

Cities, Communities and Homes: Is the Urban Future Livable?

- **Paper / Proposal Title:**

Infrastructures under Transformation as Volatile Collective Spaces

- **Format:**

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- **Author(s) Name:**

María Cecilia Chiappini, Kris Scheerlinck and Yves Schoonjans

- **University or Company Affiliation:**

KU Leuven

- **Abstract (300 words):**

Cities are manifestations of fluctuant dynamics with spatial qualities that aggregate and interact in time especially when infrastructure is under transformation.¹ In this paper the emerging and volatile qualities of collective spaces related to that transforming infrastructure are investigated, enabling speculations on future conditions. How do collective spaces raise, and fluctuate? How are their transitory spatial configurations linked to temporary communal appropriations? How do material and immaterial forces come together through voices that are spatially situated?

Collective spaces embedded in dynamic infrastructures are the focus of this PhD-research that seeks to produce new insights on urban territories related to them. Glòries Square (Barcelona, Spain) is the case-study. This infrastructure-based open space, once exposing a variety of emerging logics linked to a complex development process, is now turning into a formalized urban complex that simplifies, thus overwrites that variety.² Paradoxically responding to long standing demands for public housing and facilities by neighborhood associations, the case gathers the “most advanced” of urban

development, exposing how architects' future visions tremble when mismatching existent qualities are simplified and dismissed, leaving little space to alternative urban processes. The case is experimentally explored through **spatial** (morphologic/material-programmatic / domain / territorial configurations); **human** (uses / appropriations / atmospheres) and **symbolic** (voices / engagement / discussions / imaginaries) compounds. The research aims to tackle the overlapping, unexpected, and fluctuant characters of urban space by means of studying collective spaces and infrastructures as extreme territorial entities; and to test the possibilities of design as a tool to unveil unforeseen spatial relations.

The paper advocates for the investigation of volatile urban processes as means to imagine the livability of our cities, in contrasts with the conception of development as static outcomes, in which in the name of a "perfect picture", the crystallization and extreme formalization become the ultimate goals.

Notes:

¹: This initial hypothesis is influenced by DE LANDA, M. (2000). *1000 of non linear history*. New York: Swerve Editions. DELEUZE, G. and GUATTARI, F. (1987). *1000 Plateau*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

²: Glòries Square is located at the heart of Barcelona's expansion, and was wounded by the aspirational character assigned by Cerdà: "the centre" of his plan, meeting point of prominent urban axes. The complexity of the site manifested along history and the area developed inconsistently as the prime destination for infrastructural elements. The history of constant redefinitions including the demolition of recently built elements or intricate level differences empowered the emergence of a vivid collective urban streetscape, full of rich spatial configurations and a great variety of programmatic manifestations. The undergoing transformation process includes the relocation of major infrastructures in underground levels and the reclaim of open spaces for formally defined urban uses to be achieved by means of a new metropolitan park, a series of dominant architectural objects, along with the programmatic saturation.

• **Author(s) Biography (200 words each):**

María Cecilia Chiappini (1983) is a PhD Candidate and Teaching Staff in Architecture at the University of Leuven (KU Leuven), Belgium. She graduated as an Architect from the Universidad Nacional del Litoral (UNL), Argentina, and as a Master of Advanced Studies in Urban Design from the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH), Switzerland. She worked at Mecanoo in Delft (2013-2015); at IN-VI in Bratislava, Warsaw, Ticino and Cannes (2008-2009); at the Territorial Strategic Plan of the Province of Santa Fe, and as an Assistant Teacher at UNL (2010-2011). She currently teaches Design Studios at the International Master of Science in Architecture Programme in Brussels, "Urban Projects, Urban Cultures".

Kris Scheerlinck (1972) is Associate Professor at the University of Leuven (KU Leuven), Belgium. He studied Architecture (MSc., School of Architecture, Sint-Lucas, Ghent), Spatial Planning (Post Graduate, University of Ghent/KU Leuven), Urban Culture (Post Graduate, UPC Barcelona) and Urban Design (MSc., UPC Barcelona) and obtained his Ph.D. in Architecture and Urban Projects with Prof. de Solà-Morales and Prof. Ferrer as thesis directors (UPC/URL, Barcelona, Spain). For more than 15 years, he ran his own

research and design practices in Ghent, Barcelona and New York, working on urban and architecture projects, interior, retail and exhibition design and ephemeral installations. He coordinated and ran design studios, workshops and taught theoretical courses in Architecture and Urban Design Programs at various institutions and universities in New York, Barcelona, Bratislava, Melbourne, Valparaiso, Cordoba, Guayaquil, Cuenca, Havana, Addis Abeba, Ghent and Brussels. For the last 5 years he directed the International Master of Science in Architecture Programmes (Programme in Brussels, "Urban Projects, Urban Cultures" and programme in Ghent, "Resilient and Sustainable Strategies").

Yves Schoonjans (1960) is a Professor in architectural history and – theory at the University of Leuven (KU Leuven), Belgium. He received a Master of Science in Architectural Engineering at the University Ghent (1984) and a PhD in 2001. In 2009 he founded (with Sven Sterken & Rajesh Heynickx) the Research group *ARP (Architectural Culture of the Recent Past)* that tackles architecture as a wide cultural phenomenon and its relation to ideas, discourses and practices. In 2013 together with Kris Scheerlinck he initiated the '*Urban Projects, Collective Spaces and Local Identities*' research group. He conducts research on practices and discourses in a recent and contemporary context – relation between theory and practices; and on everyday local identity, appropriation and urban development. He was involved and lead-coordinator of different international programs (Erasmus, Mundus, ALFA) and participated in different projects, especially in Latin America. He is vice-chair research of the Research Department.