

What Makes or Breaks a Protest. How does Urban Design influence in the Making or Breaking of a Protest?

Unit 9: Design Cultures 3
Urban Fabric
27 of January 2022
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Fig. 1.

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Introduction

Barcelona is an undoubtedly protest-friendly city and having grown up there I lived through many first hand. Some were more successful than others but I was intrigued as to why the protests formed and what made them work effectively. Urban protest is directly related to city design as in Barcelona we see that social protest are fairly common and the participants have learned to use key spacial design elements to their advantage. The aim of this dissertation is to look at how urban design contributes to the making or breaking of a protest in a public realm. In other words, how does a protest succeed and have a positive impact or how does it fail in a physical-spatial context because of the urban design.

The analysis of these topics is going to be discussed through two case studies: The Barcelona 'Indignado' s' Movement which occurred in the city' s Plaza Catalunya on the 15th of May 2011 for six weeks and the Occupy Wall Street Movement which took place shortly after in New York' s Zuccotti Park on the 17th of September and lasted two months. Both protests are going to be looked at from a design perspective to understand how urban design and its policies have the upper hand when defining the durability and effectiveness of the movement. Both movements were inspired by the Arab Spring' s sense of the effectiveness of collective action, mainly through indirect means. They were also long-lasting protests which mainly used open-plan methods and encampments, in other words the direct occupation of public space:

“In recent publications, architects, planners and urban designers analyze protest encampments through their material outcomes (Allen et al, 2013) and describe how their fragile and ephemeral character (Rice, 2013) and their adoption of vernacular construction techniques (Taylor, 2014) reflect the plasticity of this emergent society, while revealing the political importance of occupying space (i.e. with light architecture)” . (De la Llata S. 2016)

Barcelona' s encampments had a very positive outcome using collaborative, spontaneous and organic mechanisms in their planning and urban design processes. In contrast, New York' s public space policies made it a lot more difficult to succeed. The public space ownership models in the two cities are completely different and it is striking how this influences the outcome of a social protest movement. We see the difference between a city' s urban design more centred on the connecting its inhabitants by encouraging public ownership of urban space (Barcelona) and a city which encourages private ownership of spaces which commonly should be public (New York). The urban tactics employed by the protesters could, within a spatial design context, make or break the effectiveness of the collective action.

Chapter 1 Public Space and Protest will provide a brief historical and philosophical context to public space and protests, its definitions and relationships today. It will explore why public spaces are so important to the character of a City and how they contribute to the well-being of the population. It will also touch upon the importance of public spaces in relation to their influence on social movements.

Chapter 2 What Makes a Protest will look into what makes a successful protest using the example of the Indignados movement in Barcelona, 2011. It explores the careful balance of influences and the construction of urban spaces which contributed to the effectiveness of the protest.

Chapter 3 What Breaks a Protest will concentrate on the case study of Occupy Wall Street, examining the influence of the Indignados movement and why the New York protest had many more problems in getting their protest message across effectively. It becomes appparent that physical differences in the urban space ensured different outcomes.

Mapping Bilbao. SILK.



Fig. 2.

Alongside my thesis I created a visual essay mapping out a representation of hidden beauty, protest and history all in the context of Bilbao.

The map is completed over a piece of chiffon and held together by a metal mould. It is supposed it mimic a corset.

Chapter 1: Public Space and Protest

Public Space has been conceived as nobody's space, everybody's space. Traditionally, in our cities it is the place that houses the everyday, the place of social and community activity, the place that gives life and personality.

Public space gives character to a city where it is in charge of intrinsically relating and preserving the collective memories including those that the site offers thanks to its inhabitants, its natural landscapes, its patrimonial history, its culture and its activities.

Throughout the years history has shown that a large part of the city is defined by public space, the relationships between power, inhabitants and citizens are materialised in the formation of streets, parks, squares; they present the citizen's meeting places. Therefore, the city can be understood as a set of elements, streets, squares, cultural facilities, bus and train stations. All the collective space is created by the progressive appropriation of the city's people. They allow the encounters and walks that grant each area of the city to take place, giving it meaning, social expression and a collective cultural area. They turn it into a physical, political and symbolic space. (Borja and MUXI, 2000) According to Jeff Hou, (Kelley, 2018) "Public spaces provide visibility to critical social, political and economic issues of our time, how they allow a variety of participants to assemble and negotiate different interests and perspectives."

It could be said that spaces define the activity that can be carried out within them. Spaces represent plurality of forms, social and spatial diversity. There are also the functions, dimensions and delimitations that define it, such as urban furniture, the buildings that surround it and the elements that border it. A city without public spaces would become concrete curtains where high-rise buildings would cover the city excessively. Without an area to share outdoors children would not have space to play or people to gather. Public space encourages civic participation and encourages communal activities.

In the past, the concept of public space was intrinsically related to green areas, but this has changed over the years. It was understood that cities required spaces that improved the health conditions of citizens, however the approach has been changing to green spaces, expanding the conception of these from "green space to free space". This is conceived as an outdoor urban space, where the pedestrian is the protagonist, spaces for games, exercise, walks, rest, protests, sport, leisure etc. All fulfil a very important role.

Protests form a significant role amongst the activities which take place in public spaces. I will be looking at how they are formed in an urban setting and what factors contribute to their triumph as well as their failures and the aftermath. But first it is important to provide some recent and historical context to what protests are and what they can offer. According to the Cambridge Dictionary a protest is a 'strong complaint expressing disagreement, disapproval, or opposition. An occasion when people show that they disagree with something.' (Cambridge Dictionary, 1995). In a social-spatial sense the term 'protest' has many dimensions. Social Movements or protest 'are powerful political tools for change' (Harrouk, 2020). Moreover, a place in which alternative human relationships have been developed. A place of free expression, an outside or alternative to normal institutions and communication channels.

The past two years have been notorious for various protests and civil actions. The murder of George Floyd (fig. 5) in the United States became huge international news as well as Palestinian solidarity protests (fig. 6) held around the world. What both these movements have in common are the international attention they have received in part contributed to the crucial impact of social media which has created a whole new world of public space activism through our screens. Lest we not forget that without the bravery and willingness of protestors putting their health on the line (due to COVID-19 etc) in order to fight injustice in person we wouldn't have been able to live these protests from a far and experience their reality. This just shows the importance of public space; people still need to "take their issues to the streets" to have somewhere to go fight and be seen (Harrouk, 2020).

Mapping.

Public Space



Fig. 3.

Before and after the 'recovery of the banks of the Nervion River' which was a major project in Bilbao's redevelopment.

This sanitation project allowed inhabitants to live overlooking the river, and for important urban design projects to take place.

The left bank was occupied by factories and their workers, the right bank was a residential area for the factory owners.



Fig. 4.

I decided to make a new garment out of chiffon re-creating the draping effect. The union point of the stitches which creates the draping represents the river and the separation of both sides of the banks.

It is the visceral encounters in physical spaces that trigger deeper and more emotional connections according to Jeffrey Hou's input "Be Water: Protests in Liquid Public Space".



Fig. 5.



Fig. 6.

Protests are what have given voice and rights for women to vote, LGBTQ rights, people of colour the right to citizenship as well as many other humanitarian movements. "Civic engagement must become an expected part of democracy; it is not a threat to democratic governments". (Dr. Hoffmann, Africa Programme)

Public space, has always been immensely political, today's protest is merely the most recent struggle between rulers and the governed.

Mapping Bilbao.

Mapping out concept of 'beauty' in non-traditional ways.



Fig. 7.

On the left, inside-out stitch of 'La Grua Carola'. In its day, it was the most powerful crane built in Spain. Named after a young woman who would cross the river everyday on her way to work.

"Physical spaces that trigger deeper and more emotional connections". - Jeff Hou



On the right, stitch of the 'Puente de San Anton'. For centuries it was the only meeting point between both sides of the river.

Fig. 8.



Fig. 9. Indignados Movement in Plaza Catalunya, Barcelona.

Chapter 2: What makes a protest

Ideally, there is no perfect place for protest, these movements can take place in squares, high-streets, parks or even un-conventional spaces such as: motorways, bridges, shopping centres etc. As well as the urban design aspect of making or breaking a protest there are other factors which come into play such as social media, government policies, the weather, strategy and so on. This part of the thesis will focus on the physical aspect and how space/urban design comes into play with the help of two case studies: Barcelona and New York.

On the 15th of May 2011, the 'Indignados' (indignant) movement was born. It was social event that had been developing for several years, beginning with a series of public demonstrations throughout Spain where citizens showed their despair with the continuing economic crisis which started in 2008 and the cuts in social and public aid that followed. According to Silvano de la Llata (2015, p.1), the protest was a six- week occupation of Plaza Catalunya in Barcelona (fig. 11). A hard core of indignados decided to take over one of Barcelona's most emblematic plazas. During that period, the encampment hosted debate sessions (fig. 10), stencil workshops, impromptu music performances, poetry readings, film screenings, puppet theatre shows, an open library, a communal garden, a kitchen that fed thousands twice a day and a daily open-to-the-public general assembly. The protesters used bicycle generators to power the assembly's sound system, cooked with solar-energy stoves of their own invention and designed clever structures with recycled wooden skids.

This a brief analysis of how the planning and location of its demonstration in Barcelona's 'Plaza Catalunya' had such a positive outcome for the its overall effectiveness.

This particular example fits into a broader dialogue on alternate space-making procedures like insurgent and tactical planning, as well as recent discussions about open-source cities. How protest encampments enacted alternative spatial orders at the local level while contesting power systems on a global scale (S.D. Llata, 2015). These encampments were urban laboratories (S.D. Llata, 2015) as an array of open-source approaches in urban planning; collaborative, spontaneous and organic mechanisms in urban design processes.

Firstly, it is important to look at the location of where this protest took place and why. Plaza Catalunya is described as the beating heart of Barcelona city centre. It is a point of union, not only physically but also in the city's history, where the roads of the old walled city conjoin and from which the new streets that make up the new upper urban expansion come out (fig. 13). Although this fact may be relatively common knowledge to some, as well as being something physically obvious, few people know that the name of the square goes back many years. Before the Ensanche existed, or indeed was planned, there was an esplanade in front of the Portal del Angel (the main gate to the old walled City) and the Ramblas, which people commonly referred to as "Plaza Catalunya". Here there were a wide variety of markets; in addition, fairs or popular festivals were held, among many other events, highlighting the importance that this space had for civic life over many centuries. This strategic civic importance continues to this day, as the plaza is often a starting point for mass meetings, celebrations and important protests such as the Woman's March 8M. It's the nerve centre from which the city's main avenues and streets all begin, a place that concentrates the entire spirit of Barcelona. (hcc Hotels, 2018)

The square covers of one of Barcelona's largest underground metro stations and has numerous bus routes connecting it to all of the corners of the city as well as the majority of the municipalities in the wider metropolitan area. It is also the common link to some of Barcelona's most important streets: Paseo de Gracia, Rambla Catalunya, the Ramblas and the Portal del Angel. Both factors are vital to mention because it clearly explains the easy access there is to this square and interconnections to the rest of the city. "When you want to stage a protest, you have to identify a location, you have to think about access, about access, and even how big it is. Sometimes people are conscious of these limitations, sometimes less so. But if you're protesting urban design will come in somewhere," according to Jeff Hou, head of the University of Washington's Urban Commons Lab and professor at the university.



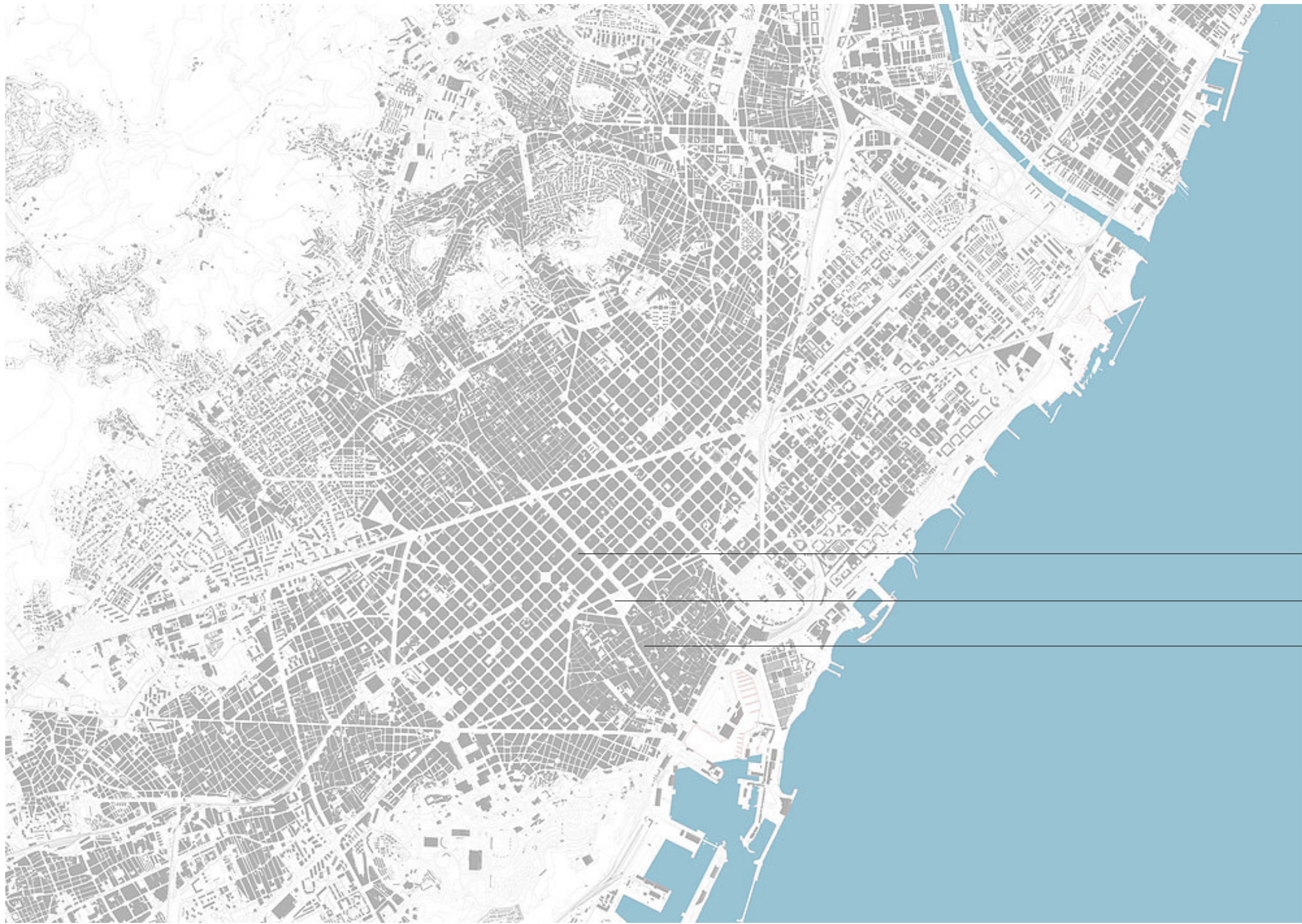
Fig. 10



Fig. 11



Fig. 12. Information stands set-up for new commuters.



New City or the 'Eixample'

Plaza Catalunya

Old City

Fig. 13

“Space is not a scientific object separated from ideology or politics; it has always been political and strategic. If space has the appearance of neutrality and indifference to its contents, and therefore appears to be purely formal and the epitome of rational abstraction, it is precisely because it has already been occupied and used, and has already been the focus of past processes whose traces are not always evident in the landscape. Space has been formed and shaped by historical and natural elements; but this has been a political process. Space is political and ideological. It is a product literally full of ideologies || .” (Lefebvre 1976 :31)

Secondly, the urban space, how is it designed and set out and why did these encampments work so well in that space?



Fig. 14. Plaza Catalunya from above.

In order to understand space and its construction let’s look at the excellent work of the French philosopher and sociologist Henry Lefebvre. From the perspective of this author’s work, space is not conceived as an objective entity, isolated in its purity or pre-existent to any collective activity. Space in Lefebvre is not an empty entity: the space of physics that acts simply as a hollow container in which human activity takes place, but rather it is a social construction. This conception implies that there is a production of space as long as one of the sectors that make up society demands it with an action that pursues an end, whether it is of communal benefit or of reduced groups of power (Vazquez, 2008:6). In Lefebvre’s words: “(social) space is a (social) product” (Lefebvre, 1991:23)

Urban space is a product of collaboration between various social factors, not a pre-existing dimension or a platform for human activity (Lefebvre, 1991).

Plaza Catalunya is a large square comprising of 5000 hectares of open space. This gave the protest a lot a physical freedom when it came to the organisation of the encampments with hardly any restrictions in place. Peter Schwartzstein (2020) explains the importance of emphasising turnout size: “large open spaces have taken on an even greater significance, especially among groups that might have previously shunned easily dispersed protest grounds. To be seen is to be heard.”

The physical planning of the ‘Indignados’ movement was spontaneous and organic meaning there was an openness to anyone who wanted to participate and in the construction of the encampment. Therefore, the spatial structure of the encampment was constantly transforming and growing in size and complexity facing day to day planning challenges. In some way, the encampments were urban ‘laboratories’ which offered open-source approaches in urban planning (S.D. Llata 2015). This movement/protest provided new opportunities to learn about the implications

Mapping.

Public Space

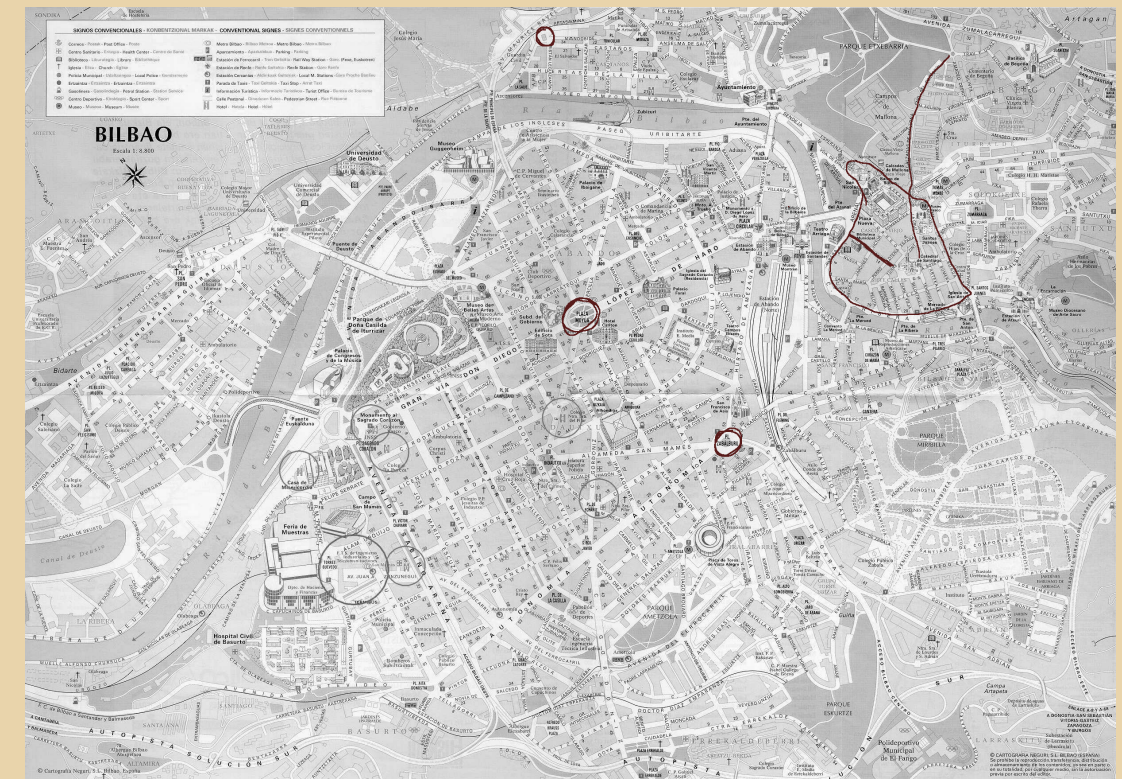


Fig. 15.

Mapping out the locations were protests took place after Miguel Angel Blanco’s assassination. They were Bilbao’s biggest protests to date.



Fig. 16.

Then mapped them out onto my garment. The amount of dots varies accordingly to which space had more or less people.

of collaborative, spontaneous and organic mechanisms in planning and urban design processes, as well as to investigate how public spaces are socially, culturally and politically constructed without the use of professional planners. Open system approaches, which were adopted from Internet culture, social networks and the aesthetics of Informatics prominent in these movements also impacted the encampments (Castells and Hernandez, 2012, Fuster Morell, 2012) (S.D. Llata, 2015).

Dillon Webster justifies in “The Empty Plaza: A Socio-spatial Post-Occupancy Evaluation” that protests mostly happen with no regard to and likely consciously against intentionally allocated spaces for activism. In his article, he presents an example of how designs were rejected by protesters revealing that protests are an improvisational performance in which actors respond to temporal and physical cues, collectively reaching a destination (B. Upmeyer 2021). The more you plan the less sincere it is. People become a lot more creative if they have to work with what they’ve got and face the constant challenges which come along with organic planning. A new level of drive and desire is born.

The encampment started with a group of about 150 people in Barcelona’s ‘Plaza Catalunya’ driven by a declared sense of indignation and two weeks later around 12000 people were participating according to local police (Mondelo, 2011). “The encampment developed with a great sense of uncertainty, but also of possibility.” (S.D. Llata 2015). According Santiago De la Llata, most people arrived without knowing much on the subject and approached the Plaza with questions and curiosity, later on attending assemblies and debates to find out together what the protest was about (fig. 18). Spaces of debate and conversation called “agoras” were created and located in the centre of the plaza open to anyone who wanted to join the public debate (fig. 20). These agoras were not thematically specific like the commissions that later resulted from them (e.g. the commissions on environment, economics, media, housing, health, education, and so on.) however, purposefully ambiguous in their goals. The infrastructures relied on donations or materials they collected themselves (Fig. 17):

“At the same time, if the needs of the commissions can’t be satisfied at a particular moment, we look for resources. If someone needs a table we look for someone who can give us a table and then we give it to whoever needs it. The commission was founded on the first day when the first commissions were founded to respond to the needs of infrastructure (of canvas, tables, paper, etc.). From there, we evolved and we have taken different tasks and others we have delegated to other commissions. Like the Commission of Security, which we were running, but it later became the Commission of Coexistence. When it [The Infrastructures Commission] was created we were 10 people, now we are about 25 that work in our stand taking turns. We have created different working groups and we decide in small meetings.” (Excerpt from Interview with a participant in the Infrastructure Commission, 15Mbcn.tv, 2011) (S.D. Llata 2015)

This same space was packed with people sleeping in sleeping bags at night. Every day, as the encampment grew in size and complexity during the course of the occupation this cycle repeated itself. New relationships were born between the camp community; learning from each other as well as helping one another.

The outcome: The occupation of Plaza Catalunya in Barcelona, which, after some initial attempts at eviction, consolidated into a stable encampment that grew organically, expanding geographically within and beyond Spanish borders. In the end, the encampment was evicted due to security, sanitation and organizational challenges which protesters had to face. The effective occupation of Barcelona’s central plaza was tolerated by the general public and authorities for a time but ultimately general civic outcry at the takeover of public space resulted in eviction. However, the movement all in all was an exceptional experiment with different planning approaches that should be examined further and can help us learn about spatial-temporal frameworks. It was also the start of another major mobilization that transformed the slogan “Take the streets” into “Take

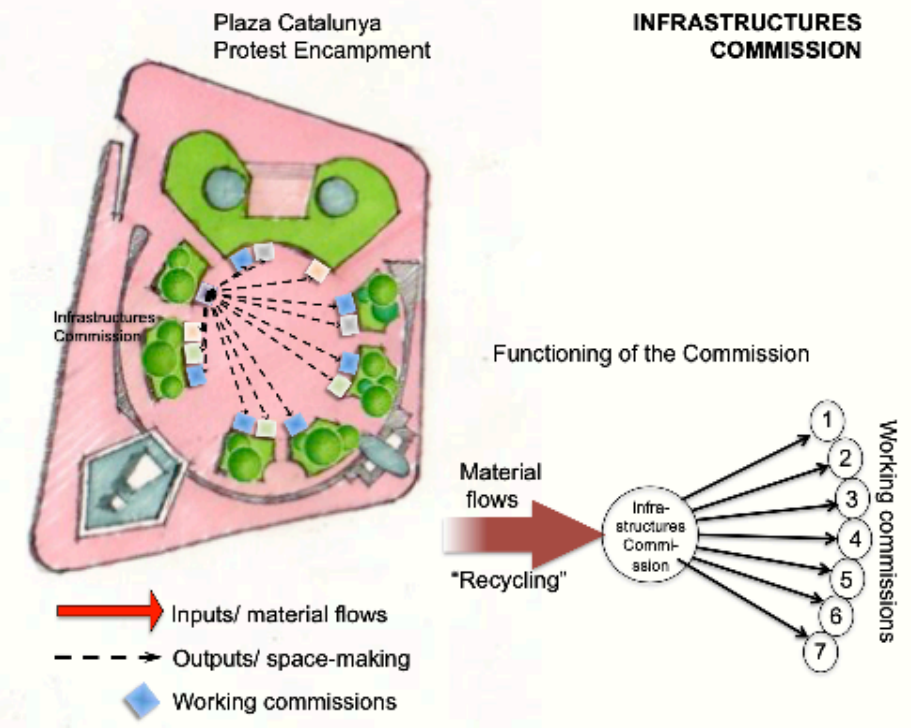


Fig. 17

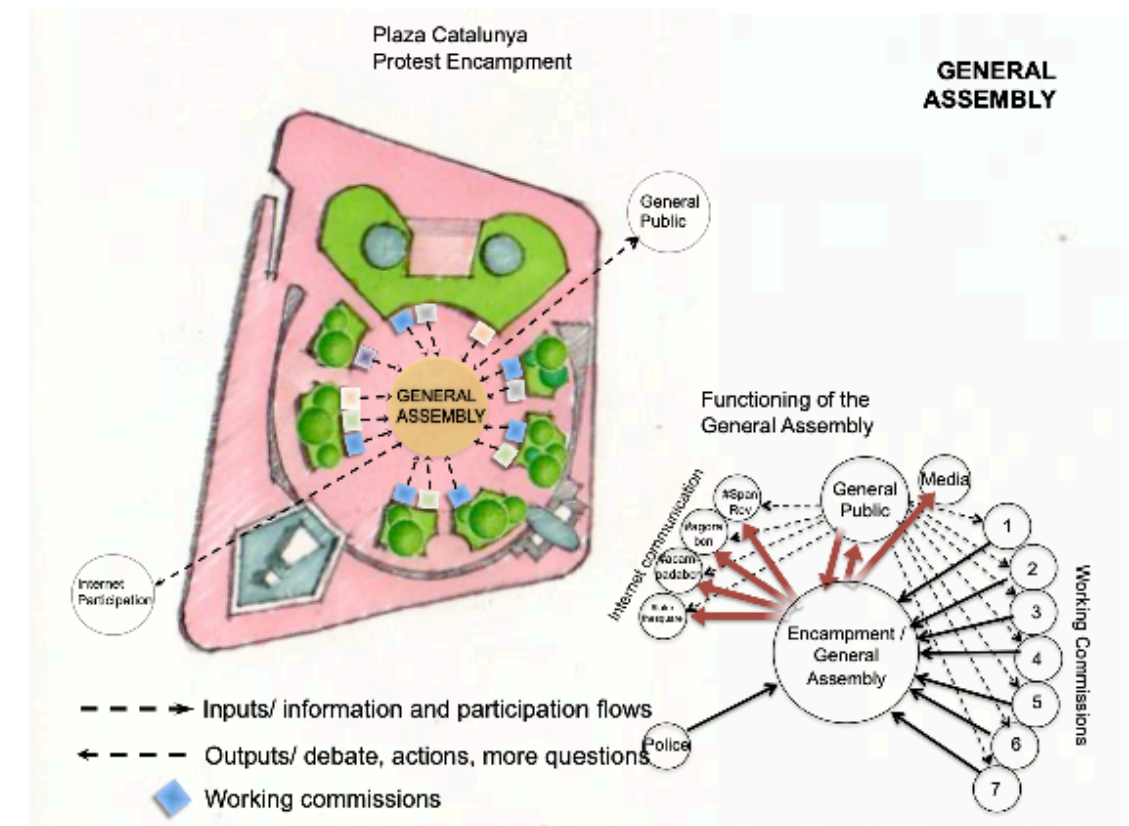


Fig. 18

the square” and took another step forward in the appropriation of urban space. (S. M. Roldan, 2011, p.28) Ultimately the Indignados movement established and consolidated the creation of a new political party in Spain, ‘Podemos’, which are now a part of the coalition government today.



Fig. 19. “Flyer of the May 12-15, 2012 Barcelona Encampment in Plaza Catalunya. The drawings describe the route of the demonstrations (left) and the spatial distribution of the plaza (circle in the right). The commissions are located in the outer ring of the granite esplanade, leaving the center for debates and the General Assembly. The flyer also marks information modules at the entrances of the plaza.” (S. D. Llata 2015)

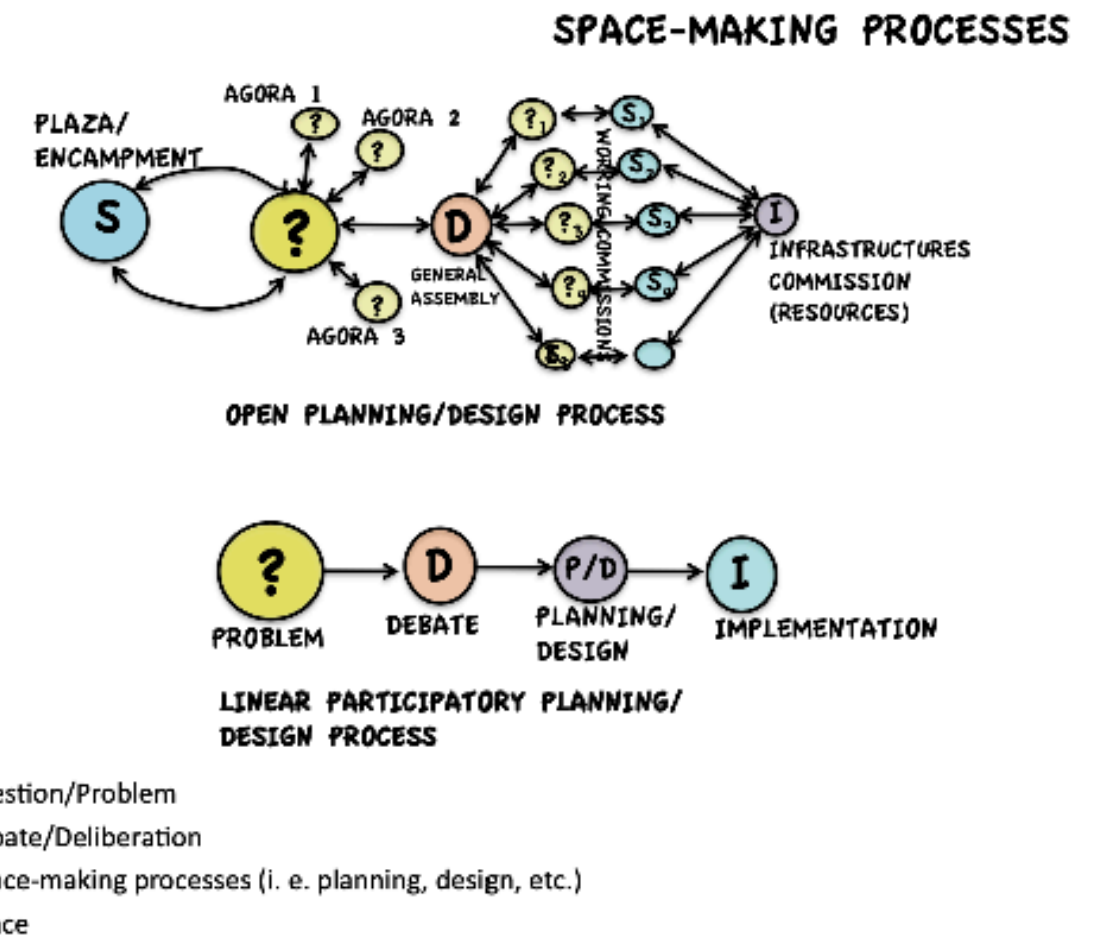


Fig. 20. Diagrams of open planning/design vis-a-vis linear participatory design processes. The latter incorporates participation and deliberation but this ends in order to give space for implementation. The former is a cyclical process that implements simultaneously with deliberation and reflection. (S. D. Llata 2015)

Chapter 3: What breaks a protest

There is no doubt that successful movements/protests influence each other whilst new ones try and imitate their strategic achievements. The Spanish indignados (May 2011) received from the Arab Spring (December 2010) a sense of the effectiveness of collective action, mainly through indirect means. Whilst the Spanish movement then “impulsed the rest of Europe to participate, creating a domino effect across the continent and across the Atlantic, with the Occupy Wall Street movement (September 2011).” (Voulgarelis, 2012: 171-172) (E. Romanos, p.104).

This second part of my research of what ‘makes or breaks a protest’ focuses on the breaking point; examining what factors contribute to the failure of a protest in a spatial-physical context. I will be using the ‘Occupy Wall Street’ movement as my case study.

Four days after the final eviction of Madrid and Barcelona’s ‘Indignados’ movement a group of New Yorkers camped outside their city council protesting against Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s cutbacks and austerity policies. Known as Bloombergville, the event lasted three weeks and ended after the approval of a new municipal budget (E. Romanos, p. 106). Soon after, a couple more protests occurred in the City: ‘16 Beaver Street’ and then ‘Bowling Green Park’ which by that time the Canadian magazine Adbusters sent out a tweet launching OWS: “On Sept. 17th flood into lower Manhattan, set up tents, kitchens, peaceful barricades and occupy Wall Street” (A. Roberts 2012, p. 755). On that day, they had hoped for a turnout of 20000 people but there were hundreds not thousands of protestors which marched through New York’s financial district and ended up setting camp in Zuccotti Park as they found that Wall Street was blocked by steel barricades. The movement would become known as Occupy Wall Street, a protest movement (that lasted two months) against economic inequality and injustice that spread to 28 other US cities (A. Anthony 2021).

Some say the movement was a triumph, because it sparked global conversation about wealth inequality that continues to this day and helped shift the Democratic party leftwards enabling the rise of democratic socialists like Bernie Sanders and Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez. Others see it as a complete failure. Income inequality being as acute as ever. “Back during Occupy Wall Street, things were bad. But they weren’t as bad as they are now” says Kalle Lasn, one of the original organizers of Occupy Wall Street (Johnson, Newsham, Ramaswamy, Ungarino, Ball, Stephanis 2021). But what were the spatial and physical constraints which led to the failure of this protest?

Firstly, the public space. Although they had taken inspiration from the organic planning and community driven groundwork from Arab Spring and 15M protests, they were faced with a big problem which Barcelona’s Indigandos movement in Plaza Catalunya did not have: “POPS” which stands for Privately Owned Public Spaces.

“The thing about Zuccotti Park is that it’s not a park. Quite the contrary, it’s a privately owned public space a few streets from the former World Trade Centre, with granite paving and several trees spared around. It’s referred to as a little square in the UK. But owing to its private status, it provided some protection against immediate eviction” (A. Anthony 2021). The protestors were initially banned from using tents so would sleep in sleeping bags or under blankets. They then managed to bring tents back in for a bit but were finally given a notice by the park’s owner that the use of sleeping bags, tents or tarps were fully prohibited due to the unsanitary and hazardous conditions. This led to the clearance and removal of the protest by the NYPD on November 15th (“Occupy Wall Street”, n.d.). Ultimately, there was a clear amount of restrictions they faced due to the POPS policy which made living conditions in that space very hard to maintain and endangered the well-being of its protestors. (A. Anthony 2021).

The preceding paragraph leads us to the next problem: New York’s hostile architecture and Zuccotti Park’s design. The vast amount of private owned public spaces in New York leads to a lot of hostile architecture around the city targeting the vulnerable population. According to the owners, this is a way to “maintain order and ensure public safety”. Jerold S. Kayden, a Harvard University professor of urban planning and design who co-authored a 2000 book, “Privately Owned Public Space: The New York City Experience” documented numerous spikes, bars, railings

and other obstructions on benches and ledges in these spaces. Suddenly, these so-called ‘public spaces’ become the complete opposite. This created a very clear barrier between authority and its citizens. A clear example is a Public Plaza on East 56th Street and Third Avenue in Midtown Manhattan. Office workers had to lean against a wall for a quick break as not a single table or chair was in sight (fig. 21). “The message is ‘Don’t hang out here,’” said Sean Orlando, 44, who sat on the steps with his lunch. “It definitely doesn’t feel like a public space. It seems like they’re trying to keep people from using it” (W. Hu 2019). On the other hand, Zuccotti Park is regarded as one of the ‘largest’ private parks in the city yet there is not one ounce of greenness people can use. Overall making the space uncomfortable when protestors were prohibited from using tents or sleeping bags, they were not even allowed to lie on the benches. Also, when they describe the park as being one of the city’s ‘largest’ private parks that is another problem. The park is a total of 33000 square feet and surrounded by four avenues (fig. 22) making the space rather small and compact for any kind of large protest such as OWS.

In May 2012, it concluded that the movement’s tactics “have been a disaster for its cause. It needs leaders, it needs structure, it needs discipline” (San Francisco Chronicle 2012) (A. Roberts 2012, p.760). Many of the reasons for its failure were due to exhaustion, internal tensions, weather conditions, political pressures, conflicts of interest and by rule of relevant high authorities. On the other hand, in a design context Zuccotti Park was not an ideal location for protest. The thing is, a city as compact as New York with such complicated public land use policies needs structure and organization when organizing a public protest, especially if its occupying a space for a long period of time. If we compare it to Barcelona’s 15M protest it’s main reason for failure was the limitations it had because of the city’s POPS policies.



Fig. 21



Fig. 22

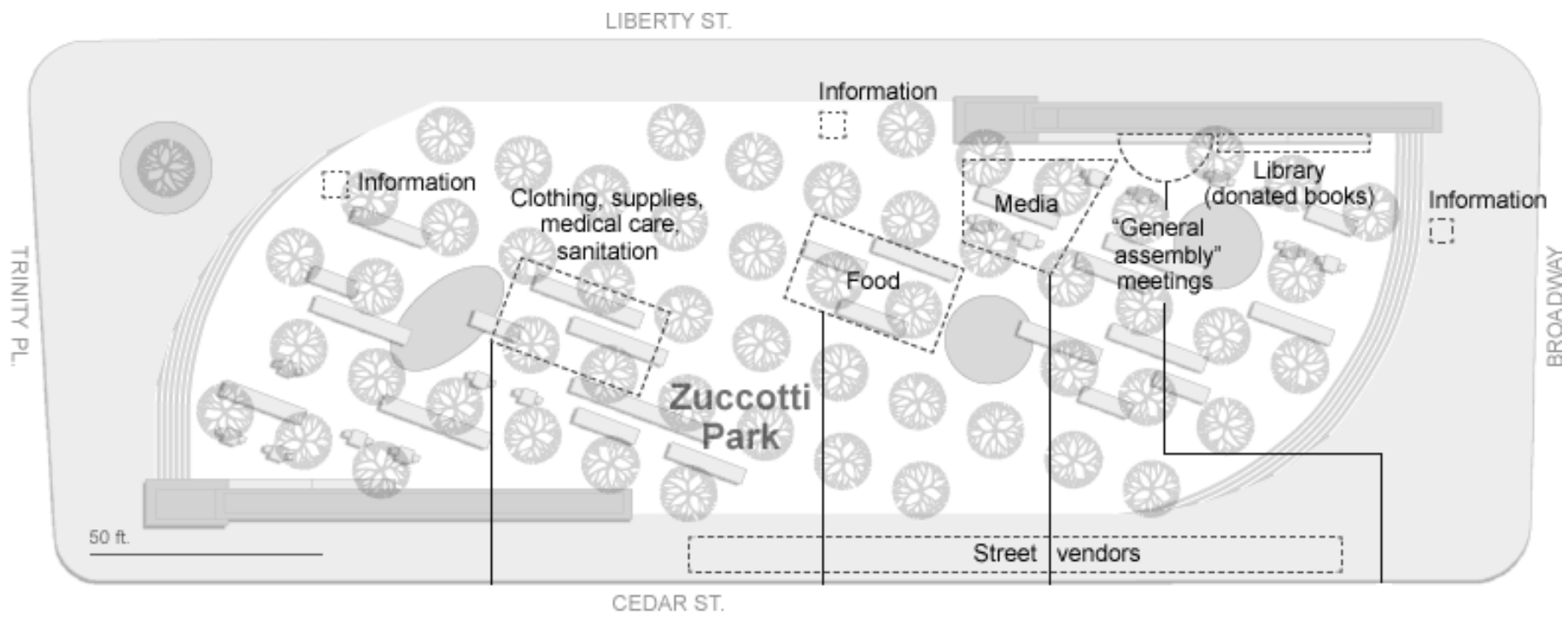


Fig. 23. How Occupy Wall Street Turned Zuccotti Park Into a Protest Camp.

Conclusion

Barcelona's 15M encampment and New York's Occupy Wall Street were both movements inspired by spontaneous planning methods such as the Arab Spring. Barcelona's protest in Plaza Catalunya consolidated into a stable encampment that grew organically, expanding geographically to other Spanish cities. The length and successful acceptance of the protest was owed to: the physical openness of the square and its transport connections, the historical significance of the square in Barcelona urban history, proper internal communication and planning through debate sessions and assemblies, and lastly relatively liberal public space policies. As a result, the movement made an impact within society spreading out into the political sphere. The first protest was essential to the formation of the political party 'Podemos', now part of the coalition which governs Spain in 2022. In contrast, New York's occupation of Zuccotti Park did not have the same resonance or success as its Spanish counterpart. Both were reactions to the economic and political troubles caused by the 2008 recession but the New York version was not as successful. They lacked space, organisation, internal communication and an actual truly public space in which to develop the encampment. The POPS policy was essential to the eventual failure of the protest as it ensured a definite eviction from the space and no continuation of this movement with no impactful outcomes. Zuccotti Park was chosen as the stage for public dissent because of its proximity to Wall Street, a symbol of capitalism at its most rampant, however the fact that it was privately owned made a truly democratic occupation of the space impossible.

It could be argued that there is no such thing as designing a place specifically for protest. Essentially they are often spontaneous acts which occur according to each narrative/situation (An example of which would be the George Floyd Black Lives Matter protest in May 2020). Each city influences its protests in different ways, they each have their own urban policies, design, land usage and ownership patterns. Cities such as New York with such compact urban design and tight 'pops' policies mean that ensuring a lengthy and meaningful street protest in urban spaces become very complicated. Central New York is privately owned and the public spaces can never truly be considered as such. This work shows the real contrast with Barcelona, where the public dissent was allowed by the Barcelona authorities to essentially take over a public space and thus developed over time to have a lasting impact on contemporary Spanish society.

Jeff Hou City Unsilenced: "Our main conclusion is this: These recent protests suggest the important role of public space in supporting active democracy at a time when our democratic institutions are being threatened and undermined by neoliberal practices and resurgence of totalitarianism." The ability to effectively protest in the public sphere is as essential today as it has ever been. In the UK we have recently witnessed climate change protests and their impact on wider society. These protests will continue whilst newer ones will evolve. Modern urban design in truly public space is crucial to ensure that democratic protests can take place in the first place. Hostile architecture and planning laws stamp out our options to take to the street and clamour for change. Social relationships and change are closely linked to urban space and this must be taken into consideration by urban planners and architects. People will not always use public space for the actual purpose that it was designed but this is what makes the fabric of our cities so interesting as well as guaranteeing that the population is really linked to the urban space and has a voice in their future.

THE END.



Fig. 24

The bareness of the piece is a juxtaposition to the chaos terrorism bears. It is supposed to evoke feelings of reflection and memory.

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