

Living and Sustainability: An Environmental Critique of Design and Building Practices, Locally and Globally

Abstract / Initial Proposal Form:

1. Paper / Proposal Title:

Local people experience of street and urban vitality in new non-central residential areas. Case studies in Madrid and Edinburgh.

2. Format:

Conference presentation and written paper

3. Author(s) Name:

Ana Miret Garcia, Caroline Brown and Ryan Woolrych

4. University or Company Affiliation:

Heriot Watt University, Edinburgh.

5. Abstract (300 words):

Active and lively streets are indicators of successful communities (Jacobs 1961; Gehl 1987; Bentley 1985). The provision of mixed uses and the concentration of diverse people and activities are necessary conditions for vitality at the street level (Montgomery 1998). Active streets help promote sustainable and healthy behaviours

such as walkability (Eyles & Williams 2008; Andrews et al. 2012). Most research on lively streets and urban vitality has focussed on city centres (Montgomery 1997; Florida 2005). Less attention has been paid to non-central residential areas. Therefore, there is a lack of understanding of how residents experience vitality at the street level or how vitality can be integrated into urban design interventions at a neighbourhood level.

This paper reports on ongoing research that explores street vitality in the case of non-central residential areas. It will address the questions of what vitality means for local people and how they experience vitality in their everyday lives. These will be tackled by contrasting two case studies in Madrid (Valdebebas) and Edinburgh (Granton Waterfront). Both cases correspond to mixed use areas in an intermediate stage of redevelopment.

A flexible qualitative approach has been undertaken, informed by ethnographic methods of inquiry, comprising participant observation and 47 interviews with local people (both residents and local entrepreneurs with a business located in the areas of study). The interviews include 23 in depth semi-structured, open-ended conversations and 24 walking interviews. The data collection has been completed with 9 additional interviews with stakeholders, which have taken part on the design of the areas of study. They are land owners, land developers (including public authority), property development companies, architects and landscape designers.

By examining local people perceptions and experiences of vitality in their everyday lives, this research suggests that street vitality is required to create a sense of community, sense of place and wellbeing. Despite the increasing mobility and specialization of contemporary lifestyles, everyday spaces and opportunities near home are essential to encourage walkability and allow for contact between diverse people, helping create an inclusive sense of community. A variety of services and facilities and the quality of urban design are necessary elements to build street and urban vitality.

6. Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Ana Miret Garcia is PhD doctoral researcher at Heriot Watt University (Edinburgh), M.Arch. (ETSAM, Madrid), MSc. Urban Geography (UCM, Madrid).

I am a chartered architect and urban designer, founding partner of Cuartoymitad Architecture & Landscape, an award-winning research and design studio that focuses on the innovative development of the public realm within the context of contemporary culture (www.cuartoymitad.es). I am a regular visiting critic in the Architectural Design

studio at the University of Edinburgh. I teach at the MSc in Urban Strategies and Design. I have been visiting faculty at the school of Architecture, Technische Universität, Graz and ESAYA, UEM, Madrid.

My research explores the role of streets in contemporary urban design. It, particularly, aim to examine the emergence of street and urban vitality in new in non-central residential areas, and the role that vitality plays in resident's everyday life. My research interests include creativity in urban design processes, civic participation in urban design and innovative strategies for public space design.

Dr. Caroline Brown and **Dr. Ryan Woolrych** are the supervisors of my PhD doctoral research. Dr. Caroline Brown is Assistant Professor and Dr. Ryan Woolrych is Associate Professor. They both work at the Institute for Social Policy, Housing, Equalities Research, Heriot Watt University (Edinburgh).