MY IMMIGRANT NEIGHBOUR: Social interaction in multicultural neighbourhoods in Madrid

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Thesis Plan
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PART I
PROBLEM FIELD

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1. Introduction

Contemporary cities are multicultural cities. Several cities in Europe are ‘characterised by a high degree of cultural diversity, generating conflicts related to multiculturalism’ (Capel 2003, p.2). Capel (2003) explains that the presence of different ethnic groups in European cities can affect the ‘coexistence and organisation in the local public arena’ (Capel 2003, p.3). This project takes Madrid as its study subject. The Spanish capital, is home to more than three million inhabitants, and one out of every six has a cultural background different from the Spanish one. According to the 2010 census, 17 percent of the city’s population are immigrants.

The different cultures sharing space in a city have different ways of living together. In some cases there might be interaction between different cultural groups; in other cases they see each other but they do not interact. Even though multiculturalism is a concept with both positive and negative aspects, for this project multiculturalism in living environments would be consider as an asset. People with different cultural backgrounds finding ways of living together, dealing with levels of interaction as a mechanism for sharing the space of neighbourhoods, streets or cities is an expanding situation. As Sandercock (1998) refers to it ‘more complex kinds of ethnic diversity come to dominate cities, the very notion of a ‘shared interest’ becomes increasingly exhausted’

The challenge for this project is to investigate how can public space facilitate multicultural interaction -or any social interaction for that matter-. The challenge grows when considering that public life keeps deteriorating, that privacy keeps taking away more activities from the public realm and that citizens are increasingly more self-involved every day. As Senett (1977) states ‘confusion has arisen between public and intimate life’ (Senett 1977, p.5) and the erosion of public life has changed people’s willingness to act socially.

The motivation for choosing Madrid as the location for this project is a combination of different factors. First, its multicultural environment as has been mentioned already. Second, the building crisis that the city has undergone during the last years, a situation which dictates that is time for using existing empty buildings instead of building new ones -which requires more investment on infrastructure among other expenses-. And third, the fact that vulnerable groups are living in deteriorating historical urban fabrics because some of those fabrics are not attractive residential areas.

2. Problem analysis

Urban development from the 1960s

The city centre of Madrid has always been a residential area, but the demographics have changed not due to massive deindustrialization like the Ruhr area in Germany or several UK cities, but due to other circumstances. Leal (2004) explains that during the 1950s, the city centre was occupied by the middle and upper classes because its proximity to services, job opportunities and the lack of a good transport network made it an attractive residential area.

Later in time, Diaz (2007) states that during the 1970s and early 1980s, social movements in Spanish cities
concerned mainly with housing, transport and local facilities, prevented the intervention [destruction] of central areas of Madrid; they were ‘promoting a programme of recovery of the cultural and popular identity of the district’ (Díaz 2007, p.186).

However, the middle and upper classes could not find in the city centre the facilities they needed for their social reproduction. Leal (2004) explains ‘a loss of social value for the traditional middle class areas, joined to the strong rise in [social] value of the new middle class peripheral settlements’ (Leal 2004, p.94); the combination of those two was also responsible for the stagnation of the central areas of the city. As a result the middle and upper classes moved to newer areas built in the periphery of the city, enabled also by the easy movement provided by the automobile.

The decay of the central areas in Madrid happen then, when vulnerable groups located themselves within this old, deteriorating and abandoned urban fabric; despite the fact that the central areas still concentrate many economic and cultural activities in the city, the residential areas are not considered attractive residential areas.

2.1 Key variables for the problem analysis

2.1.1 Immigrants

For this study, the word immigrant is being used to refer only to the foreign immigrants, the foreign-born population arriving in the city with the intention to settle there. This study will not include the domestic immigrants from other Spanish cities or countryside, since the difference in cultural backgrounds between Spaniards and immigrants is a key aspect of the study.

Immigration change

During the 1990’s new forms of immigration changed the general Spanish demographic situation, when according to Martínez & Connolly (2012) Spain went from having one of the lowest levels of first-generation immigrants to one of the highest in Europe. The authors specify that an important amount of immigrants - from 1.6 percent in 1998 to 12.5 percent in 2010 according to the INE - specially coming from Latin America, northern African countries and Eastern Europe joined the labour market in sectors such as construction, agriculture and hospitality - as well as the informal economy - as they settled in urban areas and agricultural towns.

Thus, Madrid has been a focal point for much of the immigrant population. Since the city is an economic, cultural, financial and commercial centre in the country, the proportion of immigrants - 17.3 percent in 2010, INE - in relation to the Spaniards living in Madrid is higher than the national average and higher than the average of any other Spanish city. The presence of immigrants poses a contradiction, since it has turned the city into a rich multicultural environment but at the same time, some immigrant groups are in a vulnerable socioeconomic position.

Distribution of immigrant population in Madrid

The focus of this study would be one of the districts in Madrid where the share of immigrant population is above the average of the city. The location of immigrants within the city is conditioned by the income level of the different groups,
resulting in the progressive social segregation of some of these groups.

There are four districts in the city that show the highest concentration of immigrant population: Centro, Carabanchel, Usera and Tetuán. Table 1 shows the percentages of immigrant population in the four districts with percentages higher than the average of the entire city. The location of those districts is shown in figure 1, as well as the distribution of immigrants in the rest of the city. While the district Centro has the highest concentration of immigrants, it has been undergoing a gentrification process, including an influx of people from upper and middle classes, the specialization of commerce and even of public space. While there is some value in gentrification, it is clear that it comes with a price, resulting in the displacement of vulnerable groups, such as immigrants with low income, to other parts of the city, further away from the centre (CONAMA 2010).

The reason to choose Tetuán district is the combination of different conditions. First, the high share of immigrant population resulting in a multicultural environment, especially in some specific neighbourhoods in the district; second, the historical quality of the urban fabric in some areas, which contrasts with newer developments in other areas of the district; third the economic conditions of the population living in the district; and finally the lack of some urban facilities in some areas of the district.

### Groups of immigrants in Madrid

Even though the immigrants are discussed as a group, we can distinguish different groups among them in order to get a better idea of their diversity. There are different cultural groups, socioeconomic groups, age groups and so on. The situation of the groups varies greatly from one ethnic group to the next, from one generation to the next, from one socioeconomic status to the next. These different situations pose different challenges for each one of the groups.

However, there seems to be some kind of correspondence between specific ethnic groups and their position in the city. Some immigrant groups are in a better economic position than other groups, some immigrants speak the Spanish language and some of them are more skilled or driven than others.

One subgroup for example, are immigrants who have been living in Madrid for a long period of time already, this subgroup includes immigrants from a variety of countries. Nowadays they are totally integrated into the Spanish society, they have been assimilated by the mainstream culture. Restrepo (2005) discusses the case of the second generation of Chinese immigrants; while the first generation is usually far from integration due to their advanced age, they are home and business owners and their children -because they were born in Spain- are Spanish citizens and they speak Spanish fluently and they even attend catholic schools in the areas where they live.

Another subgroup are immigrants who are just arriving to the city. For immigrants coming from North Africa...
for example, they do not know the language, and left their countries looking for better opportunities but without economic resources. Immigrants arriving from Senegal for example, reach some neighbourhoods within or close to the city centre, where they can afford to rent a bed by the hour. As Diaz (2007) points out the ‘hot bed system’ allows them to be close to the public spaces in the city centre, where they work as informal –illegal- vendors. This ‘hot bed system’ is supposed to be a temporary situation though, but it is quite difficult to conduct a research to track these subgroup.

The city centre has traditionally been a first arrival neighbourhood, since some immigrants just arriving to the city have no other choice but to try and make it there -even if it is renting a bed for a few hours while looking for something better- because accommodations are cheaper, not regulated and close to the commercial activities that could employ them. As Diaz (2007) explains, immigrants despite of their socioeconomic group tend to live in areas where the native citizens present in the area have a similar socioeconomic position.

Immigrants in a better economic position pick the neighbourhoods to live in according to it. The decision in some cultural groups is also influenced by their support networks. Manley, van Ham & Doherty (2011) explain this phenomenon as an example of the exogenous or contextual effects, which are related to the propensity of one person to change the way to act depending on the external components; the authors include ‘the propensity for ethnic minorities to favour neighbourhoods with high proportions of co-ethnic residents if they are seeking ethnic solidarity.’ (Manley, van Ham & Doherty 2011, p.5)

It is relevant to note that immigrants who have been living in Madrid for a long time -regardless of their cultural background- who have been working and climbing the social ladder and having improved their economic position, also move to the periphery. They go to the same neighbourhoods as the Spaniards with similar economic position, looking for the same residential areas with better urban facilities, newer buildings and single house typologies (CONAMA 2010). This comes to prove that support networks are much more important for lower income groups. Instead, for the middle class is much more important –more and more everyday- to be able to pick a place to live with a more socially representative surrounding.

Cultural groups in Madrid

As far as cultural groups go, Restrepo (2005) distinguishes four groups with the higher immigration and settlement levels in Madrid, they include the 88 percent of the immigrants living in the city. These cultural groups are the Hispanic American, the one from Eastern European, the one from Maghreb/Sub-Saharan Africa and the one from the Middle and Far East. Figure 2 shows the nationalities that constitute each group with larger presence in Madrid. Restrepo (2005) uses these groups to be able to describe their larger traits, which will be briefly explained below.

The Hispanic American group -54 percent of the immigrant population in Madrid in 2010 according to the INE-, most of them migrate due to economic reasons. In their countries of origin they were even displaced form the rural areas and outer edges of major cities; or they were part of middle classes working in industries that have either disappeared or are undergoing an economic crisis(arts and crafts). According to Restrepo (2005) this group deals with an underlying duality between their own identity and their life in the new city.

The Eastern European group -17 percent of the immigrant population in Madrid in 2010 according to the
INE-, due to the weaker economies in their home countries that make them vulnerable when competing in the market economy, they also migrate due to economic reasons. According to Restrepo (2005) the difference with the previous group is that Eastern Europeans are in general more disciplined, they deal better with long working hours and they also have higher education degrees or highly trained skills. Immigrants from this group have a disadvantage though, they do not speak the Spanish language, but they have proven to be able to learn it quite rapidly.

Restrepo (2005) explains that these two groups ‘share, both between them and with the Spaniards, common values from the eastern [world] culture and religious traditions from the same branch, despite some specific shades’ (Restrepo 2005, p. 106).

The Maghreb/Sub-Saharan group -8 percent of the immigrant population in Madrid in 2010 according to the INE-, Restrepo (2005) explains that at the beginning of the 1990s the demand of cheap, unskilled labour was in the rise and attracted this group, not only to Spain but to most of the countries of the European Union. The immigrants from this group were young, they left their countries by alone, leaving their families and had a high mobility and unstable jobs. The situation now is different, the current demand is for highly skilled labour and stability.

It is important to note here that even though the cultures from the Islam find several references in the Spanish context, their lifestyle diverges from the one of the native population, specially regarding their familiar and neighbourly relations.

Finally, the Far and Middle East group -9 percent of the immigrant population in Madrid in 2010 according to the INE-, is the most enigmatic group except from the Filipino people, who share some values with the Hispanic culture and therefore are easier to read. The general characteristic of this group as Restrepo (2005) explains, is that the first generations to arrive have more difficulties to integrate in the Spanish society due to the very obvious differences between them. However, the second generations and younger members of this group embrace completely the culture of their new city.

Two conclusions derived from the literature can be drawn from this section. First, the difference between social groups is more important than the cultural difference for the middle and higher income groups. Second, cultural groups and the connections and support that might come from them are more important to social groups with lower income and more vulnerable position. With these two conclusions is important to mention that the largest difference in the study area is the cultural one, and that is why multicultural interaction is the main concern of this study.

2.1.2 Multicultural environments - Tetuán a multicultural district in Madrid

In the frame of this project, multicultural environments would be defined as those neighbourhoods in Madrid where the presence of immigrants is both higher than the average in the city as a whole and higher than the average of the entire district too. The focus of this study is Tetuán, one of the districts inside the M30 highway boundary —see location within the city in figure 3-. Considering that 17.3 percent of the population in Madrid are immigrants and that the average for the district is 22.2 percent, the focus of this study will be those neighbourhoods with a share higher than 30 percent.

Tetuán as a district is divided in six quarters —see figure 4- and each of the quarters is divided into small neighbourhoods or sections. The neighbourhoods to be studied are all in the Bellas Vistas quarter, on the bottom left
part of the district. As figure 5 shows, most of the sections with a concentration of immigrants higher than 30 percent are located there.

According to the Municipal census of 2010, the largest immigrant group in Tetuán is from Ecuador, followed in decreasing order by Dominican Republic, Paraguay, The Philippines, Romania, Morocco and Peru. Nevertheless, when looking at specific neighbourhoods there are variations in those groups, with more or less presence in each part. Table 2 shows three examples of such variations, which are interesting to look at because they show some kind of concentration of different ethnic groups in specific neighbourhoods.

For example, one of the neighbourhoods in Bellas Vistas quarter (079606019) has one of the largest groups of Filipinos and Ecuadorians, both of these groups are roughly the same size. In Catllejos quarter, a neighbourhood (079606056) the amount of Moroccans and Ecuadorians is also more or less the same. Additionally, there is only one neighbourhood in the entire district with a group of Romanians as big as any of the groups mentioned before, Romanians are one of the groups more evenly distributed through the entire district. Finally, one of the largest Moroccan groups is in the Almenara quarter, found in a neighbourhood where the immigrant population is only 16.6 percent.

An important remark about the Bellas Vistas quarter is that even without much public space available there are some levels of interaction. It seems that different cultural groups are interacting with each other, probably because they are part of similar social groups.

This proportions have come to show that some of the neighbourhoods are more diverse than others. In the first example showed in table 2, a neighbourhood in the Bellas Vistas quarter, has a majority of Ecuadorians, but the groups from Romania, The Philippines and Dominican Republic are quite big as well. It is possible to conclude then that the social

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total amount of immigrants in Tetuan and the percentage of the bigger national groups</th>
<th>Percentage of immigrant classified in national groups for 3 different neighbourhoods within Tetuan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tetuán district</strong></td>
<td><strong>7906004</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>5,426</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominican Republic</td>
<td>3,410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraguay</td>
<td>2,986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Philippines</td>
<td>2,543</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>2,353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>2,131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>2,059</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolivia</td>
<td>1,739</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>1,474</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 Variations in immigrant groups across Tetuán district. First example (79060004) is in Bellas Vistas quarter. Second example (79606104) is in Valdeacederas quarter. Third example (79606108) is in Berruguete quarter.
Source: Instituto de Estadística ICM.
dynamics and demands in specific neighbourhoods might vary from one another, as well as the proportions between the different groups do.

In order to have a more comprehensive idea of how immigrants influence the places where they arrive, not only in cultural terms but also in social-structure terms, it is relevant to mention other indicators aside from their mere presence. To get an overall notion of the socioeconomic context of the study area, not only the presence of immigrants but also their influence in levels such as the average age of the population, the percentage of unskilled labour in the district and other are to be considered.

Figure 6 shows the average age of the population and figure 7 shows the percentage of unskilled employed labour within the different neighbourhoods in the district. When compared with figure 4—which shows the neighbourhoods with the higher shares of immigrant population—the match is not perfect but some coincidences do exist. This leads to two conclusions; first, average age in neighbourhoods with higher shares of immigrant population tends to be younger and second, a high share of immigrants are working but the education levels might not be professional, instead they are employed doing manual labours.

With that kind of specific analyses, the socioeconomic structure of the studied neighbourhoods can be established. The result would be used as input for the design process in the next stages of this study.
Figure 8: Pictures on the right half show different groups meeting in the street as the only public space. Pictures on the right show the conditions of public space in the research area. Source: Pictures by author.
2.1.3. Morphological considerations

Some brief considerations about urban morphology need to be mentioned here. Carmona *et al.* (2007) define urban morphology as the discipline in charge of studying the physical changes of the ‘form and shape’ of cities -or smaller units- along time, specially looking at the growing and changing processes of those settlements (Carmona *et al.* 2007, p.77). The authors avoid the description of the different Typo-morphology schools identified by Moudon (1994), namely the Italian school, the French school and the British Conzenean school. Instead, Carmona *et al.* (2007) focus on what the three schools have in common:

* Each studies the volumetric characteristics of built structures with their related open spaces to define a built landscape type.
* Each includes land and its sub-divisions as a constituent element of type, making land the link between building scale and the city scale.
* Each considers the built landscape type as a morphogenetic unit because it is defined by time - the time of its production, use and mutation. (Carmona *et al.* 2007, p.77)

It is relevant to consider the different types of morphology present in the city in a bigger scale, in order to be able to identify which are the historical portions and their morphological elements. According to Conzen (1960) those elements are the ‘street pattern, the plot pattern, building structures and land uses’ (Carmona *et al.* 2007, p.77). In figure 9 the different types of urban morphology in Madrid can be seen.

Out of these elements, the street pattern is the one that remains for a longer time, which is why it would be the main one to be considered in the research area. The other three elements endure shorter periods of time, they are more susceptible to change. In the historical parts of Madrid, as well as in many European cities, we can identify some common morphological characteristics. First, we can appreciate that the buildings constitute the open space; the streets and squares are defined by the mass of the blocks. Second, the

Figure 9: Figure-ground diagram of Madrid. Pink line around Tetuán district.
Source: Picture by author
buildings are usually low-rise and they were usually built next to each other, resulting in only one facade facing the public space; it meant that the facade needed to transmit ‘the building’ identity and character’ (Carmona et al. 2007, p.85). And third, the size of the blocks is usually smaller that in more recent parts of the city; the blocks are arranged in a grid deformed due to the topography. However, later on grids with regular patterns were ‘overlaid on or added alongside more organic patterns’ (Carmona et al. 2007, p.82).

In the case of Madrid, a regular grid with bigger blocks can be distinguished around the city centre, the area known as the Ensanche [Enlargement] -see the red blocks in figure 10-. The Ensanche was planned during the mid 19th century due to the increase of the city’ population and it was inspired partly by the same ideas of Baron Haussmann for Paris.

A similar contrast between historical fabrics with the new and bigger city blocks can be also seen in the research area. Some of the morphological characteristics of the research area are briefly explained below.

**Morphological characteristics of Tetuán**

The district has many different spatial conditions due to the presence of urban fabrics from different periods -see figure 11-. One aspect that is interesting for this study is that each different fabric creates specific possibilities when defining public space. The spatial characteristics of public space influences social interaction, starting from this hypothesis is possible to work towards facilitating multicultural interaction thus supporting the multicultural environment of the city.

Some of the historical urban fabrics of Tetuán have very little or almost inexistent open public space other than the street; this is why most of the interaction between neighbours takes place there. However that interaction is mostly just passing by and greeting each other, since there is no space to slow down, sit and talk for a while.

Other areas of the quarter with different urban typologies, such as lose single buildings in closed plots, do have the space around them but, as far as can be seen through their fences, those spaces are not really used by their middle class residents, is just left over private space.
2.1.4 City centre

For the definition of city centre, the most important consideration is the amount and diversity of activities that may exist. In this way, the city centre of any given city most probably includes a variety of commercial and cultural activities. Also, usually it coincides with the oldest parts of cities, where they were first established, but is not always exactly the case.

As examples of how wide the definition can be, I present two examples. The city centre of Athens is not the Acropolis –the oldest part of the city- but the urban fabric that surrounds it, and which contains many economic, political and cultural activities. Another example is Paris, where it could be discussed if the 20 current arrondissements are considered as city centre, since they all have a variety of activities, or if just the oldest 12 original ones -before the 1860s expansion- would be considered as the centre.

The city centre of Madrid refers to the oldest historical part of the city defined by the district named Centro. It was established as the capital of the Spanish Empire in 1561, when the king Phillip II of Spain moved his court from Toledo to the village of Madrid. Figure 11 shows the map of the city centre in 1831, when the centre was actually fully built.

Tetuán district was named after the Moroccan city and is one of the oldest areas of Madrid. Even though it started just as a settlement for soldiers in 1860. After the African war was won, the army was posted in the area and commerce started to develop around this military camp.

It is important to include this definition in order to differentiate between the district called Centro and the seven districts inside the M30 boundary that are considered as the central areas of the city all together. In some other cases all seven districts inside the M30 highway are considered to be Madrid’ city centre. In one way or another, all seven districts constitute the oldest parts of the city and most of them share some historical value.

3. Problem statement

The lack of public space in some historical parts of the city, as well as the lack of multicultural interaction are the two main components of the problem:

The lack of quality public space in the studied quarter is partly due to the morphology of its historical fabrics, where public open space other than the streets is almost nonexistent. Furthermore, there are no cultural facilities -theatres, museums, movie theatres- and not enough public facilities -sports, youth centres, cultural centres- in the area. These shortages have been observed in the study area during the first months of research.

Social interaction is one key aspect to increase social cohesion. There seems to be almost no interaction between different cultural groups in the study area, a statement resulting also from observation carried on in the area. Even when those groups might be sharing some spaces, there is no exchange between them. Furthermore, some cultural groups are nowhere to be found in the existing public space, probably due to the shortage of such spaces, or because
the existing spaces are not adequate for people with different cultural backgrounds.

For this project I am starting from the point that living together is not enough, that there needs to be interaction. The discussion about multicultural interaction comes from the fact that there is a large amount of immigrant population -with different cultural backgrounds- in the study areas. Even though arguments between people can originate from their difference in age, gender, socioeconomic position and so on, I am choosing to work with difference between cultural groups because in my opinion -perception- cultural differences pose a challenge -specially for European cities- and this challenge would keep growing.

4. Research questions

How can public spaces facilitate interaction between groups with different cultural backgrounds in multicultural neighbourhoods?

What is the meaning of public space for different cultures?

What are multicultural environments?

What spaces are used by different ethnic groups?

In what way groups with different cultural backgrounds could use the public space together?

What spatial conditions of public space can facilitate the interaction and/or exchange between different groups?

Spatial interventions are the ones that urban designers and planners can propose. Nevertheless, it is also this profession’s responsibility to take into account the needs of different users and include them in such interventions. This is why the left side of this scheme would be the one addressed in this work, taking into account the consequences that the physical intervention would have on the right side of the scheme.

The scheme on the right shows the relationship between the different research questions and the proposed methodology to answer them. What is important to note here, is that the obtained results for the sub-questions would come from the combination of different methods an that by combining the results of the sub-questions, the main research question would be answered.
PART II
HOW? WHY? WHEN
5. Methodology

**Observation and mapping**

In order to define what the current situation is, this is the most effective method. By visiting the research areas, I could answer the questions regarding what is currently happening in the public space of those specific neighbourhoods. Who is using the public space and how do the users behave in such spaces. Also, by recognizing who are the current users –their age, cultural background, and so on- an idea about why are other users missing from the space can be drawn. Interviewing the users of the spaces and asking them to map places of interest and comfort zones will be part of this method.

In *Inquiry by design*, Zeisel (2006) describes what are important considerations when observing both the physical traces and the environmental behaviour as part of the research methodology of a problem.

Observing physical traces consists in ‘systematically looking at physical surroundings to find reflections of previous activity that was not produced in order to be measured by the researchers’ (Zeisel 2006, p.159). Observing one’ surrounding is actually a natural skill, everyone does it; Zeisel (2006) explains that researchers just need to turn that skill into a useful research tool, by paying attention to a larger number of clues present in the physical environment. On the top part of figure 13, the physical traces to look for according to Zeisel (2006) are listed.

Observing environmental behaviour consists in ‘systematically watching people use their environments: individuals, pairs of people, small groups and large groups’, paying special attention to ‘how a physical environment supports or interferes with behaviours taking place within it’ and to the ‘side effects that the setting has on relationships between groups or individuals’ (Zeisel 2006, p.191). An important part of this observation is mapping the different activities as a sequence of behavioural steps; in order to be able to analyse the behaviour of people in a specific time frame in an specific area. The bottom part of figure 13 shows the elements in environmental behaviour described by Zeisel (2006).

**Literature research - PART III Theoretical framework**

This research tool will allow including theoretical findings, using them to frame both the analysis of the problem as well as inputs for the proposed design interventions. The emphasis of this research would be on understanding social interaction between different cultural groups. The first part of the discussion would focus on the definitions of public space –physical space- as the host of many of those interactions; followed by the definition of social space and its relationship to the physical one. The third part would then define multicultural cities, including the role that immigrants play in such environments and how they adapt to their new situation, ending with how different groups assign value to public space. This part would build towards conclusions of how this multicultural interaction might be encouraged or facilitated.

**Reference projects**

There is at least one neighbourhood in Madrid that had undergone an emblematic regeneration and is now a
multicultural and liveable residential area: Lavapiés. After being declared a priority area to intervene (Area de Rehabilitación Preferente – ARP) in 1997 the area went through big changes including ‘rehabilitation of housing, architectural improvement programmes, a social intervention plan and the creation of new facilities’ as Diaz (2007) explains. Figure 14 shows the area included in this regeneration process, where the public spaces are highlighted according to their function.

In a different scale, Fainstein (2005) refers to Trafalgar Square in London -see figure 14-, Djemaa el-Fna Square in Marrakech -see figure 15- and Plaza Mayor in Madrid -see figure 16-, when discussing Iris Marion Young’s desire for urban diversity. Fainstein (2005) states that the above mentioned spaces ‘offer the opportunity for high levels of interaction among persons of different social background’ consequently meeting Young’s criteria. Therefore, through the analysis of the physical environment it should be possible to understand what do these places have that encourages social interaction between different groups.

The reference projects would be evaluated, they may have things in common that make them good public spaces that facilitate interaction. By using principles taken from the work of Christopher Alexander in his Pattern language and Jan Gehl in Cities for people, regarding the physical characteristics of the reference projects, it could be established if some of those physical traces and/or general strategies could be applied or reinterpreted for public spaces in the studied neighbourhoods. In general, the principles of both mentioned works are related to the proportions of space, activities around them, characteristics of the buildings that define them, placing of urban elements -trees, furniture-, among others.
6. Relevance

The aim of this project is to research neighbourhoods in Madrid, with a high share of immigrant population. The focus of the study is the social interaction between different cultural groups, and the relationship between such interaction and the built environment. Firstly, from the academic perspective, this is an important issue for different scales of the Urbanism discipline. Contemporary cities are multicultural environments; globalization is not only an economic change but a social one, and dealing with different cultures sharing space in those cities is an important part of that social change. Urban planners and designers should be able to understand the demands that people with different cultural backgrounds have over public space of their cities.

By researching how different cultures value public space and how the built environment might be preventing the interaction between groups, it would be possible to improve it in order to encourage that interaction. The goal then would be to facilitate multicultural interaction and make the public space a safe and comfortable environment for the users.

Secondly, from the societal point of view, the issue is relevant because it refers to the quality of life of immigrant groups in new cities. These cities, such as Madrid, are probably offering better opportunities for them when compared to the situation in their home countries. However, from different immigrant groups come different demands. When we look at the groups who are not currently present in the public space, their absence is possibly caused by the inadequate offer of public space. Additionally, there is a great shortage of open public spaces and public facilities in the studied area which worsens the lack of interaction and raises the need to compete for the little available space.

These are the reasons why, by increasing the number of public spaces and improving the quality of the existing ones, the leisure opportunities in the neighbourhood would increase and the green structure of the area would improve as well. Ultimately, there will be more spaces where interaction can take place.

Note about figure 18

The newspapers in Spain show pieces like the ones used here to support the relevance of carrying on a project in the selected district.

The report on the left ‘A district without movie theatres’ refers to the last closed on October 2013. After having something like 15 cinemas in the 1970s, according to the men interviewed in the article, Tetuán now has none.

The piece on the right ‘The Caribbean in Tetuán’ is actually a positive review, explaining that the large amount of Latin American shops and restaurants in Tetuán attracts more Spaniards everyday. During the week, people working around these restaurants are trying Latin American food, which they say is delicious and cheap.

This is a small sign of the possibilities for multicultural interaction and exchange.
## 7. Time table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>Personal interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>Problem statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>Problem analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Theory research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>Location and scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>Definition - design goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>Location visit (tentative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>Location analysis - Data analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>Apply general components</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>Conceptual implementation of findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>Design intervention - quarter scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>Design interventions - urban design scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>Design details</td>
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<td>P4</td>
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<tr>
<td>P5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
8. Main design goal

The thesis is based on the assumption that the physical environment influences the way people act, by changing the physical environment the behaviour could change as well. Therefore, by modifying living environments in multicultural neighbourhoods it might encourage multicultural social interaction, embracing and encouraging the different lifestyles that compose those multicultural environment of current cities.

Zeisel (2006) explains an exercise carried on by Sommer (1969) regarding the position of furniture elements in a hospital. Zeisel (2006) describes that by Sommer moving the furniture around in different ways, eventually he reached an inflection point and that ‘when this threshold of environmental change was reached, changes in behaviour took place as well’ (Zeisel 2006, p.160).

In a more general way, Carmona et al. (2007) state that ‘the physical environment has a determining influence on human behaviour’ (Carmona et al. 2007, p.133). This sort of statements found throughout different literature sources, are supporting the above mentioned assumption.

Immigrants from specific ethnic groups, although they want to be part of the culture of their arrival country, they also want to preserve some of their own costumes. It is important for each ethnic group, to count with space in the city that would support its needs, as well as those of the other groups, all in equal conditions. As well as Fainstein (2005) explains: ‘a metropolis that allows people from a variety of ethnic and racial backgrounds equal rights to city space’, referring to the work of planning theorist Leonie Sandercock.

The idea is then to promote new public spaces that encourage interaction and exchange between different groups of immigrants and native population; this includes also the groups who are not currently using the existing spaces, probably due to lack of self-esteem or; competition over just a few existing spaces and cultural boundaries.

There will be two interrelated subjects to address for the project area. The first one refers to the intervention of public spaces to make them facilitators of multicultural interaction. The second one deals with a degree of flexibility needed for those spatial interventions to be resilient to the passing of time.

On the one hand, I am interested in working with different levels of intervention within public spaces in the studied neighbourhoods. Those neighbourhoods seem to be lacking high quality public open space -as well as public facilities- partly due to the morphology of the existing urban fabric.

Furthermore, the role of public space in the neighbourhoods should be to encourage the development of different activities either at the same time or during different times of the day. Those activities -might be cultural events, sport matches, fairs, games and so on- are specific for every culture, but they can be shared by everyone sometimes in a specific place: the public space.

On the other hand, is important to take into account that cultural differences found in the studied neighbourhoods are constantly changing in time. Thus, one main premise has to be some degree of flexibility in the proposed design interventions, since they might need to adapt later on.

Without modifying the entire existing structure of the project area, I want to find a way to intervene in existing buildings, vacant plots or poorly executed public spaces, and turn them into vibrantly used multicultural spaces. At the
same time, the new interventions might help to change the image of one of the poorer quarters of Tetuán’ district in the collective imaginary of the rest of the city’ population. The goal is to raise the social value of the residential area, raise the status of the neglected groups as well as bridging cultural and societal differences with design answers.

The final product will not be a design solution that could be applied in any multicultural neighbourhood. The idea is to define a strategy for the Bellas Vistas quarter that includes a set of interventions of public space; but that also leaving room open for interventions to be carried out by neighbours. As a strategy, these general rules could be transferable; they could be adapted and applied to other neighbourhoods with similar conditions in other Spanish or European cities.

The strategy may be divided into five general rules organized according their hierarchy:
1. Colonize space for pedestrians, take it away from the cars. Improve the movement of pedestrians in the area.
2. Diversify public space, so it can accommodate different activities and different groups.
3. Improve the quality and amount of green open space, linked to the first two rules (shortage of green space in Bellas Vistas quarter showed in figure 19).
4. Improve housing stock, different house sizes for different types of family
5. Locate parking buildings, as a consequence of the first three rules that involve removing parking from some streets.

The physical interventions include refurbishment of buildings, modifying their use and making them into public facilities; reshaping existing open spaces, such as squares or street profiles; ‘deleting’ existing buildings and replacing them with new public spaces or housing buildings. With a series of fixed interventions aiming to provide more diverse spaces, and leaving spaces open for other interventions, the public space of the neighbourhood would be able to facilitate multicultural interaction.

Figure 19: Green structure in the entire district. Source: Picture by author.
PART III
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Graphic index - relation between the parts of this work
9. Public space: the host of public life

When talking about planning or urban design, a basic and important part of the discussion nowadays, is the one that looks to define public space. There is room for many different questions: Does public space refer only to open space in the cities? Is it every space that is publicly owned? How can it be defined? Precisely because there are different points of view, some of which will be considered here, is important to reach a proposed response to the question: What is public space?

Public realm

When approaching the subject of public space, Carmona et al. (2010) start by defining the public realm, its relationship to public life and the actual physical public space. The public realm includes both the physical public space as much as what happens in it; as figure 20 shows, the public realm is composed by both physical and social space. The authors establish that the public realm are all those ‘spaces and settings’ that ‘support or facilitate social interaction’ (Carmona et al. 2010 p.137)

The public space then is the physical expression of the public realm. In figure 21 we can see how the public space, represented by the circle is the container of public life, the latter being represented by a variety of different shapes within the circle; they constitute the content or public life.

Finally, and based on Carmona et al. (2010) work, public space can be ‘external’ such as parks, squares or landscape; ‘internal’ represented in libraries, museums or public transport facilities; and; ‘external and internal quasi-public spaces’ which despite of the fact that they are privately owned, they do host social life, such is the case of cafes, restaurants or sports arenas.

Different ‘publics’

As mentioned before, there are several different approaches when defining public space. The answer from Iveson (1998) cautiously states that because there are multiple definitions of ‘public’ in English, by using one or the other, the resulting definition of contemporary public space would be equally multiple. He does describe four models of public space –ceremonial, community, liberal and multi-public- with their specific characteristics. The multi-public model of public space is relevant here since it acknowledges the existence of different publics.

The multi-public model of public space described by Iveson (1998) is based on the four ‘virtues of contemporary city life’ defined by Iris Marion Young’ model of public space in Justice and the politics of difference (1990). Those virtues revolve around the existence of different social groups, the interaction between them without exclusion and a degree of public life larger than the local scales.

Iveson (1998) explains that even though the multi-public model of public space imagined by Young includes different publics and proposes an ‘equitable and non-exclusionary model of public space’ (Iveson 1998, p.31), it also lacks a spatial approach regarding the type of interaction between the different publics mentioned.
Public space in multicultural environments

It is important to note here that the public spaces of a city, however they might be defined ‘are not natural servants of multicultural engagement’ (Amin 2002, p.12). However, Amin (2008) argues that when public space is properly organized it possesses an important role in social interaction; it would be able to take the citizens out of their daily routine and ‘as a result increase our disposition towards the other’ (Amin 2008, p.6).

In the section titled assigning value to public space, some examples would be introduced referring to the meaning of public space for different cultural groups, how different people use different urban spaces. However, it will be noted here as Carmona et al. (2010) point out, that some spaces in the neighbourhoods do provide opportunities for multicultural interaction -such is the case of school lobbies, residential streets, neighbourhood parks or local markets- and that such spaces can serve as places of contact between people from different ethnic groups. Figure 22 shows an example as one of the biggest ‘Latin’ markets in Madrid Mercado de Maravillas, which in reality is a place filled with many different products used by different cultural groups which encounter each other in that space.

To summarize, public space has different ways of being defined: by ownership, by access, by use; in my research it will be considered as any space where public life takes place, including both formal and informal expressions of public life.

Thus, in contemporary cities, where diverse ethnic and cultural groups live together, the relation between public space and public life constantly changes; such a relation ‘is dynamic and reciprocal, with new forms of public life requiring new spaces’ (Carmona et al. 2010 p.141).

10. Social space

For this section, a brief discussion about social space would be based on the work of Lefebvre (1991), who has defined relevant principles about the subject. While he starts by discussing the general notions of ‘product’ and ‘work’ when arriving at the issue of space, the tone switches from absolute terms to broader relative ones. Social space cannot be simply defined as a product which ‘can be reproduced exactly, and is in fact the result of repetitive acts and gestures’; nor as a work which ‘has something irreplaceable and unique about it’ (Lefebvre 1991, p.70).

Lefebvre (1991) proposes a city as an example of the complexity of defining space in such terms. When talking about Venice he raises the question that, even though its space is unique and irreplaceable, is it a work or a product? According to Lefebvre (1991) the city is not a work of art because it was not planned in advance, but instead the space of the city is the result of many interventions through time aiming to produce space to build a settlement.

Social space is neither product nor work; it includes a series of objects but also the relationship between those objects. Lefebvre (1991) defines it as ‘the outcome of a sequence and set of operations, and thus cannot be reduced to the rank of a simple object’ (Lefebvre 1991, p.73).

In the same way, social space also contains knowledge within it. It is not merely the container of diverse objects -both from the natural and social realm- and of the relationship between them but it is also filled with ‘networks and pathways which facilitate the exchange of material things and information’ (Lefebvre 1991, p.77). The knowledge...
produced in social space comes from the different practices that take place in it. Therefore, any urban space can feed from all the social practices that it envelopes: information exchange, interaction and so on.

Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that social space is in fact not one space, but instead it is composed by multiple fractions, 'an unlimited multiplicity or uncountable set of social spaces' (Lefebvre 1991, p.86). Even more important is the premise that those diverse social spaces are related to one another and they actually overlap with each other. When the author states that 'social spaces interpenetrate one another and/or superimpose themselves upon one another' (Lefebvre 1991, p.86) it actually supports the idea that as social life and social groups diversify, the public spaces containing social life need to be equally diverse.

Finally, another relevant idea expressed by Lefebvre (1991), is the fact that the way space gets occupied is never random, it happens in accordance to 'analysable forms: as dispersal or concentration, or as a function of a specific orientation' (Lefebvre 1991, p.150).

To conclude this part, the most relevant notion is that social space changes in the extent that physical space and public life do [and vice versa]. In the same way that public space has its own rhythms of use, social space too has different ways of responding to the changes of physical space -figure 23 represents how I understand this notion, where the outer line is the physical space and the grey filling is the social space, when one of them changes the other has to adapt-. The public space of cities is not static, it can be changed, designed and improved. Therefore, by changing the physical environment, the social space would probably be affected too.

11. Multicultural cities

Starting with the Merriam Webster dictionary' definition of 'Multicultural: relating to or including many different cultures' we can understand that there are different definitions of multiculturalism and therefore, different kinds of multicultural environments [cities]; and that each definition entails different things for public space.

In this part we will look first, at the main authors defining multicultural environments. Sandercock describes how groups are differentiated and how they share space; while Burayidi  and Ameyaw discuss about the position that planners should consider when working with multicultural groups; second we will look at the role of immigrants in multicultural environments and their support networks; and third we will look at the value that different cultures assign to public spaces.

As the population diversity in contemporary cities keeps growing, the urban public spaces that would accommodate public life also need to get diversified.

On the one hand Sandercock (2000) explains that different groups ‘have different claims on the city for a full life and, in particular, on the built environment’ (Sandercock 2000, p.15). These groups can be differentiated by age, culture, religion and a number of other facts. However, what is important is to recognize that each group has the right to be different from the others, regardless of the criteria used to group them. Furthermore, every group has different
demands and they all have to share the same space, whether that space is a street, a neighbourhood or an entire city is beside the point. Thus, one key aspect to understand is how these different groups find ways to live together.

What is important to note here is that no person belongs to only one group. Figure 24 shows people belonging to different groups who have different claims for different spaces in the city. Take the men in the top picture, aside from being part of their gender group they are also white and Spanish; in the picture on the bottom they are also elderly men, but they are Turkish. The picture in the centre shows a teenager boy who is also part of the urban subculture of skating. It is by looking at the similarities between the different groups -and not only their differences- that some common ground between them could be found, understanding where the different groups intersect each other as displayed in Figure 25.

Sandercock (2000a) shows what she expects for the ideal multicultural city to be:

I dream of the carnival of the multicultural city: I don’t want a city where everything stays the same and everyone is afraid of change; where immigrants are called ‘blackheads’ and forced to find shelter in the industrial zone; ... I don’t want a city where I am afraid to go out alone at night, or to visit certain neighbourhoods even in broad daylight; ... I don’t want a city where my profession –urban planning- contributes to all the above, acting as spatial police, regulating bodies in space... (Sandercock 2000a, p.201)

On the other hand, Burayidi (2000) expresses planning is a profession that needs to be sensitive towards the differences regarding culture, race and other parameters. However, the author points out that the urban physical environment might not reflect the diversity of cultures, especially since after World War II, when Modernist planners eliminated most of the cultural identity in the urban form. Lately, some planning practices are focusing on a ‘neotraditional’ approach as a tool to avoid the homogeneity produced during the modernism years as ‘a way of injecting culture back into the built environment and into planning’ (Burayidi 2000, p.1).

Burayidi (2000) explains that the public realm is where the differences between groups become obvious, and is there where they should be sorted out. Furthermore, he points out that such differences may come from the different claims that each group has over space or from the different ideas of how the built environment should look like. These are the reasons he gives as for why planners should be prepared to deal with difference, in order to be able to resolve conflict and at the same time ‘maintain a unified public realm’ (Burayidi 2000, p.3).

Finally, Ameyaw (2000) points out when describing the process of appreciative planning, that the emerging sense of diversity looks for a goal of “mutual admiration society”. Such a society where the differences between groups are celebrated instead of being the cause of confrontation. In the same way, collaboration could achieve a ‘community that engages its citizens to address racial and ethnic issues can grow in self-esteem’ (Ameyaw 2000, p.111). The idea is to improve relations between people from different races and ethnic groups, to promote diversity.

Appreciative planning looks to change rigid planning practices into more flexible practices. The rational tradition
of city planning has been concerned mainly with the physical environment, while neglecting the socioeconomic, ethnic and cultural issues associated with it. A more flexible approach will enable planners to ‘celebrate the valuable assets multicultural groups bring to city life and planning deliberations’ (Ameyaw 2000, p.111). After all, planning can not and should not be separated from its social context.

The role of immigrants in multicultural environments

The Merriam Webster dictionary defines immigrant as: ‘a person who comes to a country to live there’. Especially since the mid-1980s, there has been an increased migratory movement towards more developed cities. The arrival of immigrants to such cities responds to opportunities to find better jobs and to search for a better quality of life.

Sandercock (1998) explains that the influx of immigrant population can change both the social and the spatial structure of the cities where they arrive. Sandercock (2000) gives an example of municipalities outside some Australian cities where some culturally different groups have tried to adapt to the inadequate response from the planning staff to their needs. This suburban settlements have an increasing Buddhist population and therefore the need to build a temple arose. After being directed towards an industrial zone in the periphery as a possible site, the Buddhist monks reacted by buying suburban houses and turning them into small temples with communal kitchens to prepare for festivities. This spatial segregation of a group because of its cultural and religious rituals is not an expression of multiculturalism but the opposite.

Support networks

There are social dynamics within immigrant groups which are not explicit in external public space, but are important traits for social interaction of some cultures. These are the informal support mechanisms, which play a key role in achieving success in the adaptation and integration process of some immigrant groups.

When Eraydin, Tasan-Kok & Vranken (2010) refer to Turkish immigrants from rural areas living in Antwerp, they emphasize that both family networks and spaces to socialize -such as cafes, shops or the mosque- have a key role in their adaptation process in the new city. Turkish immigrants tend to concentrate in specific neighbourhoods to live in the city, keeping their community ‘relatively inward looking, and deliberately self-contained.’ (Eraydin, Tasan-Kok & Vranken 2010, p.529)

From a different perspective, the work of Dominguez (2011) has researched how social support networks work for the Latin American immigrants in Boston. Dominguez (2011) discovered that social support can greatly affect the life course and social mobility for immigrants, along with the fluidity of networks. These networks are based on reciprocity, they provide the families within them with emotional support and day-to-day survival support as long as each link of the chain is able to give and receive support depending on the requirement. The anchors of the networks are able to be such thanks to their access to the labour market, a stable partner who can share the household responsibilities and living in subsidize housing allows to pool resources to pay for other expenses.

Dominguez (2011) establishes that women in her study function as anchors in their social networks, being strong, reliable and stable actor who are able to negotiate relationships. Such networks involve the support of family...
and close friends, which participate in ‘large kin networks with high levels of visitation and exchange of material, cultural and emotional goods.’ (Dominguez 2011, p.71)

Finally, Dominguez (2011) points out that the support networks within the Latin American immigrants may be very different from others. Because the Latin American culture celebrates interdependence, these immigrants are more likely to help others, especially friends and family. However this is not a characteristic found in other immigrant groups.

Assigning value to public space

The role that public space plays in the life of immigrant population is key to discuss here. As Leal & Leyva (2011) explain, the public space is the one that holds the collective expression and the social and cultural diversity of the city. With the increasing cultural diversity of cities the public space is under pressure, since now it has to attend to the desires of the newly arrived, as well as the existing population.

As Leal & Leyva (2011) discuss, the interactions that people have in the public space vary according to their cultural background and especially to their social group. For both Latin Americans and people from North African countries in the lower income group, most everyday life interactions in their countries of origin happen in the neighbourhood street. The authors keep on explaining ‘kids play in the street, women sit in front of their house’ doors to look around and talk to the neighbours, or people gather in groups in any corner simply to talk, get together or just spend some time with each other’ (Leal & Leyva 2011, p.325).

The above mentioned use of public space in low income neighbourhoods in Latin America or some North African countries, is in a way a consequence of the lack of other types of open public space. Figure 26 shows an aerial picture from an informal and highly populated settlement in Caracas, similar pictures with this kind of settlements can be found of most Latin American cities, where the only available open space actually is the street. Similarly, the historical urban fabrics in European cities may be lacking those same spaces, and the fact that central areas of the city are usually under a lot pressure to be built, is always a struggle to clear out new public spaces.

Additionally, it is possible to identify common responses from users to public space. Just like Amin (2008) describes ‘every public space has its own rhythms of use and regulation, frequently changing on a daily or seasonal basis’ (Amin 2008, p.9). This means that people can change their behaviour depending on the organization, use and other patterns of the public space, a big difference existing between a big, crowded square full of pedestrians and a small, quiet square with some café’ sitting areas.

When combining these two last parts, two conclusions can be drawn. First, support networks are more important for immigrants within the lower income groups, despite their different cultural background. Second, the role of public space for interaction between different social groups -including immigrants and the native population- are not only the spaces that can be used to develop and maintain the support networks for immigrants, but they are also the spaces available to recreate the cultural identity of each group as both an inclusion and a self-esteem mechanism.
First, public space is defined in my research as any space where public life takes place, including both formal and informal expressions of public life. Due to the cultural and ethnic diversity that exists in many contemporary cities the public space needs to be diverse as well ‘rather than a ‘unitary’ polis or public sphere, it may be better to conceive of a series of separate yet overlapping public spheres involving, for example, different socio-economic, gender and ethnic groups’ (Carmona et al. 2007, p.140). Sandercock (1997).

In a similar way, Sandercock uses an example stating that ‘if different cultures use public and recreational space differently, then new kinds of public spaces may have to be designed, or old ones re-designed, to accommodate this difference’ (Sandercock 2010, p.322), to refer to the need of public space to be more diverse in cities with cultural and ethnic diversity. Lownsborough & Beunderman (2007) contribute to the importance of public spaces and the potential they have in neighbourhoods by stating that the spaces people use the most are the local ones, the ones they use regularly.

Second, social space is produced in specific ways, not random ones. This means that the way that people occupy the ever-changing public space of contemporary cities is what constitutes the social space. Therefore, by intervening the physical environment, social space and the life that goes with it will adapt. This process works as a kind of cycle; by changing the container the content would change and then because of this new content the container would change again time and time over.

And third, multicultural cities where immigrants with different cultural backgrounds arrive every day need to be more inclusive. Common ground between different people living together can be found where the different groups intersect. Support networks are key to some of this groups, and even though they are not part of the physical space but mainly the social one, they need to be taken into account when discussing multicultural environments.

Understanding how people from different cultures assign value to public space and how this value is included in their everyday lives, can be key to encouraging small interactions by introducing small changes in the physical space.

There is no denying that the environment influences how people act. As Carmona et al. (2010) explain the process works both ways, since people are constantly creating and modifying the space around them, and at the same time they are being influenced by its physical traces. Therefore, is possible to say that urban designers are influencing the behaviour of citizens and thus, influencing social life.

The literature that has been reviewed so far, focuses mainly on the social aspects of living in multicultural environments, while the aspects concerning the physical environment and how it influences such behaviours have no specific suggestions. In these research works, the physical environment has been taken as a constant, a static entity.

Nevertheless, urban designers could actually make suggestions in the design of public spaces that would facilitate the interaction between different groups, changing a multicultural environment into an intercultural one. Rishbeth (2001) suggests three basic design responses: ‘symbolic reference’, ‘experimental reference’ and ‘facility provision’ tools that can be used when proposing interventions in public spaces.

Amin (2002) proposes that interaction is an everyday life engagement and that ‘banal transgressions’ that work their way around the differences are key. In that way, spaces that involve the neighbours’ participation ‘can become sites of social inclusion and discursive negotiation’ (Amin 2002, p.15). The small ‘micro-publics’ that Amin (2002) refers to, represented by the social space where this day-to-day interaction takes place—schools, local markets, community gardens- would determine the terms in which social engagement in multicultural cities can be encouraged.


Restrepo, P. (2005) Aproximación a la concepción del espacio en las diferentes culturas que conforman el contingente migratorio de la Comunidad de Madrid (Approaching the conception of space in different cultures that make up the immigration share of the Community of Madrid). In VVAA (2005) El urbanismo ante el encuentro de las culturas. La inserción socioespacial del inmigrante en la Comunidad de Madrid (Urbanism at the meeting of cultures. The socio-spatial integration of immigrants in Madrid) Director Uña Suarez and Brusquetas Galán. Department of environment and territorial planning. Community of Madrid.


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APPENDIX

Metro lines connection
Madrid
In order to evaluate the characteristics of the area, these two maps show the position of the study area in the city scale.

The map on the left shows the different metro lines that go through the area, which is actually very well connected to the city centre, the airport, the central train station and the inter-urban train stations, among others.

The map on the right shows the green structure of the city. While there is a big amount of open space, a lot of that space is not actually public space. In the central part of the map a network of parkways and small squares can be distinguished, but it stops on the east side of the study area. Extending the greenery network to some streets in the study area might be considered for the design intervention for the Bellas Vistas quarter.
One way street
Two ways street
Dead ends