

**AN ARTISTIC RESEARCH PROJECT DEALING WITH THE LACK OF
EQUALITY OR EQUIVALENCE IN URBAN SPACES IN TRANSITION IN
BARCELONA: ASYMMETRIES-HORTS DE SANT PAU DEL CAMP, UP&
DOWN**

Asymmetries. Project. February 2019-February 2020:

<https://www.idensitat.net/en/schoolspace/1413-asymmetries-e-space>

Asymmetries. Open session. 13.11.2019:

<https://www.idensitat.net/en/schoolspace/1455-asimetrias-jornada-3>

Authors:

- Patricia Bagán: Social and Cultural Anthropologist by the UNED, student of the interuniversity master's degree in Youth and Society at the University of Girona.
- Tània Costa: Fine Arts and Design Culture. Professor at EINA, Art and Design University of Barcelona attached to Autonomous University of Barcelona, UAB. Coordinator of MURAD, EEES Master of Research in Art and Design, EINA-UAB.
- Gaspar Maza: Anthropologist. Professor Rovira i Virgili University of Tarragona. Department of Anthropology, Philosophy and Social Work and member of Idensitat.
- Ramon Parramon. Fine Arts and Graphic Design. IDENSITAT director. Deputy director of EINA, Art Design University of Barcelona attached to Autonomous University of Barcelona, UAB.
- Gerard Vilar. Full Professor, Aesthetics Department, Autonomous University of Barcelona, UAB. Director of MURAD, EEES Master of Research in Art and Design, EINA-UAB.

Abstract:

Precariousness and precarity are forms of the inequality, which is the main political, social and cultural problem of the present. They are specific phenomena of capitalism which create an expanding condition in today's world. Until the outbreak of the 2008 crisis, they were something that fundamentally affected countries peripheral to the western world, but so far this century, and especially in the Europe of the crisis, they are settling in the heart of our societies with the perspective of staying and become structural. We know that precariousness and precarity are affecting many of our economic activities, cultural practices and ways of life. But what does art have to do with precariousness? What can artists do in front of such realities of economic, social, psychological, cultural inequalities? How do precarious processes affect art, its production and its reception? How does precariousness affect the nature of art? *Asymmetries* is a collective project of artistic research centered in the town of Barcelona (Spain) which aims to investigate in the effects of the new forms of inequality that generate precariousness, precarity, vulnerability and fragility in all aspects of urban life.

This paper is a written and expanded version of the presentation that we should have made at the 11th SAR Conference, but couldn't be made due to the emergency of the pandemic in 2020. During the elapsed time, we have managed to produce the proposal that we presented as a study case.

Therefore, in this paper, we are happy to add the realization of the project to the previous proposal.

Keywords: Asymmetries, Artistic Research, Transition urban spaces, Art and Design Research Residence, Transition Design

1) INTRODUCTION: CRISIS, PRECARIOUSNESS, ASYMMETRIES

Precariousness and precarity are forms of the inequality, which is the main political, social and cultural problem of the present. They are specific phenomena of capitalism which create an expanding condition in today's world. Until the outbreak of the 2008 crisis, they were something that fundamentally affected countries peripheral to the western world, but so far this century, and especially in the Europe of the crisis, they are settling in the heart of our societies with the perspective of staying and become structural. We know that precariousness and precarity are affecting many of our economic activities, cultural practices and ways of life. But what does art have to do with precariousness? What can artists do in front of such realities of economic, social, psychological, cultural inequalities? How do precarious processes affect art, its production and its reception? How does precariousness affect the nature of art? *Asymmetries* is a collective project of artistic research centered in the town of Barcelona (Spain) which aims to investigate in the effects of the new forms of inequality that generate precariousness, precarity, vulnerability and fragility in all aspects of urban life.

Asymmetries has been promoted by IDENSITAT -an artistic research collective project-, by Fabra i Coats Creation factory and contemporary Art center of Barcelona -a cultural equipment of the town hall- and by MURAD, EEES Master of Research in Art and Design -a collaboration between the design and art University EINA and the Autonomous University of Barcelona, UAB.

2) ASYMMETRIES: THE PROJECT

ASYMMETRIES is a space for experimentation, learning, cultural research and cross-disciplinary work, applied to contexts in transition and defined by asymmetries, in which the forms of life, spaces or activities are the result of instability, transience or fragility, circumstances which at the same time demand projects which open up a means to change these situations.

ASYMMETRIES is founded upon applied research, and will attempt to generate

projects based on methodologies combining the analysis of spaces (physical and social) with proposals which incorporate structures, components and various agents working to resolve them.

The general objective is to place creative practice within the framework of research and the redefinition of urban contexts, taken from a critical, counter-disciplinary perspective, and aimed at discovering, defining, or proposing concrete actions directed towards aspects affected by contemporary asymmetries. A space to apply research, to share methodologies, to deploy processes and to implement projects which may have an effect upon urban physical, social and / or cultural spaces. This will be accomplished by starting up a working group combining research, production and the socialisation of processes.

ASYMMETRIES is a nursery for processes open to spaces in transition, where different asymmetries take shape (economic, social, labour, relational, racial, sexual orientation, among others), in order to activate creative practices which impact imaginatively in social contexts.

We want to learn about, share and debate structures and projects which deal with «the city» as an articulator of dynamic spaces in constant tension and modification, and at the same time, as spaces where the collective imagination crystallises to make an impact upon urban transformation as a project. In this way, artistic practices and collective processes may activate strategies of unforeseen innovation which influence both the cultural ecosystem and the social contexts on which they act. The open call for research residencies, under the theme ASYMMETRIES, proposes to explore urban locations plagued by questions of inequality, lack of equivalence, vulnerability or imposed precariousness.

3) RESIDENCE FOR RESEARCH AND PROCESS SEED-BED

ASYMMETRIES operates several strands which will be activated in parallel, giving the project a more comprehensive shape: - Investigation-action in residence. A working group, put together from a research residency organised

by Idensitat and connected to Fabra i Coats, to construct a work process around the concept of Asymmetry, linked to spaces in a state of transition. The research in residence will incorporate the collaborative production of a project, with the involvement and support of different universities.

- Process «seed-bed». The residence research group will be organised based upon an open call in order to find potential participants with proposals, ideas or research. From this research-action group, a «seed-bed» for experimental processes and processes related to project development will be configured, which will meet on a weekly basis at the Fabra i Coats Fàbrica de Creació, and which will receive external advice from professionals from different disciplines, working at different universities.
- Formation. Training and seminar space. The residence research group will work during the months of March to September, combining theory and practice. It will meet weekly at Fabra i Coats Fàbrica de Creació, and will receive specific training through intensive workshops, meetings and tutorials, with researchers and professionals in different fields. In some cases, these training spaces will be open to students or invited guests of the lecturer who will be taking the seminar or workshop. There will be an exchange of knowledge between the research group and the invited group of students.
- Conferences and public presentations. Organisation of an international conference on the topic. An open space with external guests and projects, as well as with the involvement of the research group in residence.
- Intervention in context. Presentation of the research project carried out (or in process) by the selected group, produced in the context of the location which has been studied.
- Digital publication and exhibition. Compilation in digital format of experiences, articles and interconnected, involved or related projects. Exhibition of results generated in the process.

4) LINES OF WORK: ASYMMETRIES AND IN TRANSITION

Precariousness means being subjected to a condition, or conditions, of vulnerability, fragility, deprivation or social inequality. According to Guy

Standing, more than a quarter of the adult population form part of the precarious class, a new social class which has been steadily losing its workplace and social rights. For Remedios Zafra, precariousness is one of the most common forms adopted by the inequality of contemporary capitalism, and in a world characterized by connectivity, predominantly manifests itself in the sphere of work. Many of these forms of precariousness are linked to creative work. Precariousness is associated with disappointment. For Judith Butler, the term precariousness refers to a politically imposed condition, through which a condition of inequality is established in which some people more than others suffer the rupture of their social and economic relationships, being exposed to a variety of injuries and forms of violence. According to this author, one can imagine a social and political world which seeks to overcome precariousness, so that citizens may be more alive. For Gerard Vilar, precariousness is the contemporary condition par excellence, a process which converts the individual into a reified object, or reduces them to a marketable commodity, exposed to a condition of exploitation. For Josep Ramoneda, one of the main problems is social inequality, problems which are often projected, wrongly, upon migratory fluxes. The consequences of this endanger democracy through the emergence of the extreme right and clearly anti-democratic political positions which channel the discomfort and precariousness of the middle classes. For Nicolás Barbieri, inequalities are multidimensional and multifactorial, factors which may be summarised in three concepts, difference, resources and connection. In the project ASSYMETRIES, we wish to explore different forms of contemporary precariousness in the urban context. Under the concept of Asymmetries, we propose a space for exploration, research and project advancement in relation to urban spaces that we consider to be in a state of transition. Being in transition is to be immersed in a process of transit that goes from one state to another. To be in transition is not the beginning of something new or the end of something obsolete: it is the uncoordinated condition that insinuates a change, a rupture, a transformation, an evolution, a dissolution, a construction; in the end, a different way to develop something formulated at a pre- or post- stage. Transition is the most creative phase that comes together in the evolutionary provisionality of a mutation.

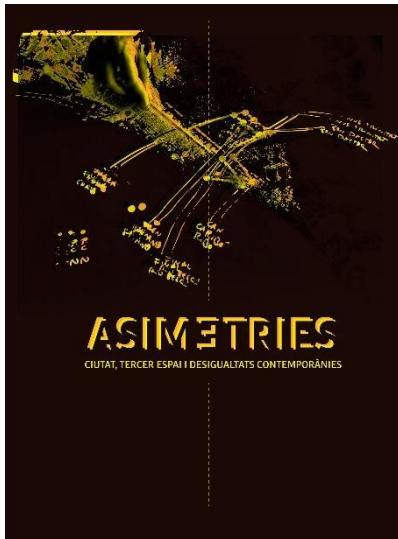
Based on this premise, ASSYMETRIES brings into dialogue elements which contribute to the transformation of cities from various perspectives and positions, focusing on the contemporary transition which is taking place, from the production modes and from the active participation of citizens in the configuration of public space, and in contemporary urban construction. It proposes multiple perspectives upon the relationship between artistic space and social space, deployed in processes of transition. It is the space of difference, relationships and emergence that makes the city a place in permanent state of rolling turmoil, of construction and of creative destruction.

5) RESULTING PROJECTS STILL IN PROGRESS

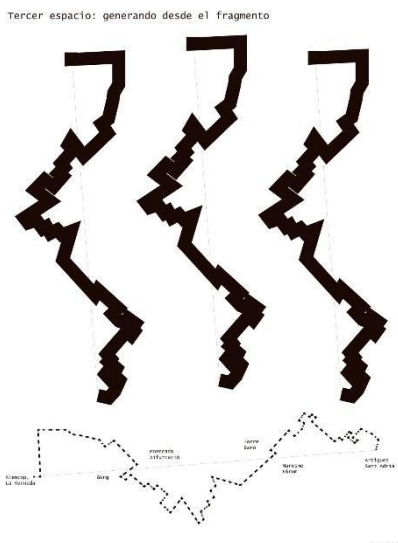
From the artistic practices of research carried out came the idea of the search for the "third space", as a metaphor for that space of relationships within the city that attends to equity between equals, although they are not necessarily symmetrical relationships.

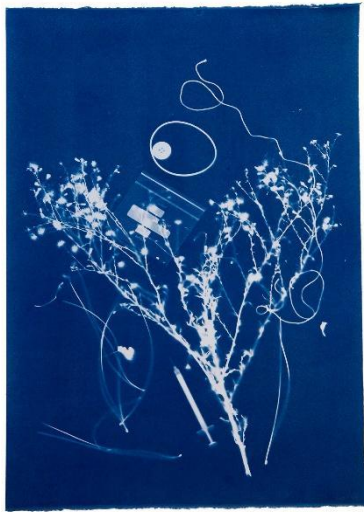
Below are the images of the proposals arising from the collective work among the group of residents: Patricia Bagán, Ro Caminal, Fiona Capdevila, Mia Coll, Irma Estrada, Sonia G. Villar, Daniel Gasol, Nil Juan, Irene Pérez, Amparo Prieto, Mayra Sánchez and Manuela Valtchanova. And in the last section of this text we will explain in more detail one of the projects as a case study, entitled "Horts de Sant Pau del camp 1987-2019".

Projects as part of the research residence and process seedbed



1-2 Idensitat / 3- Amparo Prieto / 4- Daniel Gasol





Disculpo les modistes — Mia Coll Marín



5- Irma Estrada / 6- Manuela Valtchanova / 7- Mia Coll / 8- Fiona Capdevila

ENSAYO SOBRE (CON)TENERSE Y LA TENDENCIA A CAER

Propongo encontrarnos en el mismo lugar y al mismo tiempo. A través de ejercicios de escucha, atención y conciencia corporal, trazar un mapa abstracto, alterable, que tienda a experimentar sobre lo real.

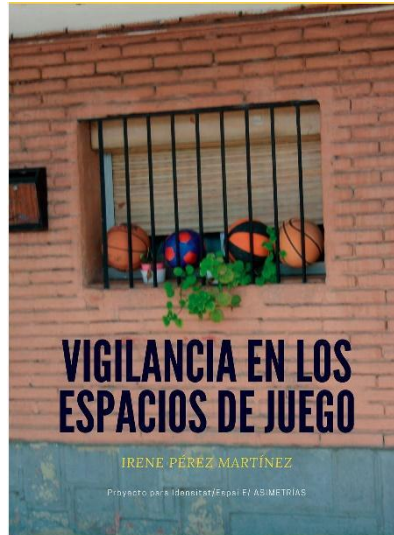
No quiero intentar comprender y transformar a partir del cuerpo, afectar y ser afectados, explorar y exponer nuestros límites y vulnerabilidades, desarrollar la visión periférica, no-direccional, acercarnos, sobrepasar la distancia con el mundo en que nos desenvolvemos, quedarnos al borde (una hermandad, liberarnos de nuestra identificación, experimentar las motivaciones ocultas, explorar los impulsos restringidos, ser heterofóbicos que no lo sabemos).

Cómo romper los muros que conciben, verticalizan, desorientan y limitan nuestra existencia y las posibilidades de reconstrucción?
Cómo conectar y comprender colectivamente?
Cómo encajar en el constructo?



Sonia G. Villar: proyecto para ASPECTOS - ESPAL 8





9- Sonia G. Villar / 10- Nil Joan / 11- Gaspar Maza - Patricia Bagán - Ramon Parramon / 12- Irene Pérez

6) CASE ANALYSIS, INVESTIGATION, PROPOSAL AND REALIZATION: ASYMMETRIES “HORTS DE SANT PAU DEL CAMP (1987-2019) UP& DOWN” BARCELONA. N 41°22.527’’ E 002°10.177’’

Authors: Patricia Bagán and Gaspar Maza

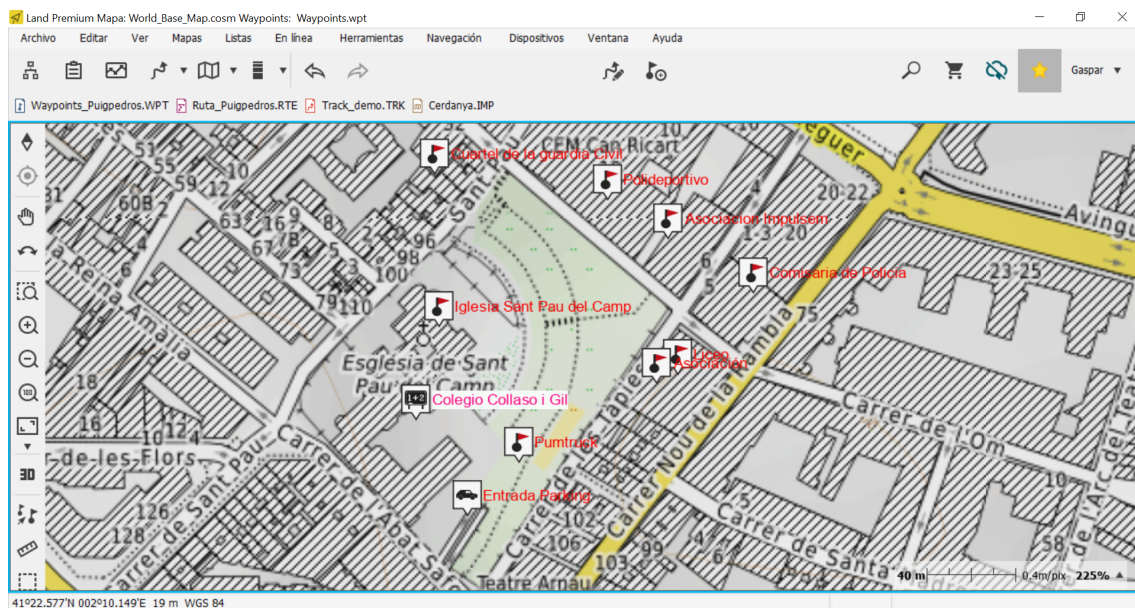
The analysis and diagnosis of this space will focus on two main axes:

- The changing “neighborhood / city” relationship.
- The asymmetries of the spaces: “up & down”.

The synthesis of this analysis and the examples that have inspired us lead us to propose a cultural intervention in a “down” space, as well as a broader reflection on the future of the city and the spaces dedicated to cars, as we suggests case of Horts de Sant Pau.

6.1) Neighborhood or City. Horts of Sant Pau del Camp in the Raval neighborhood or in the city of Barcelona: a neighborhood (Raval) or city space (Barcelona)?.

“



Horts de Sant Pau del Camp” has traditionally been an exotic place in the city; a marginal space located in the Raval district, but a place less than 1 km away from the central Ramblas of Barcelona - a space so eternally pre-destined to recover the life of a neighborhood that was substantially modified in the nineties. This has been the traditional and priority approach for all the projects in the square in the last 50 years that have focused mainly on bringing the neighborhood to life as well as fighting the prostitution of the adjacent and famous Las Tapias street.

In the nineties, one of the consequences of this way of seeing the place, resulted in the construction of an underground parking lot that has determined the place, that is, the Horts of Sant Pau del Camp. Its space is re-built on a public underground car park, which is managed by a private and public company (Saba). The parking (down) that is accessed by the C/ Paralelo is strategically located in an area with easy access to the city center and next to the theaters of the same street.

On its surface - that is to say “above”, the place until today, has triggered the emergence of a conflictive type of life, (almost permanent camping of people passing through, street vendors etc., young drug addicts ...)

Many of these people have found in “Horts de Sant Pau”, a space where to hide from the rest of the citizens by having several hidden spaces, such as those provided by the corners, the heritage chimney and the different levels of the park, marked by the construction needs of the underground parking. The fencing and the external schedule, demanded by the regulations of the urban parks produces the closing of this place at night. This circumstance has been key for the settlements of the people who have settled to live there. The fencing and the closing of the place at the same time causes security to the homeless, which increases over time a greater number of people who settle in this place. At present, the neighbors cannot enjoy the outer space since it causes them insecurity for the environment that is generated in the outer space, nor for the indoor parking, more oriented to the car parking of people who visit the center of the city or customers from other areas of the city.

6.2) “Up & Down”. Horts of Sant Pau del Camp. Surface (up) or parking (down).

The contribution of the Horts (surface, "above") and the contribution of parking (underground, "below") to the life of the city can be classified as contradictory, so we propose a change of dynamics and look, to focus in the analysis of the asymmetrical differences of the place, to say the "above" (exterior, surface, people, green, dark night) - and the "below" (interior, underground, cars, light, security).

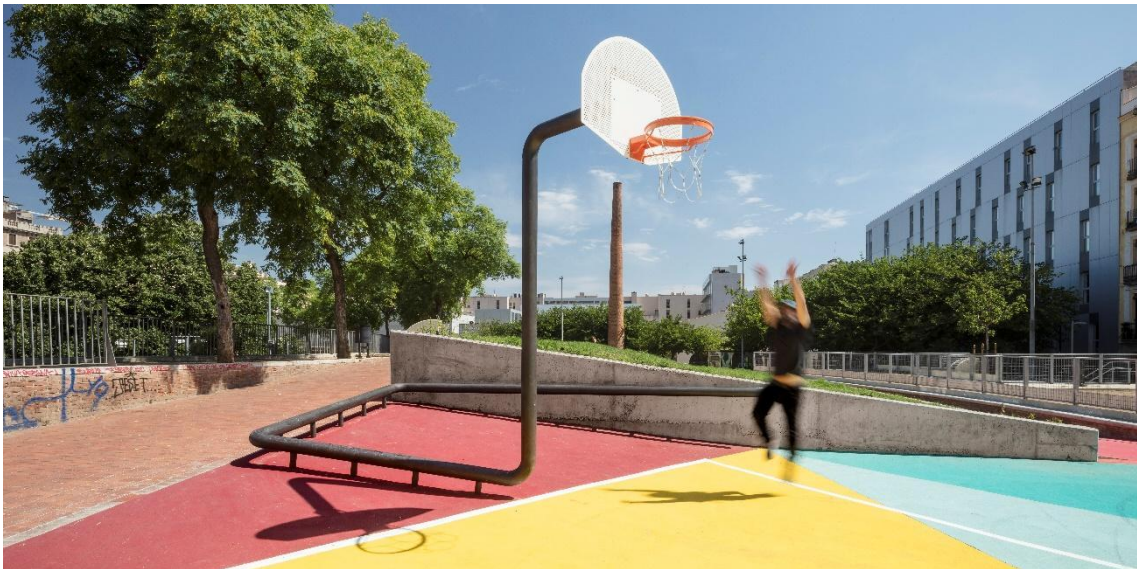
The most common diagnosis has been the analysis of the surface, that is, the problems of Horts de Sant Pau. This fixation has had the consequence that one never thought about the possibility of intervention on what is "below" the same, that is, the parking itself.

In short, the diagnosis that the square is a space on the roof of the parking lot has been a diagnosis little taken into account, compared to the diagnosis of the reform of the place as a space for the neighborhood. The attention has always

been focused on what was happening on the “UP” surface and not on what was happening “DOWN”, even though it was decisive for the place.



Pictures of the change at “up” Sant Pau del Camp (2019-20); more information at [ACUPUNTURA DE UN ESPACIO - IDENSITAT](#). The “down” remains unchanged



Project: Acupuntura de un espacio. Idensitat (Gaspar Maza, Ramo Parramon, Anna Ferrer) and Inés de Rivera 2019-2020. Img. Adrià Goula, 2020.









"Asymmetries" Idensitat call in FIC, has been an initiative of Idensitat, which has encouraged us to think about the place from this perspective and has led us to think about the spatial differences that the place presents, as well as to link and relate what it is on the surface, (UP) and what is below the surface (DOWN).

6.3) Proposal for the “down”:

As an example: Different cultural interventions in parkings.

We will start with the transformation of the space to later change the uses of it by people as we can see in the following examples:

- Peckam parking. London.
- Paris parking.
- Chamonix parking.
- London Car Park Artshow
- The Park-Ing. Tokyo

6.4) Conclusion: the future of cities (up&down) and the car. On mobility and sustainability in the near future.

Barcelona in this case, but also many other cities that rethink the future of a city with fewer cars (down Sant Pau del Camp), should think about the future of cars in the city and perhaps in the future of many of the spaces that until now are occupying the cars, applying this "up and down" look. Here we have tried to give an answer thinking about the intervention in the parking -down lot of Horts de Sant Pau, but after it we cannot stop asking ourselves other questions such as how many places and public spaces have been improved in many other cities in the name of cars ? How many spaces have been remodeled to install a car parking under them or into "up"? In the future will these parking spaces (down) be necessary? What can we do and how can we recycle all these possible leftover spaces?

In the case of Horts de Sant Pau parking (down), it has also helped us to consider an evaluation of other parking carried out in the city in the nineties, (BIMSA, BSM) that under the motto of recovering the public space of the spaces for the people, these finally ended up delivering to the underground use of cars, creating in the city a huge cheese with many holes.

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