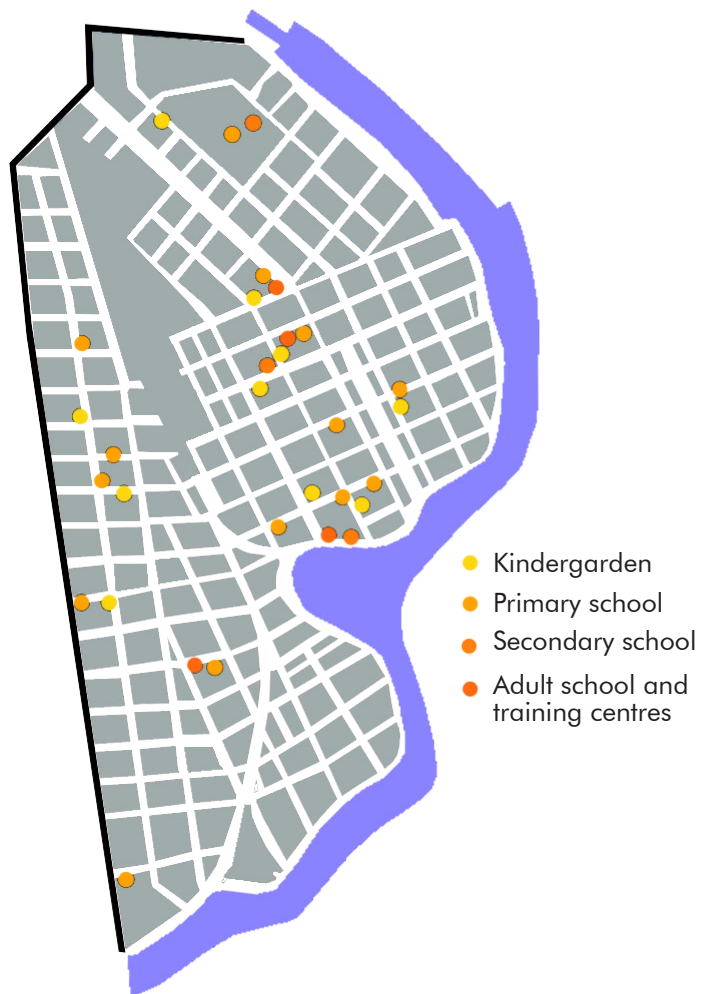
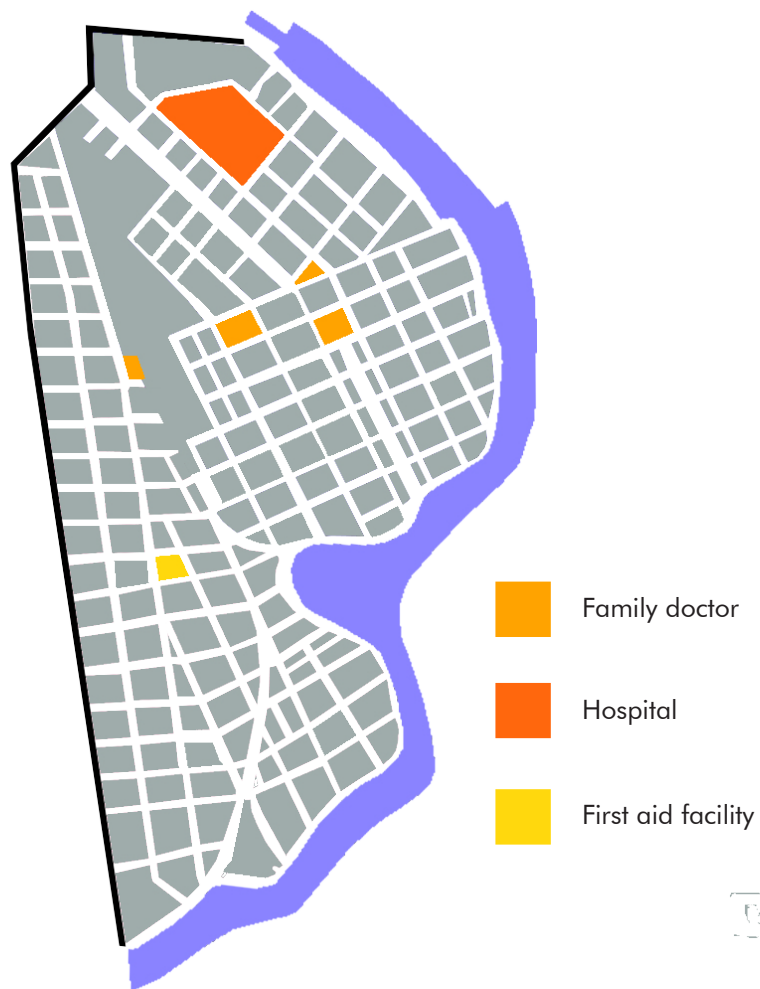


Figure 17. Scheme representing the distribution of educational institutions in the neighborhood (processed by the author)



^ Figure 18. Scheme representing the distribution of health facilities in the neighborhood (processed by the author)



Figure 19. Photocollage of Δ *conventillos* (processed by the author)



^ Figure 20. Photocollage explaining the connection system of *conventillos* (processed by the author)

06

Scenario proposal

In this chapter there are shown the main components of the concept for the project proposal, regarding the elements enlightened during the survey and the archive research.

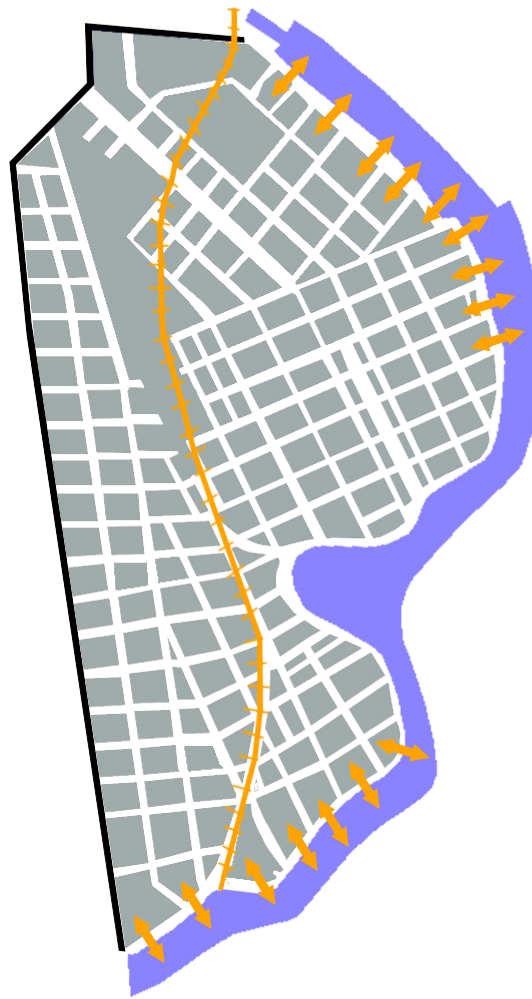
They are expressed through a list in a specific sequence correspondent with the hypothesized progression in the realization, following both the project management order, in terms of duration of the construction progress and the importance attributed by the stakeholders (local population and investors), and the natural social awareness acquired: the first step, planning the sew of the neighborhood with the rest of the city is necessary to improve the perception of safety and key role of the situs in matter of location inside the big capital; then the creation of new meeting zones, consisting in common spaces devolved to greenery and playgrounds as a result of the recalling of the track of the former riverbands allows the acquisition of a sense of unity among the inhabitants; finally the conservative requalification of abandoned buildings, previously used as factories and depots with a new social impact consisting in converting them into shelters, canteens and laboratories permits the growth of the bond between people and expresses practically the soul of the neighborhood from its foundation on: safe harbor for immigrants and *poutpourri* of cultures and colours, having each a unique tradition but sharing a common dream of life and future.

6.1 Concept and the requalification of the train path

The series of actions and choices made in this proposal are strictly related with the problems shown previously on several levels: first of all, the geographical important presence of an historic train path, used by factories for the transport of materials and goods to the whole city and province and now almost abandoned, represent a sort of *scar* in a dense urban tissue, separating the neighborhood in two distinct sides with different living conditions.

The choice of restoring this sign and turning it into a new transport line, linking at the same time the neighborhood itself and the neighborhood and the rest of the city and symbolizing the new birth of an healed area through a line park and a series of bridges to connect horizontally the main streets, represents the first step of the opening: better accessibility can improve both tourism and commerce, first concentrated along the main transport axes and, at the same time, reduce the load of the actual transport path and means, making these streets, now overcrowded and dangerous to cross, more liveable and walkable.

The union of this operation with greenery hopefully will increase the use of this new axe also from bikers and peatons, turning it from a dangerous street to avoid on foot to the new core of the neighborhood, both for morphological reasons, cutting almost in two exact parts it, and cultural ones, linking the neighborhood of *San Telmo*, with its continuous presence of tango dancers, instrument players and painters with the main infrastructures of the *barrio*, represented by the museum set in *Casa Amarilla*, *La Bombonera* stadium with its sport facilities surrounding and the riverfront.



<Figure 1. Scheme representing the concept of sewing the neighborhood itself and the neighborhood and the river (processed by the author)



<Figure 2. Link and barriers between buildings and railways (source buenosaires.gob.ar/boca)

6.2 The recreation of the old riverfront

Coherent with the first idea is the choice of recreate the old riverfront, through the construction of new areas dedicated to people and in particular to children along with the creation of areas for phitodepuration to allow the river spaces to avoid floods and at the same time to clean polluted water through plants and greenery.

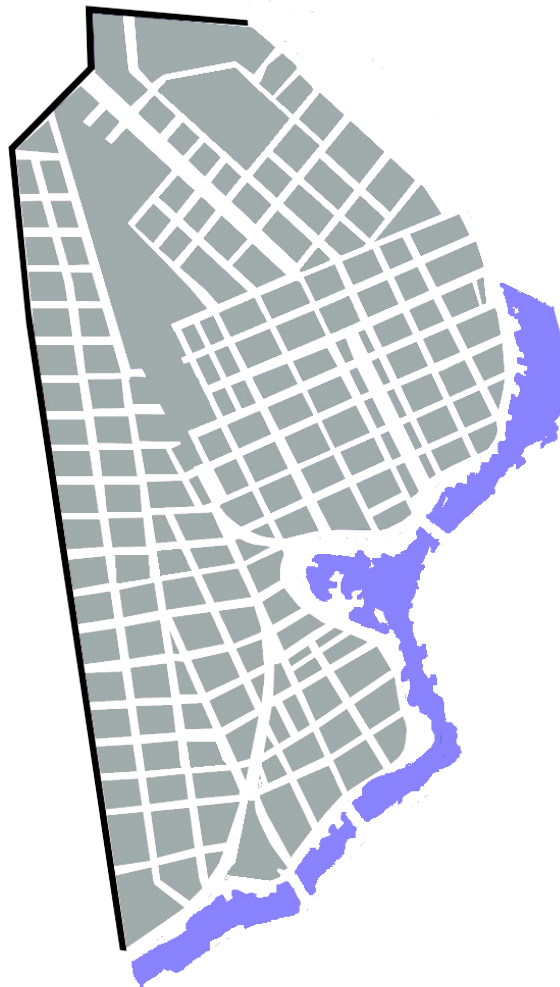
This proposal is particularly relevant because of the actual use of the riverfront: except for the area adjacent to *Caminito* along Pedro de Mendoza street, characterized by several small cultural hubs and Proa along with the traditional weekend market and the theatre, the connection between the river and the closest building is pretty none.

Abandoned factories and overcrowded social housings, full of delinquency and drugs-related crimes, make the riverfront seem dangerous and used only as a necessary area to cross fastly. The decision to introduce new services for the community and interesting points of view to admire the landscape allow people to stay and stare, creating the necessary mix of population of different social classes and ages to reduce criminality.

At the same time, introducing this shape represents the concept of reminding the past that previous projects intended to forget or hide: there is no need to regret the former features and uses of the neighborhood but it is important to start from those this process of rebirth, even if with different functions.

La Boca represents the glorious past of a city drifting but trying to find a new call, strong thanks to the multiculture that seemed to be its main negative characteristic, but that now can lead to

unexpected and new results.



<Figure 3. Scheme of the waterfront in 1929, showing its natural shape-before the works of redesign of the banks due to industrial needs(processed by the author)



Figure 4. The view of the ^
harbor and the *Puente*
Transbordador from *Vuel-*
ta de Rocha (source bo-
cagrandehistoricalsociety.
com)

6.3 The reuse of the factories along the highway

One of the main issues of the neighborhood is represented by the presence of an high number of homeless people, living the streets and the informal settlements under the highway in critical conditions, both from social and hygienic points of view.

Thus the proposal of turning the abandoned factories along the highway and at the border of the neighborhood and the city into places to host several functions related to the improve of homeless' life conditions: keeping the existing structures to contain expenses, these empty plants become canteens of the poor, public toilets with showers and shelters.

In order to reduce the contribution needed by the city government, it is important the concept of people helping with the construction and the maintenance of these services, through a public participation and the use of all the competences of the users to the building phase and the constitution of urban gardens to produce food necessary for the canteens, whose care is assigned to the same users.

This way several aims can be reached: first of all the increase of the permeable surface, necessary to avoid floods in particular in these areas, since they are under the level of the highway, then the relocation of homeless people in safe places and finally the decrease of delinquency and the parallel increase of employment rates thanks to the active work of the users to maintain the functioning of the structures.

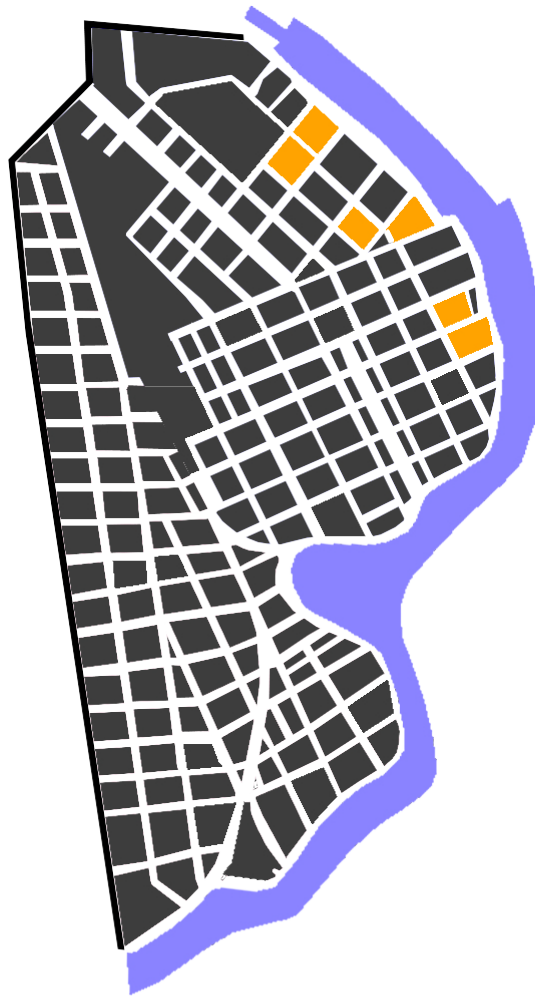


Figure 5. Scheme identifying the areas of intervention along the highway (processed by the author)

6.4 The reuse of the factories along the riverfront

Another proposal is related to the abandoned factories along the river, close to one of the new focal areas due to the requalification of the banks: this proximity is the reason of settling new functions related to culture.

The scenario shows the idea of installing new cultural centres, linked to the need and the main features of the neighborhood: some of the buildings, with no significant changes in the structure, are dedicated to expand the museum network through the creation of showings dealing with the most famous Argentinian dance, tango, which is now practised along the streets, painters who found there the best place for their expression thanks to the colours and the redundant Italian substrate filling each corner, and the historical function of harbour.

Other buildings are converted into multifunctional hubs especially destined to women and children, not well valorized in the neighborhoods: women are usually homemakers staying at home and not living the opportunities that the city can offer, not being alphabetized and introduced in the societies and, as a consequence, children often abandon school as child, depriving themselves of the chance to live actively the life and the decisions of the neighborhood, increasing the rates of unemployment and criminality.

To avoid these risks, instead of installing traditional schools, it's preferable choosing training laboratories for the most common jobs, dealing with handicraft and arts, especially for the area adjacent to the theatre, naturally linked with its main purpose.

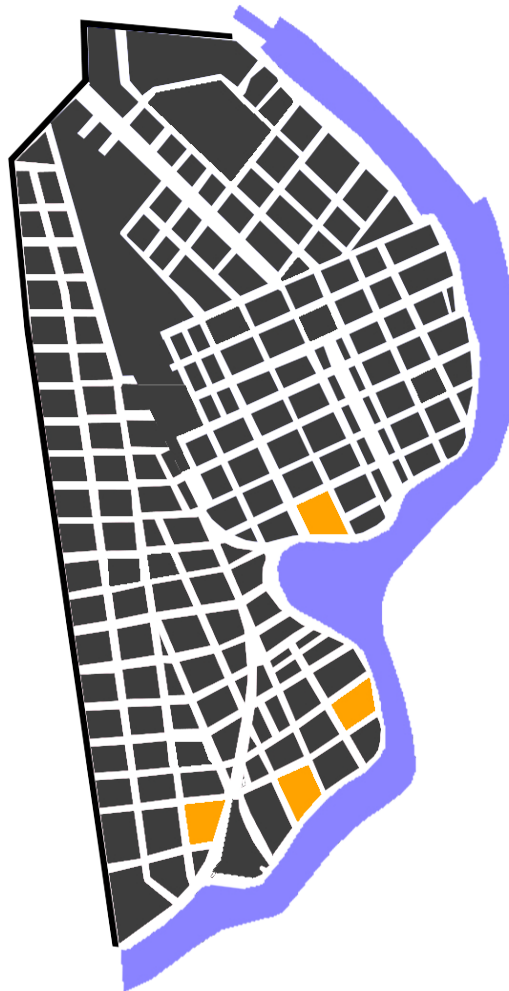


Figure 6. Scheme identifying the areas of intervention along the river (processed by the author)

Figure 7. Masterplan (processed by the author)

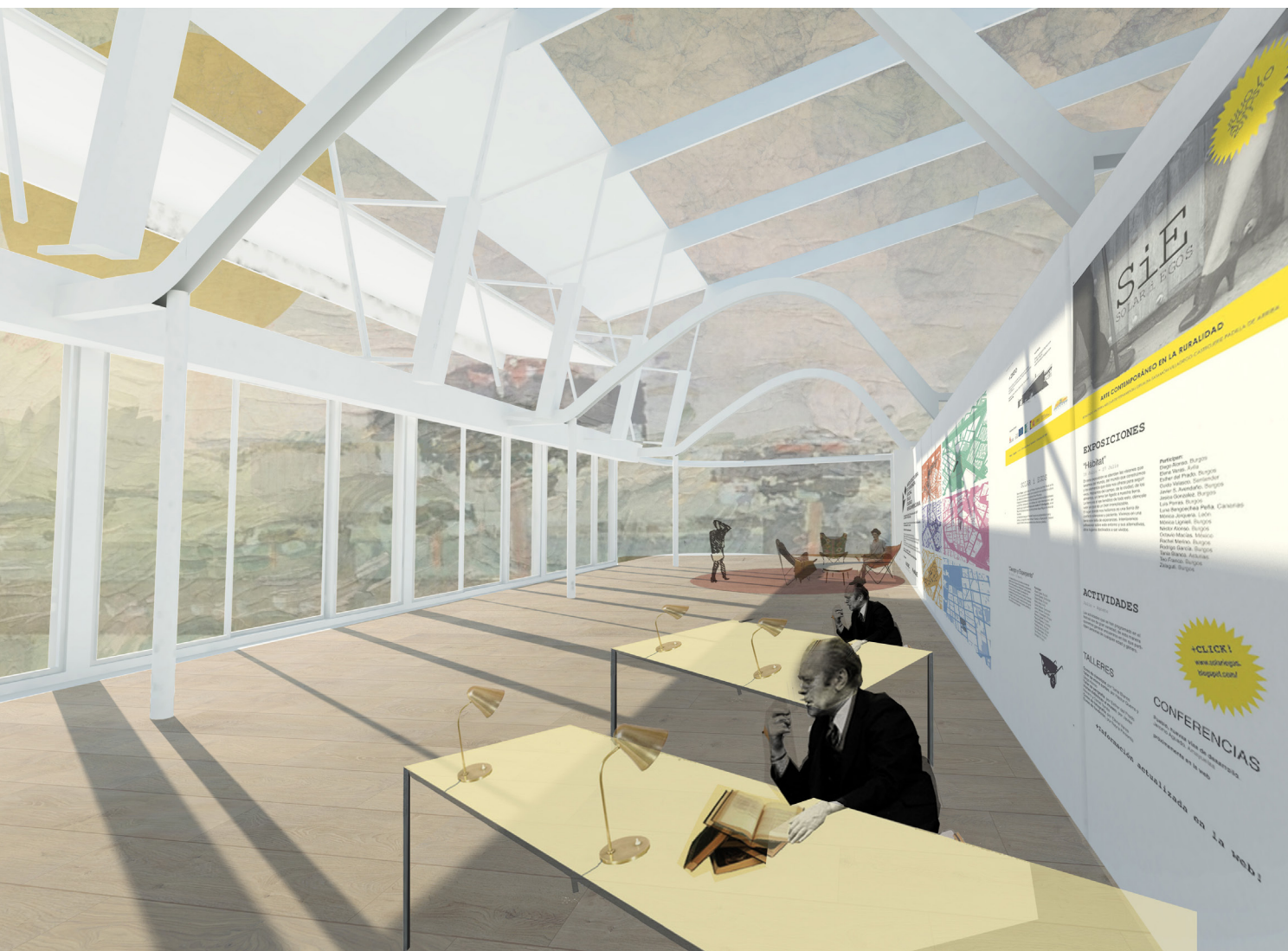




^ Figure 8. Photocollage of the riverfront with the new interventions (processed by the author)



Figure 9. Photocollage of the rooftop of the training laboratories with urban gardens (processed by the author)



^ Figure 10. Photocollage of the interiors of the training laboratories (processed by the author)



Figure 11. Photocollage of Δ the tramway (processed by the author)



^ Figure 12. Photocollage of the pedestrian path along the river (processed by the author)

CONCLUSIONS

This thesis represented an attempt of solving some of the most common issues characterizing the neighborhoods located at the borders of big cities, especially in developing countries of Latin America.

Starting from the analysis of the city of Buenos Aires, from its foundation to the contemporary situation, focusing in particular on the social aspects of demographical changes and behaviours, it was possible to notice a few parallelisms mirroring the conditions of the *barrio* of *La Boca*, such as the increase of the unemployment rate along these last twenty years, since the closure of factories settled along the rivers, and the starting move towards the creation of facilities and the requalification of urban spaces related to tourism and culture, underlining the importance of traditions and showing the masterpieces of local arts and crafts.

The neighborhood itself presented several problems, due to the location at the southern extreme of the *Capital Federal*, even if not so distant from the city centre, and the population mixture settled in during the last century, at first strictly connected to the presence of production implants, then turning into a countless flow of immigrants attracted there by the chance of getting a low-rent place to live and the proximity with the main services and facilities. This last phenomenon generated the overpopulation of the area, forcing people to create a series of informal settlements, in particular under the highway and along the most peripheral side of the coast, occupied usually by undocumented, with consequences like the lack of liveability conditions expressed in the absence of lighting and plumbing connections, the presence of a huge amount of children not able to attend even the basic levels of instruction, the

enormous rate of unemployed and the persistence of criminal episodes.

Through a thorough evaluation of the features of the *barrio*, both physical, related to the conformation of the urban frame and the distribution of the network of the basic services, the highlighting of the abandoned places and on the opposite side of the focal points that could be used as triggers for the redevelopment of the area, and socio-cultural, concerning the lack of answer to the need of the population, it became noticeable how and where to intervene to make a proposal that could face at least the most urgent situations people is actually dealing with.

In this sense the first action is to rediscover the inner nature of the neighborhood expressed by the strong interconnection between the river *Riachuelo* and the facing roads, through the recreation of the former coasts, allowing the birth of new squares and services on the water, places with the specific aim of filling the gaps in relationships between the historic part of the population and the newly arrived thanks to the condensation of space and time.

Second step is the physical reconnection between the area and the rest of the city, thanks to the reuse of the actually dismissed train path to host a fast tramway line, linking the focal points of the neighborhood and the underground network.

Last but crucial comes the reuse of the abandoned factories and deposits, located mostly along the rivercoasts, to deal with the emergency state of the lack of housing and of educational support: on one hand the proposal hypothesizes the realization of shelters and canteen for homeless and low-income people, on the

other the self requalification of white elephants with the aim of hosting laboratories for crafts and common areas to use for social purposes.

APPENDIX: INTVIEWING THE COMISION DE VECINOS' PRESIDENT

___ When is your association born?

SC: The *Comision de Vecinos* is born in 1999. At first just few inhabitants were members. We put all around the neighborhood manifestos inviting residents to participate to the meetings along the street, at the corner of Irala and Margall. After short we obtained a place to meet on Saturday mornings from Parque Lezama Association. From there we started to present collective proposals, such as documents with other associations working in the neighborhood and the metropolitan area.

The main aim of our commission is to improve the quality of life of inhabitants of Buenos Aires, promoting plans and projects, starting from the own neighborhood, integrating as much as we can of residents and enhancing active participation.

___ Could you make an example of a project?

SC: In September 2000 we introduced to the City Government a project signed by 220 residents promoting the rehabilitation of the lot called Terminal Multimodal Casa Amarilla to convert in a green space. The proposal previewed also the opening of trasversal roads to avoid long paths to surround the area to get from a side to the other, to La Boca and Barracas, underlining the need to facilitate the acces to the Hospital Cosme Argerich, to allow police and firefighters to get and help directly the residents and to generate a better connection on an urban and neighborhood level.

___ The portion of Casa Amarilla is strategic for the neighborhood, why a park?

SC: The site was the only public space that could have been transformed in a park, and it was the last chance for the neighborhood

to have a green lung increasing the quality of life of inhabitants. It was also necessary to have plants to contrast with the pollution from the chemical pole of Dock Sud and preserve the permeability of the land rich of floodings.

___How did the Government react to the proposal?

SC: The General Direction of Planning and Urban Interpretation gave us a positive opinion because our proposal was coherent with the Environmental Urban Plan. In September there was an article about this project, linked to others in Chacarita and Villa Pueyrredón because of the presence of railway lines. The main issue was the passage of national trains to another administration. Beside the change of functions from Future Urbanization to High-Density Residential would allow the possibility of building 11-12 store buildings, rising the neighborhood density. The population from 60000 inhabitants of the '60s was reduced to 44000 and a policy should rehab the existing buildings, not increasing the tissue.

___Then what did you do?

SC: We promoted our idea to avoid residents' will to be ignored, contacting other neighborhood associations and the Permanent Assembly for Urban Green Spaces. With this dialogue the original project grew: the park was made of autocton plants to recover the original landscape and give more value to the paths.

With the help of Antonio Elio Brailovsky, Public Defence of The city, we managed to redact a law proposal, involving people from different parties in a common good aim.

___How did you start involving other residents in the participation?

SC: The first of August we convoked residents in Carlos della Penna school, to inform people about the Popular Law: we nee-

ded everyone to cooperate and show their will and commitment. Thanks to them we had 14271 signatures, a huge result. Even if this number wasn't sufficient to the aim a group of politician took care of it and brought the proposal to the Legislatura. Our work with the citizens wasn't done yet because we were part of the meeting with the Urban Planning Commission and authorities. This experience showed us that the union and cooperation between residents to achieve a common goal is possible and that participation is the only mean to do it. Another issue was the need from ONABE to give us the site lands, which were given on the 31th of June to public scopes as expressed by the residents.

The project was firstly approved by the Urban Planning Commission but at the time of action a few politician disagreed because of minor reasons connected to the moving of railways in an area actually used by the football club Boca Juniors but never formally given to them. For this reason we had to present the proposal again and approved on the 12th of June 2004. The new law involves an area of 3,5 ha.

___How did you decide to use a participative process?

SC: When, at the beginning of 2004 we were adjusting the proposal we found out that there was a way to increase the participation: in the Government website there was already an experience reflecting and telling the same process we adopted called Diagnostico participativo del paisaje. Actually this office was about to be cancelled but, knowing the chief Fabio Marquez, we were so enthusiast of this reality that we were able to introduce the participative process as one of the focal points of the law.

The participation was really interesting, consisting in meeting to

choose the main guidelines and workshops of production of urban furniture. On the 30th of October the law was finally approved and we presented our participative plan. Unfortunately the opening of the street isn't completed yet and it was part of a different law proposal.

Now we are working on the idea of a bike path along the river and the rehabilitation of Calle Neochea, well representing the boquense imagery but abandoned. We took this idea from the residents which have already planting the area corresponding to '60s building. It could become a new spot for the neighborhood.

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