MY IMMIGRANT NEIGHBOUR:
Social interaction and public spaces in multicultural neighbourhoods.

Master Thesis
Susana Somoza Parada

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My immigrant neighbour
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Delft University of Technology
Faculty of Architecture
Department of Urbanism
MSc 4 Urbanism
Urban Regeneration

Supervisors
First mentor: Birgit Hausleitner
Second Mentor: Egbert H. Stolk
External advisor: Francisco Gonzalez
External examiner: Lei Qu

Author
Susana Somoza Parada
Student number: 4255119
susanasomoza@gmail.com

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Preface

This thesis has been the result of one year’s hard work, the final year to complete my Masters in Urbanism at TU Delft. This last year was filled with emotions and challenges. Throughout this time I have been surrounded by wonderful people who I would like to thank.

I want to express my deepest gratitude to my mentors Birgit Hausleitner and Egbert Stolk for challenging me to step out of my comfort zone and for all their support and encouragement in doing so. I also want to thank Francisco Gonzalez for the few but very rich discussions over coffee, about Madrid. This thesis would not have been possible without them.

I want to thank my parents for their unconditional support, even from the distance they have always been there for me. I also want to thank my sister, who is my role model and my partner in crime.

Finally, I want to show my appreciation to my colleagues for all the discussions of the last year. I want to thank R. Hendriks and D. Jindal in particular, for all their advice, for all those nights in the library and for keeping this year filled with fun moments.
ABSTRACT

Cities the world over have been changing rapidly in the last decades. Globalisation, migration and technological advancement have a great influence on the life of cities, shaping their space. We live in a global world where labour markets, economic movement and massive migration trends have been changing the social and demographic composition of cities; in a world where most shopping, social networking and recreation can take place in the virtual world. As a consequence, the physical space of the cities seems to be less important as people tend to withdraw from it; due to the presence of ‘strangers’ or to the lack of time after working hours and so on, taking interaction out of the public realm and transferring it for the virtual world.

However, public space in cities keeps having an important role in the lives of people from the most vulnerable social groups. Having limited access to the virtual world, public space in the neighbourhoods where they dwell might be the place to share their daily experiences with neighbours that may have similar ones.

Madrid has been the case studied in this work. As a major European city, it has attracted immigrants from various origins resulting in a multicultural city. Leonie Sandercock refers to the age of migration in her book Towards Cosmopolis; she describes the impact that immigrants have in their arrival cities ‘When residents with different histories, cultures, and needs appear in ‘our’ cities, their presence disrupts the taken-for-granted categories of social life and urban space. The urban experiences of new immigrants, their struggles to redefine the conditions of belonging to ‘their’ new society, are reshaping cities’ (Sandercock 1998, p. 15)

The historical fabrics of the inner city of Madrid are not attractive areas for the middle and upper socioeconomic groups to dwell, so they have been occupied by the most vulnerable groups. As a result, historical fabrics keep deteriorating and turning into deprived neighbourhoods which lack qualitative public spaces, facilities and appropriate housing stock.

Tetuán is one of the districts in Madrid’ central area. It has a morphological mixture in its urban fabrics, including a historical portion in one of its quarters, which is also the quarter with higher shares immigrant population within the district and the city as a whole. This work focuses on that quarter –Bellas Vistas- investigating multicultural social interaction in public spaces.

The lack of public space in the study area, as well as the lack of places that could facilitate multicultural interaction are the two main components of the problem statement.

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 non-existent.

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. 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.

Therefore, the main research question for this work has been: How can public spaces facilitate interaction between groups with different cultural backgrounds in multicultural neighbourhoods? To answer this question, a set of sub-questions have been defined. These sub-questions have been defined in order to organise the research and by
combining their answers get a result for the main one.

The research has been carried out using a combination of methods. Exploring the study area, alongside with observation and mapping were used as key methods in order to understand the different aspects of the study area. Additionally, a theoretical research has provided the framework for the development of the analytical framework. The analysis of the area has been divided into three parts –city scale, quarter scale and available space- which play a role in the proposed design interventions.

This work is divided in five parts. The first one describes in depth the problem field by defining some key notions related to immigration, multiculturalism in the city and morphological characteristics.

The second parts is the theoretical framework. Three main concepts are discussed in this part: Public space, social space and multicultural cities. These concepts are key for the analysis of the area and for the design proposal.

The third part is the analytical framework. This part shows the results of the different research methods that have been used.

The fourth part comprises the design proposal. The design includes a proposal for the position of the quarter within the district. A proposal for the quarter scale, which have been divided into two different levels of intervention. Finally, for the block scale a set of rules have been defined and a possible scenario of how it could look like when applying those rules is shown as a result.

Finally the last part explains the conclusions and reflections derived from this study. The most relevant findings resulting from this work are summarised there, as well as some recommendations for future research.
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PART I
INTRODUCTION & PROBLEM FIELD
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 recognise 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 considered 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’ (Sandercock 1998, p.15).

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 Sennett (1977) states ‘confusion has arisen between public and intimate life’ (Sennett 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 it is time for re-using existing structures 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’ (Diaz 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 happened 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 notions 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 Martinez & 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 those 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 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 as the focus for this study is actually a 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 already living in Madrid for a long period of time; this subgroup includes immigrants from a variety of countries. Nowadays they are integrated into the Spanish society, they have been assimilated by the main stream culture. Restrepo (2005) discusses the case of the second generation of Chinese immigrants; while the first generation is usually far from integrating 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 attend catholic schools in the areas where they live.

Another subgroup are immigrants who are just arriving to the city. For immigrants coming from Northern African countries for example, they 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 like shown in figure 2. This ‘hot bed system’ is supposed to be a temporary situation though, but it is quite difficult to conduct a research to track this 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 tend to live in areas where the native citizens share 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, tend to move to the periphery as well as the rest of the middle and higher classes. 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 Eastern European, the one from Maghreb/Sub-Saharan Africa and the one from the Middle and Far East.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural group</th>
<th>Main nationalities</th>
<th>% of the cultural group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic American</td>
<td>Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Paraguay, Venezuela, Argentina</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern European</td>
<td>Romania, Bulgaria, Poland, Ukraine</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maghreb / Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>Morocco, Algeria, Senegal, Nigeria, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Far and Middle East</td>
<td>China, The Philippines, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Cultural groups and main nationalities. Source: Instituto de Estadística ICM.
Table 2 shows the nationalities that constitute each group with larger presence in Madrid. Restrepo (2005) uses these groups to describe their general 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 either displaced from rural areas towards 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- also migrate due to economic reasons, due to the weaker economies in their home countries which make them vulnerable when competing in the market economy. 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 European Union countries. The immigrants from this group were young, they left their countries alone 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 for the Filipinos 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 the culture of their new city.

Two main conclusions 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 group 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. The focus of this study is Tetuán, one of the districts inside the M30 highway boundary —see location within the city in figure 2—. 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 7 on opposite page- and each of the quarters is divided into small neighbourhoods or sections. The area to be studied is the *Bellas Vistas* quarter, on the bottom left part of the district. As figure 8 shows, most 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 the proportions of the groups, with more or less presence in each part. Table 3 shows the largest groups of immigrants according to their countries of origin. Next to it, the three pie charts show three examples of the variations in the proportions of each group across the district, demonstrating some kind of concentration of different ethnic groups in specific neighbourhoods.

Figure 4 represents an area in the *Bellas Vistas* quarter (079606004) which has one of the largest amount of Romanians a group as big as the one from Ecuador, while the Filipinos and the Dominicans share the third place. Figure 5 shows a neighbourhood from *Valdeacederas* quarter (079606104) where more than half of the immigrants are Latin American -adding the groups from Paraguay, Dominican Republic, Ecuador and other Latin Americans-. Finally, figure 6 shows the proportions for a neighbourhood in the *Berruguete* quarter, where the group from the Maghreb/Sub-Saharan is one of the bigger ones in the area.

| Total amount of immigrants in Tetuán and the percentage of the bigger national groups |
|-----------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| **Tetuán district**         | **35,005**       | **73.0%**        |
| Ecuador                     | 5,426            | 16.0%            |
| Dominican Republic          | 3,410            | 10.0%            |
| Paraguay                    | 2,986            | 9.0%             |
| The Philippines             | 2,543            | 7.0%             |
| Romania                     | 2,353            | 7.0%             |
| Morocco                     | 2,131            | 6.0%             |
| Peru                        | 2,059            | 6.0%             |
| Bolivia                     | 1,739            | 5.0%             |
| China                       | 1,474            | 4.0%             |
| Poland                      | 294              | 3.0%             |

**Table 3:** Percentage of immigrants larger national groups

*Source: Instituto de Estadística ICM.*

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**Figure 3:** Location of Tetuán district.

*Source: Instituto de Estadística ICM.*

**Figure 4:** 079606004 Bellas Vistas

*Source: Instituto de Estadística ICM.*

**Figure 5:** 079606104 Valdeacederas

*Source: Instituto de Estadística ICM.*

**Figure 6:** 079606108 Berruguete

*Source: Instituto de Estadística ICM.*
The difference in proportions have come to show that some of the neighbourhoods are more diverse than others. In the example shown in figure 3, 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 dynamics and demands in specific neighbourhoods might vary from one another, as well as the proportions between different groups.

An important remark about the Bellas Vistas quarter is that even without much public space available there are some levels of interaction, although not necessarily between different cultural groups. What has been observed during the visits to the area is that the street is heavily used as a place for meeting, different corners are occupied during some times along the day. It seems that different cultural groups are only interacting with each other for basic interaction in shops and involve transactions like purchases, hair cuts and so on.

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. The influence of immigrants in social levels such as the average age of the population and the percentage of unskilled labour in the district are to be considered.

According to Madrid’ statistics Institute -ICM- the neighbourhoods with high shares of immigrant population in the district also show lower average age of the population and a higher percentage of unskilled employed labour when compared to other sections with less immigrant population. This leads to two conclusions; first, immigrant population is in general younger than the Spaniards living in these areas; second, a high share of immigrants are employed and working, but their education levels might not be professional, instead they are employed doing manual labours.

These indicators give a general idea about the living conditions in the quarter. This data describes a deprived quarter, having a low socioeconomic position in the entire district. The impact that vulnerable groups living together in some city areas and the implications this has for public space will be addressed in the next part.
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 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 is the main one to be considered in the study 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 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 or Plan Castro -named after its
designer- was planned during the mid 19th century as a response to the increase of the city’ population and it was
inspired partly by the same ideas of Baron Haussmann for Paris. The plan defined three different areas of the city: the
city centre, the Ensanche [enlargement] and the Extrarradio [outskirts] -meaning everything outside the road around
the enlargement area. However, the plan only designated a name for the outskirts but nothing else. The area known as
Tetuán district nowadays, was part of the northern outskirts.

The bigger city blocks on the eastern part of the research area, which contrast with the older historical blocks, were the
consequence of a different plan from the end of the 1940s Plan Bigador. Some of the morphological characteristics of
the research area are briefly explained below.

Morphological characteristics of Tetuán

When the Plan Castro failed to include the outskirts into the intervention area, it gave those areas -including Tetuán
district- leeway to grow in a way that lacked any formal organization. The implementation of the plan attracted a great
amount of population from the countryside to work on the enlargement project. These new inhabitants included
construction workers, woodworkers, brick makers among other craftsmen. They settled in the outskirts and made their
own houses in whatever way they were able to.

These circumstances generated a great contrast between the planned enlargement area and the informal
settlements on the outskirts. According to Burgos (2013) the amount of people living on the outskirts grew 27 percent
from 1909 until 1913; the amount of buildings grew 50 percent in the same 4 years. The rapid and informal growth of
such parts of the city meant that fifty thousand people were living in unhygienic conditions lacking basic services, very
close to the enlargement area with its wide avenues, established public spaces and urban blocks filled with hygiene,
well lighted houses.

As figure 11 shows, in 1900 the development of the district was already extensive. Burgos (2013) explains how
in 1909 a new plan by urbanist Núñez Granés was looking to improve the living conditions of the outskirts. Through
the plan hundreds of new houses would be build and basic infrastructure such as paved streets, electric lighting and
sewerage systems would be incorporated. Some of these affordable houses for the working class -built in the district
during the first three decades of the 20th century- are still standing in the district. They were semi-rural single houses
that kept some resemblance with the British garden city model; they were characterised by the use of brick as main
material.

As a consequence of its historical development, the presence of various urban fabrics in the district defines different
spatial conditions -see figure 12-. 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 influence social interaction.
Figure 12: Different urban fabrics in Tetuán district. On the left side the historical urban fabrics, small plots, irregularly shaped, following the hilly topography; on the right side newer areas, with closed building blocks and single buildings in closed plots, higher buildings, bigger blocks with regularized block shapes. Source: https://maps.google.com/

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 non-existent open public space other than the street; this is why most social interactions presently take place there. However, those interactions are mostly passing by and greeting each other. Since there is no space to slow down nor to sit, there are no opportunities for other kinds of interaction.

Other areas of the quarter with different urban typologies, such as lose single buildings in closed plots, do have space around them. After visiting the study area in two occasions, it was possible to conclude that, as far as can be seen through their fences, those spaces are not really used by their middle class residents, they are just left over private spaces.
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 12 original ones—before the 1860s expansion—would be considered as the centre.

The city centre of Madrid refers to the oldest 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 13 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; 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’s 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.

Figure 13: Madrid’s historical centre, currently Centro district. Source: http2.bg.blogspot.com
3. 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 environments in 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 spaces in the city -and even more so within the neighbourhood- that would support its needs. 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; 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 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.

Trying to keep as much as possible from the existing structure of the project area, I want to define locations where interventions should take place and what those interventions might be. The idea is to take advantage of vacant plots and available unused open spaces to turn them into spaces that facilitate interaction. The goal is to increase the amount, quality and diversity of places for people to meet as a first step towards interaction, which could lead later on
to increasing social value of the residential area, to raising the status of the neglected groups and to bridging cultural and societal differences.

The final product includes a strategy and set of rules which could be transferable to other areas with similar conditions; they could be adapted and applied to other neighbourhoods with similar conditions in other European cities. The strategy may be divided into five actions 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 14).
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 the reshaping of open space, like street profiles, turning leftover space into defined legible space and improving the spatial quality of existing defined spaces; removing existing buildings and replacing them with new public spaces and/or new buildings. The aim of the interventions is to provide more diverse and attractive spaces.

Figure 14: Green structure in the entire district.
Source: Picture by author.
4. Problem statement

The lack of public space in some historical parts of the city, as well as the lack of places that could facilitate 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 non-existent. Furthermore, there are no cultural facilities -theatres, museums, movie theatres- and not enough public facilities -sports, youth centres and 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 area. Even though conflicts between people can originate from other differences, I am choosing to work with difference between cultural groups because in my opinion -perception- cultural differences pose a big challenge for interaction especially for European cities- and this challenge would keep growing.

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.
5. 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 cultural 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?

The scheme on the left shows the relationship between the different research questions and the proposed methodology that has been used 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 and that by combining the results of the sub-questions, the main research question would be answered.
6. Methods

6.1 Exploring - Observation and mapping

In order to define what the current situation is, this has been the most effective method. By visiting the research areas, I have some answers the questions regarding what is currently happening in the public space of the Bellas Vistas quarter. Who is using the public space and how do the users behave in such spaces. Also, I have found who are the current users of the space—their age, cultural background, and so on- and which users are not present in the space.

I interviewed 36 people who live and/or work in the area. Even though this amount of interviews do not represent a sample from the statistical point of view, the variety of answers have been helpful in order to determine some parts of the design interventions. The results of these interviews are shown in Part III - Analytical framework.

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’s 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).

The observation carried out in the area was mainly focused on pedestrian movement on some key spaces in the area, both existing public spaces and available spaces for possible interventions. The results are shown in Part III - Analytical framework.

6.2 Literature research - PART II Theoretical framework

This research tool has been used to delineate the theoretical framework for this study. These findings have been used to define the analytical framework and also to evaluate the proposed design interventions, making sure that they are coherent with the over arching theoretical framework.

The emphasis of this research has been in trying to understand the challenges of social interaction between different groups. The first part of the theoretical framework focuses 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 deals with the definition of multicultural cities, including the role that immigrants play within them and how they adapt to their new situation, ending with how different groups assign value to public space. This
part concludes by naming some spaces where interaction is more likely to happen, those spaces that could facilitate interaction have been taken into account to include them in the design proposal.

6.3 Reference projects

This tool would be used for the last part of this work. The initial idea was to use reference projects to try and underpin what spatial characteristics are shared by some spaces where interaction takes place. Most of the spaces that were going to be evaluated are major public squares that Fainstein (2005) describes as spaces that offer opportunities for high levels of interaction between different groups -Trafalgar square in London, Djemaa el-Fna in Marrakesh and Plaza Mayor in Madrid-. Another reference project was supposed to be a residential area in Madrid that has been already regenerated: Lavapiés. All of these would have been the wrong type of projects to look for references.

Throughout the development of this work it has been clear that the type of reference projects needed to change. I will use existing projects as references, not going into a deep analysis but just looking for the main strategies used in each one. Also, for the design of public spaces the references have been surfacing more from the works of Christopher Alexander in his *Pattern language* and Jan Gehl in *Cities for people*, regarding the physical characteristics that make public spaces attractive and comfortable for use.

In general, the inputs from 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.

6.4 Space syntax

Space syntax is an analysis method widely used nowadays in the research of urban space. According to Van Nes (2011) based on the work of Hillier & Hanson ‘Space syntax measures how every public space or street segment in a built environment relates to all other public spaces’ (Van Nes 2011, p.7)

In their book *The social logic of space* (1984) Bill Hillier and Julienne Hanson set the basic principles for the later development of space syntax software that is being used today. Hillier & Hanson defined space as a system of *beads* (where space widens) and *strings* (where space narrows), which can be represented graphically and therefore ‘it can be analysed as a system of syntactic relations’ (Hillier & Hanson 1984, p.93).

Since the continuous system that is open space can be described as a set of syntactic relations, the analysis of a settlement can be viewed in terms of its axiality or convexity; the relation between different spaces can be described as distributed or non-distributed, symmetric or asymmetric, some of this relations are shown in figure 16 (Hillier & Hanson 1984, p.94). According to Hillier & Hanson (1984) it is possible to describe any configuration of urban space both in its whole and for each part using these spatial measurements.

In the first part of *The social logic of space*, Hillier & Hanson define society as a ‘system composed of large numbers of autonomous, freely mobile, spatially discrete entities called individuals’ (Hillier & Hanson 1984, p.32), and that ‘it is through its realisation in space that we can recognise that a society exists in the first place’ (Hillier & Hanson 1984, p.26). In order to be able to analyse various settlement layouts, Hillier & Hanson were then making the link between both systems, one continuous and rational -space- and one discontinuous and discrete -society-.

The authors state that settlement layouts can be noticeable different depending on factors such as social
grouping, ethnicity, culture and lifestyle; they also explain how big changes in society have been accompanied by big
spatial changes, and by doing so they show the influence that both systems have on each other. However, they explain
that as much as spatial order seems to be an intrinsic part of culture ‘based on generic principles of some kind’ the link
between the two systems -space and society- cannot be limited only to those generic principles (Hillier & Hanson 1984,
p.27)

Axial maps Madrid

In her book Van Nes (2011) explains axial maps are the basis for the space syntax method since they are a representation
of the publicly accessible space and they are the most commonly used. Axial lines represent the ‘longest and fewest
sight lines’ that go through space. Hillier & Hanson (1984) explain that this kind of representation makes it possible to
see how urban structures are different from each other, in terms of their axiality or axial extension.

The axial maps for integration with the different radius show the value of integration of every street in relation
to all the others, showing in red the ones with the higher values and dark blue with the lower ones. As a general
principle, long straight lines have higher integration values that long lines with direction changes.

For this project, only axial maps are used for the space syntax analysis. It is important to note here that the axial maps
used for this study were made considering only the part of Madrid inside the M30 highway. The fact that this is the
boundary of the axial map would have some effect on the results for the global scale, (integration HH r=n), since they
may differ a little from results using the entire city of Madrid.

The idea of using of space syntax as a method of analysis for this project is to be able to link the bigger and smaller
scales. First, by studying the axial map of the city of Madrid is possible to understand how Tetuán district ranks in the
integration values in the city.

Second, by studying the map of the district alone and using local integration values (r=5), it could be possible
to identify the streets with higher values, which is to say the better connected ones in the intermediate scale, with the
surrounding.

Finally, for the quarter scale the streets represent most of the public open space which exists nowadays in the
study area. Three complementing values would be use: local integration (r=3); topological total length (r>500); metric
total length (r=500). Van Nes (2011) explains that according to existing research, most European cities have an average
mean depth of three; also a radius of three is generally related to pedestrian movement, which is finally the movement
this study is concerned with. As for the topological and metric lengths, Van Nes explains that the used value should be
fixed in relation to the general measure of the entire system; in this case the district has been taken as the reference
measure.

Van Nes (2011) also explains how based on Conroy Dalton’ research there is a ‘competition between the desire
to select the simplest routes and the desire to maintain the shortest route from origin to destination’ and that probably
the shorter routes would be more likely picked over the simpler ones (Van Nes 2011, p.64). This is the reason to use the
combination of the metric and topological lengths within the quarter.

It is worth noting here that angular analyses will not be taken into account for this study. Even though these kind of
analysis have been developed within space syntax software mainly to get more accurate values for the integration of
slightly curved streets, the combination between topological length and metric length have been considered to be
more relevant based on Dalton’ findings mentioned above. Van Nes (2011) explains that people tend to pick linear
routes over those with direction changes; even though the majority of long streets in the area are not straight, they do describe linear routes.

One more brief remark from *The social logic of space*. Hillier & Hanson explain that there is a noticeable difference in the likelihood of use of any street in the system depending on the users, whether they are strangers or locals.

This is a relevant aspect to take into account, since most people using the streets in the study area either leave or work there, which means that they move around the area on a daily basis and they do it following a routine. According to Hillier & Hanson (1984) zones with low integration values are where strangers are less likely to penetrate.

Finally, the idea of using syntactic analysis for the area is to determine which streets are the ones with more potential for new use; the streets of the study area are currently the space where most interactions take place.

Thus, by finding out which streets are more likely to have larger amounts of pedestrian traffic, combined with other findings from the quarter scale, it seems possible to conclude that they represent opportunities to place new facilities -public spaces, shops, restaurants- along them.
7. Relevance

The aim of this project is to research neighbourhoods in Madrid, with high shares 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; dealing with different cultures sharing space in 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 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 public space in order to facilitate interaction. The goal then would be to facilitate multicultural interaction and make the public space a safe and comfortable environment for users with different claims or desires over it.

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 when compared to the living conditions 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 space available.

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.
8. 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 19 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 20 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 what 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 21 shows as an example 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.

Public space in multicultural environments have an additional challenge in order to facilitate interaction. Madanipour (2010) explains that some communication problems can take place in those public spaces as a consequence of the diverse forms of expression, where behaviours can be completely incompatible. However, the author points out that ‘when public spaces allow differences to be expressed, they can contribute to a sense of well-being’. This would be a key condition for public spaces in neighbourhoods with users from different cultures to fulfil.

Some important remarks about marginal public spaces and everyday public spaces have been included in the next section, as a consequence of the specific findings related to socioeconomic characteristics and the current state of the existing public space of the study area.

Marginal public spaces - Everyday public spaces

For most European cities when developing projects regarding public space, the focus is usually placed in the central or major public spaces, especially those which can help with the projection of a positive image of the city. These central spaces are a key part of the marketing strategy of contemporary cities. Madanipour (2010) explains that public spaces in deprived neighbourhoods -‘marginal public spaces’- are rarely taken into account in citywide improvement projects.

Mandanipour (2010) outlines the situation where the most vulnerable groups have been clustered in poor urban neighbourhoods ‘which now suffer from multidimensional disadvantage and stigma’ (Mandanipour 2010, p.114). Such neighbourhoods tend to ‘trap’ different vulnerable groups, limiting their access to resources, lowering their social mobility and disabling their ability to deal with daily based problems.

As a consequence, the public space in marginal neighbourhoods starts to show the ‘cracks’ resulting from disadvantage and difference between the groups, where ‘the cracks take the form of neglect and decline, as well as tensions along the lines of social fragmentation and stratification’ (Mandanipour 2010, p.115). Therefore, public space within such neighbourhoods should be key to take into account for improvement.

Local public spaces have a great significance when discussing and fighting social exclusion. Improving these spaces could have a positive effect in the perceived image of deprived neighbourhoods and they can ‘help avoid
stigmatization’ (Madanipour 201, p.129). Furthermore, for vulnerable population -low mobility- public spaces within their own neighbourhoods are much more likely to have an impact on their daily lives, on their perception of their own living environment and living conditions than major public spaces in the city.

Everyday public spaces are the ones where daily activities take place. Yücesoy (2006) explains that contemporary public space may be defined ‘based on lived experiences of various groups of counter-publics’ and that this definition is related to ‘the sharing of places and face-to-face interactions among individuals’ (Yücesoy 2006, p. 37). The author starts from such a notion in order to underline the importance of both everyday interactions and the public spaces that are likely to host them.

Yücesoy describes the everyday experiences –such as commuting, shopping and moving through streets and sidewalks- shared by neighbours of a specific area. The physical characteristics of daily used public spaces, as well as the activities that take place there, are more informal and usually less planned than the major public spaces of a city.

Everyday public spaces are related to everyday interactions, which according to Yücesoy can provide important evidence about the social structure of an area and can also ‘bear the potential for the creation of community bonds’ (Yücesoy 2006, p.37). For urban areas where vulnerable groups dwell, public spaces for everyday routines and activities to take place are the most likely to facilitate interactions.

The improvement of such public spaces in deprived neighbourhoods may also act as a catalyst for change. As Madanipour explains, there are different strategies that could be implemented in order to include the residents in the process, making them participants of the maintenance and management of public spaces or creating jobs for them in the execution of such improvements. As Madanipour explains ‘residents who are involved develop a sense of ownership and responsibility towards their environment’ (Madanipour 2010, p.127).

To summarize, public space has different ways of being defined: by ownership, by access, by use. For this project, it will be considered as any space where public life takes place, including both formal and informal expressions of public life and focusing on the local spaces. Those spaces within the study area are where everyday interactions are likely to take place.

Additionally, it is important to remark that for contemporary cities where diverse ethnic and cultural groups live together, the relation between public space and public life constantly changes, as the users keep changing over time. The space-life relation ‘is dynamic and reciprocal, with new forms of public life requiring new spaces’ (Carmona et al. 2010 p.141) and in spatial terms the physical settings need to be accessible to everyone and flexible in order to include different activities and users.
9. 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, 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. It is not merely the container of diverse objects -both from the natural and social realm- and of the relationship between them. 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, interactions and so on.

Furthermore, 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, as figure 22 shows. 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.

**Interpersonal space zones**

Edward T. Hall studied how people use space and how the space that anyone maintains between themselves and other people depends on the kind of interaction they have or are willing to have. Hall established four different zones that mark the degree of sociability in relation to the actual distance that people leave between themselves and others -see figure 23- always regarding that those measurements are likely to change with gender, culture or other individual traits. Based on Hall’ findings, Forsyth (2010) explains that personal space ‘provides a boundary that limits the amount of physical contact between people’ (Forsyth 2010, p.454). Meanwhile the social space is the one where most routine transactions take place and the public space is reserved for more formal encounters. The different zones are related to a degree of comfort that various interactions carry with them; therefore, when personal space is invaded people are not at ease and interactions belonging to each zone are less likely to happen.

The impact that the environment has over human behaviour is studied by many different disciplines. Some disciplines are focused on how groups influence the behaviour of individuals; others have an ‘environmental orientation’ and
these affirm that ‘groups are shaped by their environments’ based on the fact that physical settings ‘influence the group’ dynamics and outcomes’ (Forsyth 2010, p.445). Figure 24 shows the multi-level relations of how individuals are immerse in both social and spatial domains; highlighted are the scales that may apply to this specific study.

Forsyth explains that the relations between different groups are the ones that define social existence ‘for is the group that creates social obligations based on respect, trust, and a sense of community’ (Forsyth 2010, p.68). The physical locations where the different groups interact may greatly influence the behaviour of both individuals and groups. Forsyth continues explaining that most routines or ordinary behaviours are determined by the ‘environmental settings’ where they take place and that such places ‘often have boundaries that identify the edge of one behaviour setting and possibly the beginning of the next’ (Forsyth 2010, p.449). Also important to mention here is that some settings have a greater influence than others and that groups may have either positive or negative responses to specific settings.

Finally, related to how the physical environments influences behaviour, Lefebvre (1991) underlines 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 25 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, when changing the physical environment, social space would follow.

Figure 24: Forsyth (2010) Group dynamics.
Sources: Picture by author.

Figure 25: When physical space changes, social space adapts [and vice versa]
Sources: Picture by author.
10. 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.

For this part I 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. Secondly, I will look at the role of immigrants in multicultural environments and their support networks. Thirdly, I will make a short reference about the role fear may play in multicultural cities, based on Sandercock’ work. And finally, I 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.

No person belongs to only one group. Figure 26 shows people that belong 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. The boy probably has nothing in common with the elderly man in both pictures -aside from gender- but the men in the top and bottom pictures may. 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 27.

Sandercock (2000a) describes what she expects the multicultural city to be, a vision that I share:

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 that planning is a profession that needs to be sensitive towards the differences regarding culture, race and other parameters. However, the author points out that urban environments nowadays might not be reflecting the diversity of cultures they hold. Especially after World War II, 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 it 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.

Fear of the other

Leonie Sandercock in her book Mongrel cities, pays careful attention to fear as an important factor for the use of spaces in the cities. While the author explains that we all are ‘vulnerable to being unsettled by the presence of strangers’ (Sandercock 2012, p.123) she recognises that contemporary cities have an increasingly complex ethnic and cultural
diversity, and that the bigger challenges appear when all that diversity meets in one place ‘people hitherto unused to living side by side are thrust together in the mongrel cities of the 21st century’ (Sandercock 2012, p.86) or even in the same neighbourhood or street.

Sandercock elaborates, explaining that ‘migrants from diverse cultures are seen as bringing strange customs and lifeways that do not fit with their [citizens] idea of the identity of the nation, and of being ‘at home’ in that nation’ (Sandercock 2012, p. 122). However, what is more worrying is when this individual perceptions are taken as the base to build discourses of fear, ‘portraying certain groups as fear-inducing surely serves to some extent to produce the very behaviours that are dreaded, while also increasing the likelihood that such groups will be victimized’ (Sandercock 2012, p.124).

Thus, fear is associated with the loss of identity. For the native population they fear that immigrants may threat their way of life, but at the same time, immigrants are concern with the possibility of expressing their collective cultural identity in their new city.

Sandercock offers some inputs as to how societies can be reoriented to reconstitute themselves as truly multicultural ones. The author explains that it is a matter or tolerance, and that probably the forming of ‘new hybrid cultures by second generation immigrants’ fuels her vision for Cosmopolis. In the meantime though, cultural groups should have places in contemporary cities where they can ‘establish collective cultural expressions of their identity’ (Sandercock 2012, p.151); they should also have claims over the built environment, being able to modify it in order to reflect cultural diversity.

**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. The informal support mechanisms play a key role in achieving success in the adaptation and integration processes 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. They work 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 play this role 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 actors who are able to negotiate relationships. Social support 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 socioeconomic, 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. Lownsbrough & 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.

Social space is also the zone of interpersonal space where routine exchanges are suppose to happen. By introducing spaces with an intermediate degree of publicness, translating the social space as an interpersonal zone defined by Hall into a physical operation; allowing people to regulate the degree of interaction they wish to engage in.

Finally, 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 changes in the physical space. Additionally, introducing new spaces that are valued across cultural lines increases the likelihood of people from different groups to be attracted to them.

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, 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’, ‘experiential reference’ and ‘facility provision’ tools that can be used when proposing interventions in public spaces. The author explains that the symbolic
references are ‘frequently simplistic’ and that the ‘use of ‘ethnic’ forms can portray a caricature of a complex reality’ (Rishbeth 2001, p.359). Experiential references as Rishbeth (2001) explains refer mainly to landscape design, and does not apply here. Finally, the facility provision approach seems to be the most adequate one for this work, as Rishbeth explains its strength relies on being inclusive as ‘it does not differentiate between different users or define specific areas for ethnic communities’ (Rishbeth 2001, p.362).

As a last remark from the researched theory, 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 spaces 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.
PART III

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK
11. CITY SCALE
The map on the left shows the different metro lines that go through the area, both Tetuán district and Bellas Vistas quarter are highlighted with coloured backgrounds.

Regarding public transport, the area is actually very well connected. Bellas Vistas quarter has four metro lines crossing it. The grey line -6- is a circular line that goes around the city, and connects the area with the lines that reach the airport and it also goes to three stations for interurban trains, which move between Madrid and other towns from Madrid’ metropolitan region.

The light blue line connects the quarter with the northern part of the district. It is also a direct line to reach the main train station and another one for the interurban trains. This line also reaches the southeastern parts of the city. Both the light blue and the red line go straight to the city centre.

The yellow, purple and dark blue lines reach stops which belong to the B1 zone of the subway system.

The intersection between grey, red and light blue lines -circled- is also one important node for the bus system within the city. There are at least 6 different routes that go through this point.

Regardless from the fact that the area is very well connected with the public transport system, neighbours complain about the amount of available parking spaces on the street.

The design proposal would actually take advantage of such public transport network to try to reduce the amount of space that cars take over on the streets of the quarter.
**Green structure**

The map on the right shows the green structure of the city, both Tetuán district and *Bellas Vistas* quarter are highlighted with coloured backgrounds.

While in general there is a big amount of open space, a lot of that space is not actually public space. There are two major parks close to the quarter:

**#1. Dehesa de la Villa:** One of the oldest parks, it used to be a forest that covered most of the western area of the *Bellas Vistas* quarter. Currently it remains as a more or less natural forest unlike other parks in the city.

**#2. Rodríguez Sahagún:** This one is a new park, mostly filled with sport facilities. This park, unlike the previous one, has been completely design.

**#3. Complutense University campus**, is not a park, but the green areas are open to the public...

In the central part of the map a network of parkways and small squares can be distinguished, it reaches the eastern part of the district but it stops on the east side of the study area.

From this map is clear that there are major green areas -for recreation and leisure- fairly close to the study area. However, it is the lack of everyday green spaces what would be the focus of the design proposal. It is possible to conclude that extending the network towards some streets within the study area.
We can see on the map that the integration values for the historical fabrics of the city -both the city centre and the south part of the Bellas Vistas quarter- are quite similar.

There are some streets in the district that seem to have some relevance for the city as a whole, shown on the scheme above. First, the main streets that define the border of the district on the south and east sides, the thickest ones on the scheme. Second, the street that goes across the district from south to northeast -Bravo Murillo- which is also a main shopping street. And third, in a lower degree, the street that defines the border of the Bellas Vistas quarter on the west.

This last one represents an opportunity for the design proposal and since it is also well connected with public transport, it should have enough traffic to exploit.
In general axial maps usually show straight lines to have higher integration values, they seem to be better integrated because the same line is crossed by many others. For streets with curves in them, the values are usually lower, since they are described as a set of straight segments, which means that the crossing lines count as crossing each segment and not a single line.

The assumption then is that straight streets are more likely to be followed than the curved ones. This results in a discrepancy, because slightly curved streets are shown as less integrated when in fact they might be highly used.

Therefore, the more regular grid on the east has better integration values than the more irregular grid on the west. For the Bellas Vistas quarter, the streets that define its limits are better integrated in general than the ones inside the quarter, as shown on the scheme below.

Nevertheless, there are some streets within the irregular grid that show a relatively high value of integration for this radio. Those would be the ones which are more or less straight and therefore are suppose to have high visibility, shown on the scheme below. On the next page however, an evaluation of some of these assumed characteristics.

For the pink line on the scheme is interesting that while it does not have such a high integration value, it is one of the few lines that crosses the main street that defines the boundary of the quarter. This will be explained further also in the next page along with the conclusions.
**Bellas Vistas quarter - Integration**

The maps on the left show the measures for integration HH for the quarter; $r=n$ for the top and $r=3$ below that. Regardless of the radio, the more straight lines keep the higher integration values, they are shown on the schemes next to each map.

Axial maps are two dimensional, which means that they do not take into account if there are height differences in any given street. The theory is that straight lines have high visibility and therefore, people are more likely to walk those straight lines, where they can see where they are going. However, the study area has great height differences.

The sections at the bottom of this page show two examples of streets with high integration values -highlighted on the bottom left corner map- that lack visibility due to the height difference.

Additionally, even though such high integration is usually correlated to pedestrian movement, in the case of steep slopes, no matter how straight the street is in plan, it may not be highly used; not only due to the lack of visibility, but also as a comfort preference for some vulnerable groups as the elderly or people pushing strollers.
**Bellas Vistas quarter - Metric total length r=500 metric**

The map on the right shows the shortest metric distances in some lines in the central area of the quarter. According to Hillier & Hanson (1984) strangers are less likely to penetrate less integrated areas such as the ones shown in red.

While such streets with the shortest metric distances might have some relevance for the block scale, they do not seem to have the potential for high amount of use. Nevertheless, for that same reason, they might be ideal for locating spaces such as playgrounds or semi private spaces, where neighbours know that children, women and other vulnerable groups could be less susceptible to unwanted contact with strangers.

**Bellas Vistas quarter - Topological total length**

The map on the right shows the lines with the shortest topological total length. Naturally, there is some coincidence between the lines with short metric distance and short topological length, both are a consequence of the layout of the streets following the topography of the area.

These two maps have not been as influential for the definition of the design proposal for the quarter scale as the other axial maps. The focus of the interventions is to locate new spaces where they would be accessible to more people, increasing their potential for use; and the streets with short metric and topological lengths are usually less likely to be used.
Conclusions from the city scale analysis

The key elements from the city scale analysis are summarized here.

+ The background of the map shows the green structure of the city. From this aspect comes one of the main conclusions, that the green structure seems to stop outside of the quarter. Introducing local scale greenery into the quarter would be an intervention consequence of this statement.

+ The highlighted streets have the higher integration values according to space syntax. Some of them are also major arteries for public transport and shopping. Streets with high integration values, would be the ones where pedestrian movement can be improved and new spaces can be proposed along them.

  Some of these streets may play a key role in connecting the quarter with its neighbours. Pedestrian movement along them must be improved as the main street crossing the district from north to south is not only an important street use wise but is also a barrier between the quarters on each side of that street.

+ Even though the public transport network serves most on of the quarter, new bus lines might be missing from the edge towards inner areas of the quarter.
12. QUARTER SCALE
Introduction quarter scale - basic data

*Bellas Vistas* quarter, is divided into twenty two (22) sections or neighbourhoods, each one with population between 990 and 2200 inhabitants. Each one has a number and that is how they are identified by the Municipality for data and other purposes.

For the analysis of the study area, this division is important to understand the distribution of population density, immigrant population and age groups. By locating groups in specific areas it is possible to get an idea of the distribution of the most vulnerable groups and their needs.

The maps on the next page point out some interesting facts. Figure 28 shows the neighbourhoods with the higher shares of immigrant population -28 percent and higher- and the two sections with the lowest shares -9 and 8 percent. Dominicans are the biggest group in general and in seven of the twelve sections with high share of immigrants, shown in figure 29; they are also the biggest group in the sections with the lowest immigrant population. However, they are not the biggest group in section 19, on the eastern part of the quarter, commonly called Little Caribbean -they are not even the
The second biggest group which is the one from Ecuador.

Figure 30 shows the sections where Ecuadorians are the biggest group. Figure 31 shows the sections where Filipinos are the biggest group, including section 19. Figure 32 shows the section where the Chinese group is the biggest one, sharing the first place with Dominicans.

These culturally diverse sections call for more attention regarding the provision of public space. Not only make open spaces available where they are not, but also try to use them as a mean to facilitate interaction.

*Leave open spaces, without design, for the neighbours to develop them. Sharing space. Basic principle = they have to be open and green spaces.*

*Increase the amount of opportunity to meet. Meeting people from different groups - get use to seeing them - safety feeling.*
Existing public space and available plots

The map on the left shows the existing open public spaces in the Bellas Vistas quarter. This is important to know what is the current state of the existing public spaces in the quarter. There are two defined squares in the area, marked on the map on the left with numbers 1 and 2. The other spaces are numbered below:

#3. According to documents from the Municipality, this is a public space. However, figure 33 shows the condition of this so called “public space”

#4. This space shown in figure 34, is one of the biggest leftover spaces in the study area. It use to be a street, which is now closed to car traffic but still is possible to see the road. It does have a publicly owned court even if is closed with a fence.

#5. Figure 35 shows the entrance to this space (top) and how it looks inside (bottom). The buildings around this space have no direct access to it and they are facing their backs towards it.

#6. Is a parking lot, belonging to the building next to it.

+ Improve the quality of public space in general. More diverse public spaces, possibilities for diverse activities different groups.
Building preservation levels

There are some buildings in the area which carry some historical value and therefore are protected. There are different preservation levels, which are shown in the map on the left.

The area with the dotted line around it was a rehabilitation area from the EMVS (Empresa Municipal de la vivienda y el suelo), which is the housing association in charge of public housing in Madrid. Therefore, the housing buildings in that area have already been already refurbished; figure 36 shows a couple of examples.

There are some brick houses from the 1920s which have the highest preservation level. Some examples of these houses can be seen in figure 37.

However, in some buildings with low preservation levels interventions are possible. The lowest level designated as environmental allows interventions as long as the appearance of the original building is preserved. An example of this preservation level is shown in the two pictures in figure 38.

*Low preservation levels are opportunities to improve housing stock. Details from historical buildings reinterpreted in new buildings.*
Looking again at the map showing the sections with the higher and lower shares of immigrant population, is interesting to compare it now with the maps on the right, showing the sections with the higher (figure 40) and lower (figure 41) population densities in the area.

The map on the right shows the number of layers for every building. Most of the open space in the quarter is defined by the buildings themselves, except for the northwest corner. Most of the buildings taller than 7 layers are located at that corner, along some of the main streets and at the southern and eastern edges.

The rest of the area is almost completely built. The southeast area is not only one of the most densely built but also the oldest part of the quarter. The blocks within these sections have no open space other than the street. Some of the plots’ courtyards are apparently built nowadays, not to the complete height of the building but not open areas anymore either. The living conditions of houses located in those blocks is not optimal, specially regarding natural light and ventilation.

*Increase both built and population densities where they are currently the lowest ones. Create open spaces in densest areas.*
Figure 40: sections with highest population density

Figure 41: sections with lowest population density
Public facilities and potential spaces for interaction

The map on the left shows the public facilities in the quarter as well as the closest ones in the neighbouring quarters. It has been important for this project to locate these public buildings, since they are included in the definition of public space given in previous chapters.

Public facilities are considered here as spaces where interaction between different cultures could take place, since they are neutral areas -not dominated by any group- and they may host activities that could attract people from different cultural groups. However, we recognize only a few public buildings in the area.

The Eating and drinking / Businesses map on the far right shows some retail shops that are consider here as places where some interaction takes place. Most of the mapped stores are most likely owned by immigrants.

Places of food have been classified in four categories, markets and supermarkets; groceries, shops mostly selling fresh fruits and vegetables and basic products; Latin American food includes both specialized stores for Latin products and Latin restaurants; Bars and cafes.

As for the businesses, the map shows the position of hair salons -mostly owned by Hispanic Americans-; phone booths and money transfer businesses -owned in similar proportions by Hispanic Americans and people from the Far East cultural group-; and chinese bazaars. These last ones show the lower levels of interaction according to what have been observed during the visits to the area.

The map on the right showing the car shops ad car dealers in the area, has been used to place parking buildings in some of those spots, combining them with the repair businesses.

+ Increase the amount of public spaces. Big and small public facilities. Big and small open spaces.
+ Opportunity for mores shops where interaction occurs - mixed use buildings.
+ Use location of car shops for new parking buildings, combine two functions with a third one.
CONCLUSIONS
QUARTER SCALE
Conclusions from the quarter scale analysis

+ Most of the open space -the streets- is defined by the buildings. However, it is important to note that the northwest corner represents an exception, where the building typology leaves open space undefined. On the one hand, this corner has a lot of space available and it also has the lowest population and built density.

+ Only two defined squares are shown in pink, as well as the facilities, which are considered to be public space for this study. Propose spaces with complementary functions, diversification of public space regarding quantity and use.

+ Empty spaces available highlighted in green. Larger interventions.

+ Leave open spaces, without design, for the neighbours to develop them. Sharing space. Basic principle = they have to be open and green spaces.

+ Increase the amount of opportunity to meet. Meeting people from different groups - get use to seeing them - safety feeling.

+ Improve the quality of public space in general. More diverse public spaces, possibilities for diverse activities different groups.

+ Low preservation levels are opportunities to improve housing stock. Details from historical buildings reinterpreted in new buildings.

+ Increase both built and population densities where they are currently the lowest ones. Create open spaces in densest areas.

+ Increase the amount of public spaces. Big and small public facilities. Big and small open spaces.

+ Opportunity for more shops where interaction occurs - mixed use buildings.

+ Use location of car shops for new parking buildings, combine two functions with a third one.
PART I
Introduction &
Problem field

Public space
Social space

Immigrants
Multicultural environments
Morphology
City centre

PART II
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Key notions
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PART III
Analytical
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City scale
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PART IV
Design

Main design goal

Design concept
Vision
Building rules
Design interventions

Graphic index - relation between the parts of the thesis
13. AVAILABLE SPACE
Available space

The Nolli map on the right show highlighted in white the open space -considered as available for interventions- and in light grey the spaces that are available but closed, plots with potential for becoming open space.

The map illustrates one of the conclusions explained in the previous part, the fact that most open space is defined by the buildings themselves, except for the northwest corner. This represents one of the major opportunities for design proposals. The intervention including that corner would be considered as the maximum intervention scenario.

The map on the left shows a total of 12 spaces that will be shown in a more detailed way in the next pages. These spaces are available now, so it would be possible to carry out design interventions even if the maximum scenario would not be possible.

These spaces have been classified into 4 types:

1. Defined public squares
2. No outer space available
3. Leftover space
4. Inner -plot- space available

In the first two pages the spaces are shown only as built mass and void. In the second pair of pages show the spaces in terms of what functions are present on the ground level, as well as entrances and garage entrances. The mapping of functions is focused on those which have been designated as places where interaction could take place, the same categories shown on the Eating and drinking / Businesses map in previous pages.
As it was mentioned before, there are two defined public squares in the study area. The quality of both of them is quite low. The one shown on the top has a big height difference of more than 2 metres on the northern side which results in a lack of visibility when walking from west to east, where a blind wall next to sidewalk gives an unsafe feeling. The one on the bottom is a newer square that covers a parking garage; it was supposed to be some kind of roundabout to articulate the new street that comes from the northwest and ends up in this square.

In this second type of space, the shape of the blocks is almost completely extruded with built mass; The streets are just wide enough to hold one lane of car traffic and parking spaces on one side. In other words, these two are examples of some streets that simply have no open space available, no space to colonize. Therefore, for such areas the proposed interventions are focused on keeping empty plots available. As mentioned before, the plots would remain available for the neighbours to intervene on them, sharing not only the use of the space but also its creation.
Three examples of leftover spaces are shown here. Throughout the area it is possible to identify plenty of spaces like the two on the left, which have been left undefined and -when in doubt- most of them have been taken over by cars, either for parking or simply as a result of an irregularly shaped intersection. However, the map at the bottom shows another kind of leftover space, in this case composed by two leftover green areas and one street between them -which is currently closed for traffic- a space defined by no one and one that belongs to no one.

These examples include a bit of a mixture with some of the previous types. The ones above this text show empty plots with some potential due to their position, as they are related to one of the better integrated streets of the area, which is currently more a long parking lot, it also seems to have some leftover space of its own. The ones to the left show two interesting cases and they are actually next to each other. Two major plots have been cleared to build new housing projects, and right next to it there is this small plot with a garden -totally closed off- and a neighbouring plot with a one story high construction.
For the design proposal the existing squares are kept but they definitely need to be improved. For the one in the top map, the two main issues would be the height difference -regardless of all the entrances facing the square, the difference does not allow control over the square, but rather from it- and the lack of functions around the space. For the map at the bottom, the most important factor to take into account is that it has been taken by one particular group -young Dominican men- thus, other groups barely use this space. Also, the public building on the corner is facing away from the square, lack of control.

These spaces are located in an area that has been already refurbished, where the pavement of the street is made out of the same bricks and placed at the same level of the sidewalk, giving pedestrians priority over cars. Regardless of how narrow it is, the street is heavily used and the shops play a key role as extensions of the public space, at least during the opening hours. On the downside, the area is usually associated with a feeling of unsafety, might be because groups of people -mostly men- are standing on the corners talking. Nevertheless, the small plots o determine a large amount of doors ‘guarding’ the streets.
It is interesting to note that despite their poor spatial quality and their lack of definition, these spaces have plenty of functions on the ground floor. Even though most of the shops are not within the ones classified here as the ones where interaction could take place, at the very least these commercial spaces must have a positive impact regarding the amount of pedestrian movement through the streets. For the design proposal it is important to take into account the long facades without functions nor entrances.

For the map below this text, there are no functions other than the public courtyard and the longest building faces the opposite side.

4. Inner space available

For the three maps above this text, is important to consider that while there are some businesses on the ground floor, the lack of continuity makes it unlikely that people would go there just for a walk. However, the three plots and the street can be seen as a group in terms of design, they might complement each other.
14. FIELDWORK RESULTS
Exploring

As a first approach to the study area, exploring it was an important methodological tool. Just as Hillier & Hanson explain ‘a settlement presents itself to our experience as a continuous object by virtue of the spatial relations connecting the outsides of boundaries. By moving about the settlement we build up knowledge of these exterior relations until we have a picture of some kind of the settlement structure.’ (Hillier & Sanson 1984, p.154).

Walking through the area, without a fixed route, without looking for something specific, allowed me to find places with interesting conditions. The pictures on the left show some interesting spots that I found while strolling through the study area. The photos depict some of the main problems in the area, such as the overwhelming presence of cars, empty plots left to rot and no regard for pedestrian movement. Some of these available spaces provided opportunities later on for interventions.

The map on the right shows the different walking routes made within and around the study area. Most of the routes are inside the Bellas Vistas quarter, but the lines outside the quarter also have a great relevance in understanding the heterogeneity of the district in aspects as the morphological one, socioeconomic, among others.
Observation

Observation carried out in the study area has been an important analysis tool. After getting data from other methods, observation worked as a way to confirm those results. As an example, observation could either deny or confirm if the lines with higher integration values in the axial maps actually have more use than other streets.

Additionally, observation allowed the evaluation of the existing public spaces in the area; it also helped in the understanding of spaces that were signalled as the ones with potential for interventions to take place, basically leftover spaces.

+ Figure 42 shows the crossing of two of the streets with higher integration values according to the space syntax results. Indeed these streets show a fairly important pedestrian traffic, despite the height differences they present, resulting on uneven sidewalks filled with obstacles.

+ One on the main leftover open spaces in the area is depicted in figure 43. The two maps show that few people use this space, regardless of the time. The map on the top shows the more intense use, which revolves around the use of the racquetball court.

+ An irregularly shaped intersection is depicted in figure 44. This spot is interesting due to the amount of empty space devoted to car parking. At the same time through observation it was possible to confirm that it has enough pedestrian traffic to be one of the areas to be intervened.

+ Figure 45 shows one of the two existing defined open spaces. Observation of this square revealed that most people use it only to cross but very few people use it as a place to stay. Mostly people with children use the playground and some homeless people use the benches to sleep.

+ Figure 46 shows the end of a street that has been already modified to give pedestrians priority over cars. This street has a high integration value according to space syntax analysis. Nevertheless, the profile of this street has no available space.
Name
Age
Where were you born?
[1] Where do you live?
[2] Where do you go to school/work?
[3] Where do you usually go grocery shopping?
[5] What do you do on those places?
[6] Which one is your favourite place on the neighbourhood?
[7] Which place do you dislike in the neighbourhood?
[8] Is there any pace where you feel unsafe?
[9] Is there something that you would like to have in the neighbourhood? Movie theatre, theatre, library, sports facilities...
[10] Do you know your neighbours?
[11] If you do, do you know where they are from?
[12] Do you do something together?
How to read the map

The map on the right shows the conclusion of the interviews as a unified result. The maps on the right and on the following pages show individual results.

The interviews have been an interesting tool to get an idea of what is going on in the study area. The questions are presented on the left. Even though the amount of interviewees is far from having statistical value -as it was mentioned in the methods chapter- the variety of answers have provided an interesting input.

A total of 36 persons where interviewed. Here a brief explanation of the more relevant answers:

+ When asked about the places they frequent in the neighbourhood (starts on the map) there were more than one answer for each person. The most frequent answers were senior centre [12], Dehesa de la Villa [11] -the park near by towards the west-, Maravillas market [11]

+ Most of the people answered nothing [9] when asked about their favourite place in the neighbourhood (hearts on the map). The second most frequent answers [5 each] were home, Dehesa de la Villa and everything [5]. In third place are the senior centres [3].

+ No one considered any of the existing public spaces in the quarter neither as their favourite place nor as a place they frequent.

+ For the unsafe feeling (red x on the map) the first answer was nothing [12], followed by the area pointed out on the lower part of the map, this is the area known as Little Caribbean [9]. The third most frequent answer was everything [5]

+ Most of the answers about what is missing in the quarter chose sports facilities [16], followed by movie theatre [14] and green/open space [12] including parks, spaces for children to play and areas where is safe to walk and bike.

+ For the last three questions the answers were very similar. Most of the people are able to recognize their neighbours, but they do not know each other and logically they also do not do things together.
Like to have...

Adela (70)
Spain

Antonio (69)
Spain

Manuela (73)
Spain

Carmen (61)
Spain

Pilar (72)
Spain

Maria (84)
Spain

Julian (64)
Spain

Josefa (76)
Spain
Like to have...

Waleed (64)
Syria

Like to have...

Maria (77)
Spain

Like to have...

Teresa (80)
Spain

Like to have...

Fernando (98)
Spain

Like to have...

Enrique (81)
Spain

Like to have...

Consuelo (75)
Spain

Like to have...

Jesus (68)
Spain

Like to have...

Antonio (77)
Spain
Like to have...

Isabel (77) Spain

Felix (74) Spain

Maria (46) Spain

Omar (33) Dominican Republic

Carmen (46) Spain

Judith (54) Spain

Kenya (45) Ecuador

Daniel (30) Dominican Republic
PART IV
DESIGN
As it has been explained in the design goals chapter at the beginning of this study, there are five general actions that can be introduced in the study area in order to increase the amount and quality of spaces where interaction may take place. At the same time, some of the actions address missing spatial quality in the study area.

These five actions would all be included in the vision for the Bellas Vistas quarter, improving the position of the quarter within the district, since now it is the most vulnerable one.

Also, a set of rules would be defined for the quarter scale, translating the vision into specific actions. The vision includes a set of interventions that set five general actions, organized as follows according to their hierarchy:

### 14.1. Colonizing space - pedestrian priority

This action is the one with highest priority. The spatial quality of pedestrian zones in the study area is quite poor, since there is a great amount of space being occupied by parked cars which leaves pedestrians walking on narrow and uneven sidewalks. By taking some space away from the cars, the idea is to conquer enough space for pedestrians to walk more comfortably, specially when taking into account the high share of elderly population in the area.

Jan Gehl (2010) explains ‘the prerequisite for city life is good walking opportunities’ (Gehl 2010, p.19). Gehl describes that walking provides an opportunity for contact with other people and how people engage in different activities when walking.

### 14.2. Diversify public space

According to the findings derived from reviewed literature, multicultural neighbourhoods need public spaces which are able to accommodate different activities and/or different groups. Additionally, there are only two defined squares in the neighbourhood and from the interviews and observation carried on in the field, it has been established that most of the people leaving in the area don not frequent these spaces, but they do use squares located on the neighbouring quarters.

The diversification needs to introduce both open space and public facilities; spaces with different scales; spaces which allow different uses and more importantly spaces to meet. As Gehl describes ‘strengthening common space so that meeting people from various groups of society is a routine part of everyday life’ (Gehl 2010, p.28)

### 14.3. Improving local-scale greenery

The diversification of public open space should also include the increase of greenery in the area. According to the interviews carried out, people enjoy going to the city park close by during the weekends, but the lack of green spaces was the second most recurrent answer when asked what is missing in the neighbourhood. The discussion here is about spaces to use on daily basis, is not about introducing a city-scaled park. Small pocket parks, community gardens and playgrounds are included in this action.

These first three actions are related to what Amin (2002) calls ‘micro-publics’. According to Amin (2002) interactions are more likely to take place in these everyday spaces available within living areas, instead of the city-scaled public spaces which he refers to as not being ‘natural servants of multicultural engagement’ (Amin 2002, p. 12).
14.4. Improve housing stock

This action is mostly focused on the sections with the highest and the lowest built density and population density. The idea is to focus on setting rules that could be use to achieve a spatial quality in the built environment. This quality corresponds with the issues regarding open space addressed with the first three actions. The set of rules is meant to be applied in areas that could be densify and also in areas with high densities.

Also important to clarify here is that the improvement of the housing stock goes through the diversification of housing typologies, different typologies to accommodate different types of families related to different cultural groups. Carmona et al. 2007 use the list from Talen (2009) with some ways that make housing diversity viable, such as accommodating multi-family units in single-family blocks; increasing density near public transit; demonstrating the value of nonstandard unit types; among others.

14.5. Parking buildings

As a consequence of the first three actions, where taking open space required the removal of parking spaces on the sides of some streets, new parking buildings are proposed as the last action. The location of this buildings will be combined with the location of car shops across the quarter. The action proposes new buildings that can accommodate the car shops on the ground floor and parking spaces in the floors above. These buildings should also have a third function on the facades facing the streets.
16. VISION
POSITION WITHIN THE
DISTRICT
Vision - position within the district

The map on the left shows a summary of the conclusions of the analytical framework, both city and quarter scales, that have been considered as the most important inputs for the vision of the quarter. The highlighted streets

The vision on the right includes all five actions that have been described for the design concept. The pink arrows represent the streets that could improve the connection between the quarter and the surrounding areas.

All the pink lines represent the streets to be improved for pedestrian movement, by colonizing space and diversifying public spaces along them.

The stars on the map point the location of new public spaces, both open space and public facilities. These locations have been defined combining three main principles. First, they are placed along streets with high integration values. Second, the facilities are distributed across the entire quarter so they are within walking distance from any point of the quarter. And third, they have been located in some of the available spaces from the analysis.

Public facilities are considered to be spaces where interaction between different cultural groups are more likely to take place. This is why it is worth pointing out that some of their locations coincide with the sections with higher shares of immigrant population.

Finally, the sections with the highest and lowest densities are highlighted. They would be the focus for the housing stock improvement.
17. BUILDING RULES

QUARTER SCALE
1. **Define the border**

While most of the edges of the quarter are defined, the edge on the west side is not. The building typology in the northwest corner of the quarter is composed by purely residential blocks loosely placed on their plots. By defining the west border of the area - as well as the area in front of it towards the west - a strong and defined edge but not impenetrable would act as Lynch (1959) describes as a uniting seam 'rather than an isolating barrier' (Lynch 1959, p. 65). By doing this, continuity in the urban fabric, as well as an easier to read space can be achieved, while also improving the connection to the big scale park located close by towards the west.

2. **Densify the northwest corner**

As was explained on the analytical framework part, the lower population density on the area corresponds with the lower built density. The northwest corner of the quarter has most of the available open space, due to the housing typology explained with the define the border rule. The idea here is to increase both population and built density at this part of the quarter, by stitching together the existing buildings with new ones. The diversification of public space begins with the definition of open available space. This rule corresponds with two actions from the design concept: diversify public space and improve housing stock.

3. **Pedestrian permeability**

After the application of the two previous rules, maximum pedestrian permeability must be guaranteed. The new buildings used to define the borders of the blocks in the northwest corner cannot represent a barrier for pedestrians. The inner courtyards defined by the new border buildings need to provide enough pedestrian paths crossing these new collective spaces to connect to the streets. Taking after Christopher Alexander’ pattern Courtyards which live, the new courtyards need to have precise gradients of privacy for these public pedestrian paths to work. Colonizing space and diversify public space.

4. **Pedestrian network**

The quarter’ spaces for walking need to be improved in order to give pedestrians priority over cars, there is the need for colonizing space. Jan Gehl explains that by ‘improving the conditions for pedestrians, we not only strengthen pedestrian traffic, we also - and most importantly - strengthen city life.’ (Gehl 2010, p.19). He also explains how walking is much more than just walking and it could be a first step towards interaction. Therefore, by increasing the opportunities for walking is a step taken towards facilitating interaction in public space.
5. Generating open space

On the most dense areas of the quarter is important to provide open spaces as part of the Diversify public space action. Some of these densely built areas are also the ones with narrowest streets, which is why the possibility of generating open space relies on the empty available plots. The small scale of these spaces could also be considered as a way of facilitating contact. What Gehl (2010) describes as ‘chance meetings and small talk’ and Amin (2002) as ‘banal transgressions’ of the day-to-day live can take place in this small-scale public spaces (daily use).

6. Improving housing stock

This rule includes different measures depending on the area where it takes place. As explained for the improve housing stock action, the list from Talen (2009) may prove useful, as she lists some basic measures to take into account in order to make housing diversity possible. Other opportunity or improving and diversifying the housing stock, comes from the empty plots at the southeast corner of the quarter. In any case, the new housing buildings need to follow the pedestrian permeability rule explained before. The part that follows, specifies rules for the development of each of the two major areas.

7. Add bus lines

As a consequence of the colonizing space action in the streets shown in this scheme, additional bus lines are proposed for them. Currently the bus lines move along streets shown in gray and the proposal is to include the three pink doted ones in order to provide better connections in general and specifically better connections to the new proposed facilities -circles-. This rule also supports the pedestrian network and seeks to improve the mobility for the most vulnerable groups so they can easily reach the proposed facilities.

8. Parking buildings

By using some of the current locations of car shops which are dispersed all over the quarter, new buildings for parking are proposed as an important measure resulting from the removal of parking spaces from some of the streets. There will be 8 new parking buildings with different sizes as part of the Parking buildings action but also as a consequence of the densify the northwest corner rule. The ground floor of the new parking buildings may be used for car shops. Additionally, the redevelopment of some of some blocks, would allow to build underground parking as well.
1. Defined edge

This is the block scale version of the Define the border rule for the quarter. For both new blocks and existing blocks to be modify, defining the border can be seen as another way of colonizing space. By defining the borders of the blocks, the spaces inside and outside them are also defined. The provision of buildings for the edge definition also increases the built density, following the rule for densify the northwest corner. Additionally, as Gehl explains the ‘edges provide the opportunity for life in the buildings or immediately in front of the buildings to interact with life in the city’ (Gehl 2010, p.75).

2. Maximum pedestrian permeability

This rule together with the defined edge are parts of the pedestrian network. For example, some of the existing blocks are too long and would require pedestrian crossings to connect the existing streets. Alexander (1977) explains in Network of paths that most city activity happens in places where pedestrian and car traffic meet; he recommends pedestrian paths to be perpendicular to roads and that both networks intersect each other frequently. Also, by making pedestrian paths instead of streets, the priority of the pedestrian movement is emphasized. A pedestrian path is required every 40 metres.
3. Public space access

The results from the analytical framework conclude that the existing open spaces are not used, probably due to the lack of activities around them, combined with lack of control over them. This rule regarding the access to public spaces through thresholds formed by public facilities is an expression of what Jane Jacobs refers to as ‘eyes on the street’. Hillier & Hanson (1984) also explain that urban systems work by ‘accessing strangers everywhere, yet controlling them... As a result, the strangers police the space, while the inhabitants police the strangers’ (p.19)

4. Public facilities visibility

New public facilities need to be easy to spot. As far as the alignment goes, the new buildings would be allowed to “take a step” to the front of the border defined by the buildings in that block. This allowance is connected to the important role that public facilities play in facilitating interaction between different groups.

5. Housing typology diversification

As it has been mentioned before, part of improve housing stock includes the diversification of housing types. Since most of the new buildings would have residential use, it is possible to introduce new types of houses, types that can accommodate different types of families common for some cultural groups -extended families, no nuclear families, among others-. The new typologies may include single houses with front gardens and/or back gardens, urban villas surrounded by collective space, row houses and folded row houses; houses with commercial uses in the ground floor; small building blocks, etc.

6. Public space diversity

Following the diversify public space action, together with the generating open space rule is important to clarify that this diversification also applies to the degree of publicness of the different spaces. As a general principle, related also to the pedestrian network -public paths crossing collective spaces- inner block spaces need to generate a gradient of publicness. This way the “public” also know where it belongs and where they would be overstepping into more private domains.
1. Private buffer

The space inside the existing blocks is being colonized as collective space. For this reason, a buffer of privacy for the existing buildings is provided as a rule. This space is at least 3 metres wide all around every building. For new buildings a similar buffer zone must be provided towards the existing buildings as well as towards the street.

2. Bring it to the edge

This rule is related to the quarter rule Define the border and to the block rule common for all defined edge. New buildings are the essence of those rules, ultimately these new buildings will compose the edge of the blocks. Most of these new buildings have residential uses, but in some of the streets, diverse uses on the ground floor have been contemplated. In the case that the ground floor is occupied with houses, small front gardens -2 metres deep- are permitted facing the streets.

In any case the border buildings cannot be deeper than 12 metres.
3. Ground floor coverage

For the existing blocks, after the border buildings have been defined, only 25 percent of the remaining inner space can be occupied by buildings as the maximum occupation rate. The idea of this rule comes from Alex Lehnerer’s book *Grand urban rules* and it is meant to guarantee some basic qualitative aspects for the new buildings such as daylight. Since the shape of resulting courtyards are usually irregular more that 25 percent may result in crowded spaces.

4. Diversify use in ground floor

The reason for making this a rule for the block scale is based on the different street conditions across the quarter. The streets of the northwest corner are very different from the ones on the southeast corner; while the former has wider streets without diversity of functions, the latter, has narrow, diverse streets where most interactions are taking place. The rule for the streets around existing blocks would be to maintain and/or introduce diverse functions -combined with residential uses- including shops, small public facilities, pocket parks, playgrounds, etc.

5. Height of new buildings

As a general principle for all the existing blocks no building would have more that 5 layers.

Under no circumstances the new buildings defining the edges would be higher that one half of the height of existing buildings closer to them. They also will not be higher that the width of the streets around them. This reasoning is linked the amount on sunlight that streets will get, but also related to the human scale of the streets. The height for the inner buildings would be the same or less than the height of the edge building.

6. Follow the slopes

From these three schemes, the one on the top shows two examples of different conditions that exist today. Specially in the northwest corner, the height differences between buildings and the street can be quite drastic. Therefore, this rule stipulates that such differences should be managed in terms of defining spaces inside the blocks, instead of just placing the buildings without any regard towards such difference. There is big potential with such height differences, where new buildings can have a spatial relationship with the street and the roofs of new buildings can be a terrace for existing buildings, just to mention an example.
BLOCK SCALE
New blocks

‘...rules, then, are no mere passive forms of description, but instead also active steering elements for future developments’ (p.66)

Alex Lehnerer
Grand urban rules
1. Ground floor coverage
Compared with the existing blocks, for the new ones the definition of the edge can be made in a more regular way and therefore, a larger amount of ground floor can be occupied without compromising the basic qualitative aspects of the buildings, such as day light provision, among others. A maximum coverage of 50 percent is allowed. This rule for the new blocks is also linked to the Housing typology diversification, specially these new ones can hold new house types and

2. Diversify use in ground floor
The explanation of this rule for the existing blocks also applies here. One difference is that for the new blocks, this diversity can also be applied to the inner spaces. Depending on the degree of publicness of each specific space, the inner spaces can also be served by small shops, day cares, workshops and so on. Another difference would be the scale of the facilities that both blocks could produce. Clearly, the new blocks would be the ones that could include bigger public spaces.

3. Height of new buildings
Except for some specific locations in proximity to main roads, as a general rule for all new blocks no building would have more than 5 layers. Gehl explains that ‘Contact with the city quickly dissipates above the fifth floor’ (Gehl 2010, p. 41).
Under no circumstances buildings inside the block would be as high as the edge building. The height for the inner buildings would be the same or less than half the height of the edge buildings. Buildings with height differences are preferred over buildings with an uniform facade measurement. These difference may very well result from the slope of the terrain.

4. Facade transparency
This rule is related to the feeling of safety that seems to be lacking in some areas of the quarter, according to the results of the interviews. Maximizing the amount of ‘eyes on the street’ can result in a sense of control over inner and outer spaces. The facade transparency has been fixed at 50 percent. The provision of balconies is also part of this rule, as they contribute for a closer contact between the buildings and the streets.
APPLYING THE RULES
Step by step
Applying the rules. Step by step.

The maps and schemes presented here and in the following pages, describe the application of the rules in steps.

The map on the left shows all the blocks where the rules apply. The green blocks are the existing ones and the purple blocks are the new ones. The schemes show two blocks - one existing block and one new block - as an example of how the rules may be apply for each type of block.
1. Defining private buffer for existing buildings

2. Defining border buildings
3. Defining public space. An important difference regarding scale and diversity goes with the definition of public space and public facilities in the different blocks. Additionally, maximum pedestrian permeability by introducing public pedestrian paths is key here. As for the accessibility of the paths, it can change during the times of the day.
4. Inner block space. This is the resulting spaces that can have a maximum coverage of 25 percent in the case of existing blocks.

5. Diverse housing typologies inside the block. Definition of collective and private spaces.
Two levels of intervention

The drawings displayed in this two pages represent two different levels of intervention.

The one on the left shows the interventions that could be carried out without making major changes, the lower level of intervention.

This version focuses on using currently available spaces, basically carrying the strategy’ actions of colonizing space and diversifying public space, with the limitations that the existing buildings represent. Shown in purple are the new public facilities, connected with the main streets improved for pedestrian movement.

As a consequence of colonizing space, or in order to make it possible, some parking buildings may be develop as well -the map shows all the parking buildings in blue-.  

It is possible to develop some major interventions on the empty plots on the southeast corner; the leftover empty space on the northwest corner and the undefined open space on the west side of the area. The first two interventions would be the ones addressing the improve housing stock action, while the last one could address the improving local-scale greenery action.

The drawing on the right shows how the quarter would look like when applying the higher level of intervention.

All five actions from the strategy are shown in this version. The improve housing stock has a wider application, as well as the diversifying public space, since this higher level introduces collective and private spaces. The northwest corner undergoes an intense modification.

More detailed evaluations for the two major intervention areas -northwest and southeast corners- are described in the next pages with more detailed drawings in lower scales.
LOWER LEVEL

MAKING USE OF AVAILABLE SPACE
**Lower level of intervention**

This lower level of intervention focuses on making use of the already existing available space, including empty plots and leftover spaces which are reshaped.

One of the main interventions for this level is the **colonization of space** in some of the main streets of the quarter. The next pages show plans and sections of proposed interventions for three main streets, along with their current situation. The interventions concentrate on:
+ improving sidewalks to facilitate pedestrian movement and when they are wide enough, allow shops to make use of part of the sidewalk, without compromising the space for movement.
+ introducing greenery, not only for contemplation purposes but in some cases wide enough to allow its active use.
+ generating small scale public spaces along these lines, as everyday used spaces that have the potential to be **social spaces** and are likely to facilitate interaction.
COLONIZING
SPACE - STREET
INTERVENTIONS
Proposed intervention
COLONIZING SPACE - STREET INTERVENTIONS

Current situation
Proposed intervention
COLONIZING SPACE - STREET INTERVENTIONS
Proposed intervention
SOUTHEAST CORNER

- Existing buildings
- New residential buildings
- New public facilities
- New public open spaces
- Collective spaces
- New public gardens - mainly green spaces
- Private gardens
- Existing private open space
- Retail
- New parking building
Making use of available space

+ Available space in two major plots, preserving the buildings defining the edge of each plot.

+ Diversification of public space. Providing public, collective and semi-private spaces.

+ Introducing public spaces with different scales. Major public facilities are located next to open public spaces, guarding them in a way. The images on the right show the impact that new visible buildings may have on the street.

+ Smaller public spaces are cleared from previously occupied plots or neighbours to intervene in them. The condition for their development is that they have to be open and mostly green -community gardens-.

+ Mix use in the plots including the housing buildings, public facilities -could be schools, sports facilities, senior centres- and open public space. Also, new buildings facing the streets, include space in their ground floors for other uses to take place -shops, cafes, small businesses-workshops-

+ Improving housing stock by introducing new typologies and increasing the amount of housing. Introducing housing typologies with open private space.

+ Improving pedestrian permeability. Generate a connection to the main street -on the right side of the map-. Pedestrian paths crossing the largest blocks Intermediate pedestrian paths between streets.

+ An important remark here is that the leftover space on the left side of the map, represents an exception. Even though it is clear that it needs to be improved, most of the rules cannot be applied there.

   For the drawing shown here, the most important feature is the definition of open space, keeping it open but clarifying its edges. The second feature is the activation of that space with buildings looking over it and dealing with the height differences that exist in that particular spot.
HIGHER LEVEL

FROM LEFTOVER SPACE TO AVAILABLE SPACE
Higher level of intervention

The higher level of intervention keeps the proposed colonization of space or main streets from the lower intervention level. However, the higher level of intervention looks for a deeper modification.

The main intervention for this higher level is the one taking place in the northwest corner of the quarter. The next pages show drawings of the proposed intervention. The interventions concentrate on:

+ Maximising pedestrian permeability generating pedestrian paths crossing the blocks in between streets.
+ Introducing new housing typologies.
From leftover space to available space

+ Definition of main and secondary public spaces. Public facilities for everyday use - playgrounds, day care, etc. - Major public facilities can only take place with this higher level of intervention - school, senior centre, etc. -

+ Improving housing stock by introducing new typologies and increasing the amount of housing. Using new buildings to define edges and inner spaces

+ Maximum pedestrian permeability. Pedestrian paths crossing long blocks and public spaces connecting existing streets

+ Diversification of public space. Providing new big and small public facilities, public, collective, semi-private and private spaces.

+ Introducing new green open spaces.

+ Diverse functions on the streets. Commercial strips along bigger roads. Possibility of bigger stores in some key corners.

+ Risk of displacement due to improvements in the area. Middle class residents may want to leave due to the inclusion of affordable housing states. Also, the new housing typologies may be attractive to different types of family which have not been accommodated yet in other areas of the city.

+ Long time to implement and expensive. But much less expensive than building it from scratch.
DIVERSIFICATION
OF SPACE QUARTER
SCALE

- Public facility
- Defined public space
- Pedestrian-priority street
- Leftover open space

[Map showing diversification of space with legend and scale]
Diversification of space quarter scale

The drawings on these pages show the diversification of space in quarter scale.

The map on the left shows the open space as it is nowadays. The highlighted streets are the ones which have been already modified in order to give priority to pedestrians. As for the defined open public spaces there are only the two squares and some public facilities are present.

The map on the right shows the different open spaces after the intervention. Aside from defining open public spaces, the most important action is the introduction of spaces that form a gradient from public to private. These are the private gardens, shared gardens and collective spaces.

Private open spaces -gardens- play a key role as converters between private and public space. These spaces have the potential to be social spaces, with a higher degree of individual control than public spaces. At the very least they act as buffers between private inner space -house- and public space -squares, streets-

The schemes on the bottom show the current condition of open space -left- and the definition of public space through the implementation of transition zones between public and private -right-. 
DIVERSIFICATION OF SPACE BLOCK SCALE
**Diversification of space block scale**

The schemes on this page show how the diversification of space works on the block level.

The first one to the left depicts the implementation of private gardens as buffers between public open space - a path in this case - and the inner private space of the house. These gardens have the potential to be social spaces, depending on each individual desire.

The one on the centre shows the definition of collective space as a result of placing new housing buildings. While the main entrance faces the more public space, the back sides share a common space, more controlled than the public ones.

Finally, the scheme on the right shows the entrance from a public street to public paths inside the blocks. It also shows that some of this inner spaces can be closed at night, even if during the day they are open for pedestrians to cross.
EXAMPLE BLOCK
**Example block to show diversification**

The schemes on the right show different features of the space of this example block.

The plan on the right shows the resulting types of open space in a more detailed way. The main public space, the collective space of three different parts of the block are depicted here.

There is also a definition of hard and soft surfaces, where the amount if greenery is especially relevant, as one of the main actions pointed out in the strategy for the entire quarter. Additionally, the schemes above this text show some notions of how types of greenery can define smaller spaces within the whole, allowing for different activities to happen - sitting with a guarded back, active green, passive green and so on-

The next page shows two sections of this example along with an isometric view of one of the collective inner spaces shown in this plan.
Section a-a. Inner block space

Section b-b. Public space
To conclude this part, I want to show here some impressions of how this intervention may look like. Keeping in mind that the final architectural image is not the main concern, but instead the definition of different spaces through the placement or architectural elements.

The next pages show a sequence of images describing a route. On the edge of the pages the location map for each image is displayed.

Starting from views that show the definition of the edge of existing blocks, including pictures of their current situation.

Following, there is a set of images showing the route described by a pedestrian path crossing the block, showing the qualities that this inner collective spaces may have.

Finally, a couple of pictures show two of the main public spaces, the first one in a new block and the second one in an already existing block.
20. Conclusions

In order to conclude this project I would like revisit the research questions that were proposed at the beginning and try to provide the answers that I have reached after the research and the design proposal. As it was explained in first section of this work, by providing answers to every sub-question and combining them, the main research question can be resolved.

What is the meaning of public space for different cultures?
As it has been discussed in the first part of this study, different cultures in general have different relations with public space. While for some cultures the public space is an extension of their private sphere and is heavily used, for other groups public life and public space is only there to mediate between the different private spheres. In particular for the study area, different cultural groups have taken over the few existing defined public spaces, which is one of the reasons why introducing new spaces across the entire neighbourhood has been one basic design intervention. Before interaction can happen, there need to be spaces for that interaction to take place.

One of the more important findings of this study has been the fact that there are some public spaces that every cultural group shares and value, even if those spaces differ in form they share similar contents. More than looking for the difference between the meanings of public space for different cultures, this common ground have been key. Spaces for recreation, for contact with nature and outdoor activities and markets, are some examples of spaces with shared value.

The importance of introducing spaces that are valued across cultural lines, lays in being a first step towards interaction. People from different cultural groups may be willing to use the proposed spaces, attracted by the possibility to express themselves.

A critical remark needs to be made here. Even though providing space may lead to people from different groups using it, there is no way to guarantee that use will evolve into interaction.

What are multicultural environments?
For this study, multicultural environments have been defined as those neighbourhoods within the Bellas Vistas quarter that have high shares of immigrants, with 28 percent or higher. The distribution of cultural groups across the study area is not even. The proportion of different cultural groups changes with the neighbourhoods, which means that some areas have more diversity than others.

In multicultural environments, the presence immigrants changes both the social and spatial structure of the cities. As Sandercock explains, they have new claims probably different from the ones native to the city where they arrive. This is the main input that has been used as a base for interventions, all pointed at the diversification of space.
What spaces are used by different cultural groups?
By means of the different modes of field work, through observation, mapping and interviews, I have concluded which groups are currently using the few defined public spaces that exist in the quarter. The results of the interviews were specially useful, even though they are just a few and have no statistical value, they revealed a great deal of the dynamics of use of public space in the area.

Some cultural groups were identified using the existing public space. Latin Americans presence in general in the existing public space, especially some streets that give priority to pedestrian movement, as well as street corners in those areas where no other open space is available, is the highest one.

Elderly Spaniards were also observed using the streets of the quarter. The difference is that for them, use of public space focuses on movement, as a means to reach their destination. Since public space in this work has been defined as open spaces but also as public buildings, is relevant to mention the importance that senior centres in the area have for this particular group. According to observation and the results of the interviews, an important finding regarding the likelihood of interaction, this group is the least likely to engage in multicultural interaction.

Finally, in contrast with the group from Latin American countries, I found that people from the Far and Middle East group are not using public space. As a consequence, no data has been collected about what might be the reason.

In what way groups with different cultural backgrounds could use the public space together?
As it has been mentioned before, Amin (2002) explains ‘the city’s public spaces are not natural servants of multicultural engagement’ (Amin 2002, p.12) and that spaces for everyday use or ‘micro-publics- where ‘banal transgressions’ are likely to happen be the ones where difference may be negotiated.

Another important finding to take into account from Amin’s work is that ‘the contact spaces of housing estates and urban public spaces, in the end, seem to fall short of inculcating inter-ethnic understanding, because they are not spaces of inter-dependence and habitual engagement’ (Amin 2002, p.13)

The concept of habitual engagement or ‘banal transgressions’ as Amin refers to them, as possible triggers for increasing levels not only of multicultural interactions, but interaction altogether lead to introducing different spaces in the study area.

By providing everyday use urban spaces in multicultural neighbourhoods -such as senior centres, youth centres, child-care facilities, community gardens- which are accessible to everyone, have a degree of control and are not especially designed for one specific group. These spaces work towards inclusion of different groups into the public realm therefore including them and increasing the likelihood of use.

What spatial conditions of public space can facilitate the interaction and/or exchange between different groups?
The proposed interventions in public space are focused on the diversification of space. This diversification has five different characteristics:
New public spaces: Currently there are very few available defined open public spaces in the area. Following the assumption that the lack of adequate public spaces may be taking a toll on social interaction, by generating new public spaces that provide the possibility for people to meet, is a first step towards facilitating more interaction.

Degree of publicness: A gradient of spaces to transition from private to public. Replacing the line that exists today between public and private by introducing intermediate spaces. This measure provides people the opportunity to choose the level of interaction they wish to engage in.

Scale: New public spaces generated in the area have different scales. The definition of some main open spaces is necessary, but it needs to be followed by the implementation of smaller scale spaces spread over the entire quarter. Implementing open spaces across the entire area, provides spaces within walking distance from most households; public space closer to home has the potential for daily use and is more likely to facilitate social interaction than major public spaces.

Involvement: The design of smaller scale spaces is left open and is meant to be defined by the users. Leaving some spaces open for later interventions, where the neighbours can be involve with their development and maintenance, gives neighbours a sense of belonging and participation.

Use: The proposed interventions have been more focused in the spatial definition of the different spaces, rather than the detailed design for each one of them. As Kevin Lynch explains ‘an ordered environment... may serve as a broad frame of reference, an organizer of activity or belief or knowledge’ (Lynch 1960, p.4)

Furthermore, every space needs to hold a balance between its physical definition and the flexibility to allow different activities to take place. The overall idea is to have diverse and defined public spaces which can accommodate different desires from different groups, even if not at the same point in time.

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

Finally, I would like to briefly summarize the most important elements that I have considered to be the more important ones in order to facilitate interaction.

Definition and diversification of space. In terms of the degree of publicness, introducing collective and private spaces with the potential for being social spaces. In terms of scale, more everyday urban spaces across the area rather than few bigger in scale distant spaces.

Based on the ideas that Sandercock suggests for planning the city of desire ‘If city life is a coming together, a ‘being together with strangers’ (Young 1990: 237), we need to create public spaces that encourage this parade, that acknowledge our need for spectacle[...] the spontaneous spectacle of strangers and chance encounters’ (Sandercock 2012, p.223). Improving pedestrian movement in the study area is part of such
encouragement. Changing the structure of some streets in order to become clear movement lines and adding spaces for rest along them, has been the result of the colonization of space; improving pedestrian movement would most likely increase opportunities for basic interactions to occur.

+ Diversification of new housing typologies. Even though most of the work have been focusing on public space, the inclusion of types of houses that can accommodate different types of family is key for keeping diversity.

The design proposal has shown how new housing typologies can be implemented on the northwest corner of the study area -which is not the one with most diversity at the moment but it has most of the available space-. The intervention in the plots on the southeast corner also include new types of residential buildings, although not as many. The idea is that diversity may reach the northwest corner, were immigrants can find types of houses that fit their types of family. This may apply for new coming immigrants or the ones living in the area for some time and now have the possibility to move.

Finally, I want to close these conclusions with a final remark from Leonie Sandercock’ city of desire, which I think summarizes the ideas guiding the proposed interventions. It is by ‘giving more attention to places of encounter [...] recognizing that some places of encounter must necessarily be appropriated, and not trying to regulate the uses of all public spaces’ (Sandercock 2012, p.225) that such a desired city can be planned, or in this case that Bellas Vistas quarter can be improved in order to increase multicultural interaction.
21. Reflections

As closure for this work I would like to offer some reflections in this part. I would start with the choice of the subject for this study and some impressions about the first approach to it. Following I would share some reflections regarding the methods I used for this project and finally, I would react on some findings about the role of urban designers that I have derived from this last year’ work. 

Ever since I started the Urbanism master track, I have been interested in working with the smaller, local scale or even building scale. It is clear that any strategy planned for a neighbourhood or any small area of a city, must also be coherent with the bigger scales of both the city and/or the region. With that in mind I started the Urban regeneration studio which was the one offering this type of smaller scale interventions. 

Being an immigrant myself, I decided to address a subject related to immigration. The massive migratory movements are a major force influencing cities all over the world. Neighbourhoods with high shares of immigrants are most frequently deprived ones and as a consequence they are stigmatized. Immigrants are in general a vulnerable group and they arrive at some areas of a city, most probably marginal areas which are not a priority for the city scale planning schemes, they are not the focus of urban regeneration projects or public space improvement projects. However, they may be the ones with a greater need for improvement. 

Even though I started this project wanting to make a very specific local design for the study area, I am glad to see that the process led towards a more general design concept, presented as a strategy and a set of rules regarding the quality of the built environment. This set of rules could actually be applied in other locations with similar characteristics. 

Important to clarify here that it has never been my intention -nor would it be- to design specific spaces so specialised for a specific cultural group that they would generate more segregation between the groups and not the other way around. The idea behind this project has been to bring people from different groups into spaces they can share, spaces that could accommodate them all, even if not all at the same time. 

As far as the research methodology goes, a combination of different tools has been crucial, using each tool to get a specific result. It is possible to see now that the combination of methods has worked really well by providing not only hard data but also additional information in the form of perceptions. 

The research carried out for this project has had a theoretical component and an analytical one. The design interventions have been based on the results of both components. 

It is important to state here that most of the literature that has been researched about multicultural environments and about the challenges they pose, has been written from the social sciences point of view. There seems to be a missing link between the findings of those studies and their spatial implications. For this reason I decided to focus on multiculturalism and try to use it from an urban designer point of view and apply this knowledge to spatial interventions. 

Aside from the theoretical research -which has been the base to build upon with the other methods- and the analytical research, observation and exploration of the study area have been fundamental for the understanding of the project’ context. It has been by walking its streets, interviewing people and experiencing its spaces that I have been able to get a grip of the area that no amount of maps and literature could have provide. 

At this point I have to say I was more optimistic about the idea of multiculturalism at the beginning of this
project than I am today. Ever since the beginning of the research I considered multiculturalism to be an asset that could be capitalized on in contemporary cities, I still do. However, through some of the fieldwork I realized that reality was not as optimistic.

The times I visited the study area I witnessed that the only interaction happening nowadays -if any- is between people from the same cultural group. At the beginning of this project I thought that most conflicts -non-violent conflicts in this case- arose from a lack of understanding as a result of ignoring and avoiding one another.

The lack of social interaction, in this case between different cultural groups, takes a toll on the social cohesion and public life of neighbourhoods. The main idea of facilitating multicultural interaction is based on the fact that each person belongs to more than group –depending on age, gender, culture and so on-. Therefore, it would be possible to take the common ground between different groups with different claims, to find overlapping claims. The less optimistic reality is that multicultural interaction will not come that easily, especially when the goal of most of the groups seems to be to avoid one or more specific groups.

After being too optimistic back then, I came to comprehend that as an urban designer I can only do so much. Spatial interventions are the only ones that urban designers and planners can propose. Nevertheless, it is also this profession’ responsibility to take into account the needs of users from different groups and include them in such interventions.

As an urban designer I have developed a strategy and a set of rules to define public spaces that could facilitate social interaction between people from different groups, cultural or otherwise. The design intervention proposes different spaces where different activities can take place, comprising different degrees of publicness. By providing a set of rules and not a specific design for each space, the intervention leaves open a degree of flexibility that allows the inclusion of different uses while it guarantees basic qualities of the built environment.

To close this reflection I want to say that I do believe in cities that I have discovered only through literature, like the ones described by Leonie Sandercock, Iris Marion Young, David Harvey and Ash Amin among others, where difference does not mean fear and violence, where there are available places for everyone and where resources are more fairly distributed. In the words of David Harvey: ‘The right to the city, as it is now constituted, is far too narrowly confined’, so the goal should be to constitute it on a wider manner that will include the diversity of people who lives in cities nowadays.


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