

City limits at work: Urban planning facing metropolitan challenges

International workshop
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Presentation: city limits at work

The dimension and territorial scale of urbanization processes in the metropolitan region of Barcelona is one of the most relevant challenges for local urban planning at the present moment.

The city of Sabadell, a main urban centre articulating functional relationships and integration in the Barcelona region, is specifically concerned about this main challenge which simultaneously underlines some problems but also some potentialities in regard with future urban local planning when defined on a metropolitan basis.

The projects to be developed during the workshop will activate different urban values regarding city limits considering both the relationships between different inner areas and the urban fringe in-between the more compact urban fabric and the open spaces system.

The projects will also explore new possibilities for economic and social development based on innovation and creativity, understanding urban landscape and the open spaces system as containers, drivers and catalysts for defining new up-dated urban and metropolitan strategies for the city.

Main issues for the projects definition and proposal

After the consideration of the main challenges and risks defined by the urban agenda characterising city planning in Sabadell at the present moment, 6 main issues to work with have been identified:

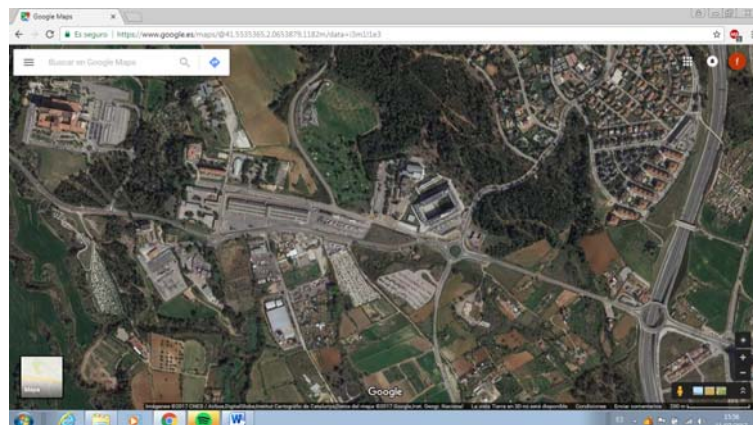
Issue 1. The urban-agricultural fringe connectivity and management:

The project deals with the future redefinition of the 'Nacional 150' road in terms of traffic management and pacification. The necessity for rethinking the future urban role and functions of some facilities located in-between the city limits and the Sabadell Agrarian Park also offers a very wide range of options for designing urban strategies in terms of creative urban landscape intervention and management.

Particularly, some public facilities can be found following the road N-150: public institutional buildings under used; parking lots; public services and facilities; along with several interstitial spaces with no clear functions and configuring an expecting urban landscape.

So the main objectives of the projects to be proposed would be:

- Designing a clear strategy on urban porosity and permeability for the spaces of transition in which the urban contiguous matrix is ending, paying special attention to the possible connections with the Sabadell Agrarian Park areas around the N-150.
- Proposing programmatic strategies for the different public facilities that can be understood and projected on a new basis. So strategies dealing with reprogramming and even extinction are welcome.
- Suggesting new relationships –both formal and functional– between the Sabadell Agrarian Park and the city on that specific part of the municipality.



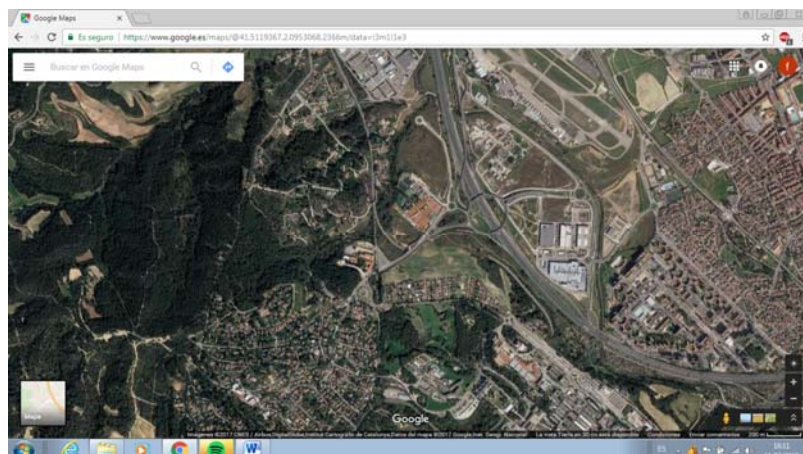
Issue 2. Rethinking the open spaces system in the urban boundaries:

The project faces an area in which some important infrastructural elements related with mobility and water management, such as the C-58 highway and a very important water collector, define a city limit accounting both risks and challenges. The definition of potentialities and new urban strategies are related with the proximity to the open spaces system surrounding the Sec River and the possibility to propose a new bicycle itinerary connecting the city with the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.

In a much more specific way, the area contains the very well-known elements defining a very clear peripheral scenario but also some projects regarding the recovery of the River Sec environments which have not only dignified some linear spaces on the site but also shown some very important potentialities regarding the possibilities for a new urban entrance-exit gate for the city in a place in which planning with the traces of the old river seems to be more than a rhetoric inspiration.

So the main objectives of the projects to be proposed would be:

- Proposing a masterplan of actions for the recovery of some peripheral areas still remaining on the basis of the previous projects already developed regarding the River Sec environmental restoration.
- Designing a whole new strategy for the site in which the idea of constituting a new urban gate entering the city could be understood, developed and projected.
- Proposing a specific sustainable mobility project based on the connection with the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB) using the bicycle. The project would also contain a whole strategy dealing with the identification of the ordinary landscape and heritage values to promote effective landscape projects and actions to reinforce attractiveness of the new bicycle itinerary.



Issue 3. Redefining transport infrastructures at the local urban scale:

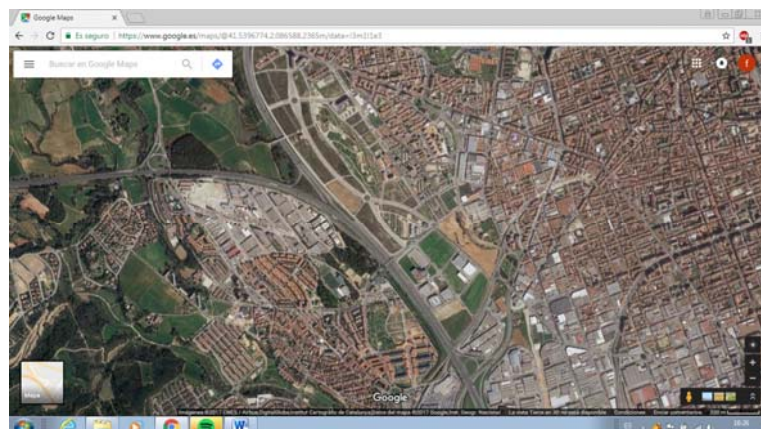
The project for covering a whole section of the train infrastructure gives the city the opportunity for completely rethinking an urban area in the Gràcia and Can Feu neighbourhoods. In this sense, the connection of the streets network with the urban downtown and the management of some strategic heritage spots in terms of new urban catalysts and facilities, such as the Can Feu Castell, represent main future local urban challenges.

Planning with traces represents in this new opportunity area realising about the capability of the urban heritage elements to be catalysts for new urban scenarios. In this sense, the Castell de Can Feu acquires a new strategic value as a landmark and an urban spot which can be related with a whole new definition of the urban matrix in which the physical border that used to represent the train infrastructure is over.

Finally, the connection between the urban area specifically affected by the infrastructural project and the more compact fabric at the city centre also represents a major challenge for urban planning in this part of the municipality.

So the main objectives of the projects to be proposed would be:

- Defining a whole new projectual strategy both for the area specifically affected by the infrastructural reclamation project and a hinterland to be defined covering different areas surrounding the place.
- Proposing a new urban definition based on landscape and heritage contextual elements of the Castell de Can Feu spot helping to redefining and understanding on a new basis the whole urban area which would definitely change after the infrastructural project.
- Designing specific projects to specifically taking advantage of the new urban scenario created by the reclamation project for both connecting the affected area with the city centre and increasing the attractiveness of the whole sector.



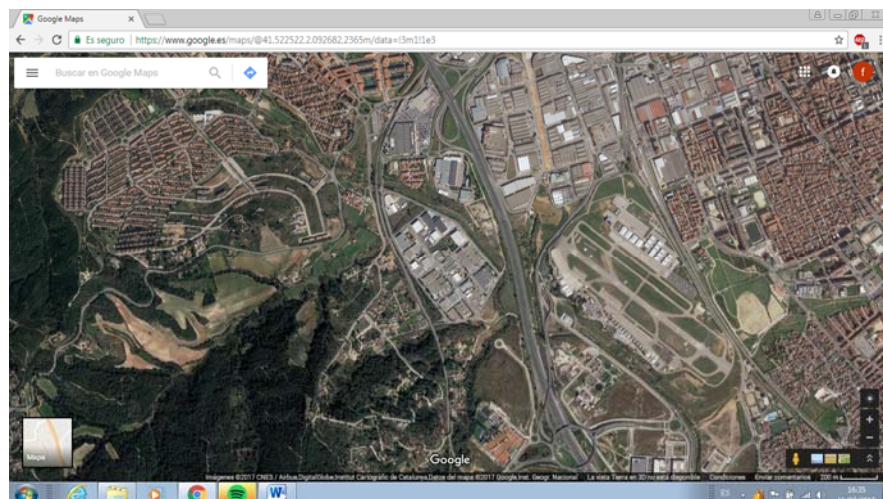
Issue 4. Recycling urban industrial areas as new boundary centralities:

The necessity for recovering some plots and miss-used industrial buildings in the Gràcia industrial district offers the possibility for proposing a particular program for industrial urban recycling. The project is based on the recognition of two different industrial areas, with a very diverse urban fabric structure, and the possibilities for defining a specific treatment of the urban boundaries in-between Sabadell and the city of Sant Quirze del Vallès.

Also, a broader approach to the area reveals a whole industrial fabric highly fragmented and disconnected but with some strong potentialities such as the presence of the Sabadell Airport which really constitutes one of the city urban assets clearly under used and representing a major challenge for rethinking all the industrial sector which can be found in the site.

So the main objectives of the projects to be proposed would be:

- Establishing a completely new approach to the design of these urban industrial spaces based on the ideas of continuity and coherence to improve the level of fragmentation and isolation in-between the industrial plots. In this sense, the consideration of bypassing the administrative limit with the city of Sant Quirze del Vallès seems to be a major challenge.
- Proposing a whole redefinition of the industrial landscape image promoting landscape integration and the visual dialogue with the pre-existences and the urban border spaces which have the potentiality to link this area with the former traces of Sec River.
- Suggesting different hypothesis for reprogramming the Sabadell airport dealing with his recycling in terms of 'smart heritage' and also with its capability to configure a new urban gate for the whole industrial sector which can be found at this part of the city.



Issue 5. *Climate-proof* planning facing *low-carbon* urban local challenges:

A whole new strategy based on different dimensions of urban climate-proof policies is included in the local urban planning agenda for the forthcoming decades. This local *low-carbon* urban approach deals with improving the energy efficiency of the urban fabric; defining new sustainable mobility schemes in different areas; or introducing 'smart-city' protocols regarding urban planning action and monitoring. Projects dealing with this general framework are welcome regarding the rest of the issues and urban areas to work with.

Issue 6. *Stand-by* city limits: re-programming the urban on the edge:

The city of Sabadell accounts some urban sites in which urbanization has not been completed because of the effects of the economic urban crisis since 2007. However, these unfinished urban projects could also be considered as creative labs in terms of defining new planning principles and ambitions, different to those which inspired their proposal before the economic breakdown. In the case of Can Gambús area, the proximity to a main road (Ronda de Sabadell) and the location by the city boundaries are important elements defining the urban context and inspiring new uses and programs that can eventually be proposed.

So the main objectives of the projects to be proposed would be:

- Proposing a new physical –both morphological and functional– definition for the urban façade of the Can Gambús area facing the main road Ronda de Sabadell.
- Exploring new possibilities for urban permeability and connections with the Sabadell Agrarian Park which can be found at the other side of the Ronda de Sabadell.
- Suggesting a whole new masterplan for the expecting spaces and the whole Can Gambús sector based on the understanding of the capabilities that this former urban limit can have today in terms of a more integrated urban area between the compact city and the Agrarian Park.

