

*If happy little
bluebirds fly
Beyond the rainbow
Why, oh why can't I?*

Somewhere over the rainbow
The Wizard of Oz, 1939

The Graduation Project of Anna Sala has been developed in a PFC workstudio where the thesis subject was a real problem: the urban disconnection between the districts of Sants and Badal due to the construction of the railway's cut tunnel case which contains the underground and Ave from Hospitalet to Sants station. It is a railway corridor that has left an urban scar (disconnection, different height levels and residual areas) and a question mark over what to do with this area of about 30,000 m² that will be transformed into public space in the near future, into a 12 metre-high vast promenade. In spite of this, there was set out a hypothetical situation as start point: there wasn't enough money to finish the construction of the supposed project leaving the site unfinished, and yet we must solve the connection between neighbourhoods and equip the promised public space area.

This promenade on a different level to the usual one of the street allowed formulate the hypothesis that public space and consequently commercial premises can appear on a different level to the usual one of the street, transforming the existing blocks into a living architecture in which a shop, office or art gallery can appear on the 3rd floor.

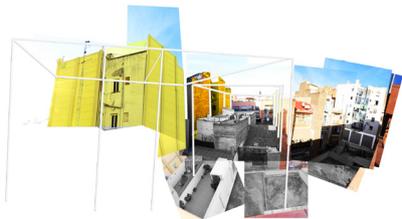
The urban congestion produced by the cased tunnel and the need to "gain momentum" to jump it led to propose a viral project, that penetrates into the adjacent residential blocks defining mechanisms of action in time and transforming parting walls, the empty interior plots of the residential blocks, roofs in disuse, laying out a board game from a collage of yellow brushstrokes that transform the desolating landscape of the residential blocks' interiors of the area into a map of opportunities. That yellow path, a back and forth path, is a metaphor of the course: like Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz, students accidentally enter the kingdom of Oz, they follow an initiatory path in search of a superior being which in reality is false, the key of their way back being in their shoes, in themselves and in their own instruments. From then on they trace that path.

Some dose of Lina bo Bardi's Pompei, a bit of Cedric Price... Anna's project gives the key to what we have done during the course: There isn't a commissioned project, we had to invent it, look for it, define it, set bounds to it, draw it, build it. They had to find the places where the city had failed, study why and how we got to the current situation and be able to describe it by different means: drawing plans, diagrams, data, models, video, writings and words. This procedure, the usual one of a school of architecture until not long ago, is now closer than ever to the reality and future of the professional practice.

**Jaime Coll López, Dr Architect
Coordinator of the PFC Class**

Inhabiting Sants

Barcelona, July 2012



The great leap. We had to jump, jump from one reality to another to sew up the wound that was separating both. If you want to jump, you need to gain momentum, enough to be able to reach the other side. Taking this leap we can now see the same place from a different perspective, from the distance. This project is based on this wider perspective and proposes an urban strategy forged by connecting “macrospace” through gathering “microspaces” together. The encased railway track in Sants is defined as a macrospace in the middle of the Carrer de Sants - Can Batlló sequence. Its qualities are unique and unusual in Barcelona’s public spaces: a big elevated platform which rises from the dense urban fabric providing an unprecedented vision of the city. Hence, a perfect structure to use as a support for new programs and events, and an urban opportunity to be made the most of. Thinking about events and performances (the exciting and unusual) as tools to heal the entire area creating a scheduled platform with non stop ordinary activities such as street markets, sporting activities and so on.

By joining the dots between microspaces we draw a path, much like the run up to a long jump, taking us over the elevated platform and back onto the path that continues through the city. This yellow path is an ensemble of pre-existent supports in the urban fabric that will be transformed. Roofs, empty plots and courtyards used as “horizontal supports”; parting walls as “vertical structures”; empty ground floors as “ribbons”; and entire disused buildings as “boxes”. Hence, the project takes place at different heights, it spreads normal street level qualities out to a higher level, in accordance with the platform. Ground floors are now connected to inner courtyards. Roofs and side walls are colonised by “public-collective” activities (such as social canteens and reading spaces) as well as by “public-individual” activities (work spaces, rehearsal spaces, etc), under the motto “an extension of your home”: a mixed-use social program dotted around this neighbourhood. All in all, a strategy to create an urban structure based on bringing disused spaces back to life, transforming pre-existing areas of the city.

Anna Sala Giralt