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**SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES OF URBAN RENEWAL. GENTRIFICATION  
AND NEW PROCESSES OF INVASION AND SUCCESSION IN BARCELONA.**

**Poster Session**  
**(Extended abstract)**

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**Introduction**

The research analyses processes of gentrification, focusing on the relationship between urban renewal and housing market strategies as the main explanatory elements. The presentation discusses the specific case of Barcelona and the social and urban planning changes that have taken place there in recent years. Specifically, the paper analyzes the changes that have occurred in the characteristics of the population living in the areas of gentrification and the invasion and succession patterns that have taken place in these areas.

Gentrification has been one of the most evident social effects of certain operations of urban renewal:

- 1) The processes of urban renewal and the disproportionate rises in housing prices that the city has undergone in recent years has had the effect of gentrification in the specific areas where reforms have been carried out, generating a **domino effect** throughout the city. This has occasioned a generalised process of invasion-succession that has in turn led to an increased presence of high-earning socioeconomic groups to the detriment of middle-income groups. This has occurred concurrently with a concentration of the sector of the population with few resources, which has caused **polarisation** in the city.
- 2) Barcelona has combined two models of urban reform, one macro and the other micro, and these have generated different models and forms of gentrification so that one may not speak of any kind of homogenous process. The presentation focuses on the characteristics and dynamics of both macro and micro processes.

The poster presents the cases of two districts in the city where this phenomenon has had the most evident repercussions and where, in particular, the process remains open: Ciutat Vella and Sant Martí. The former is an example of processes of reform in historic neighbourhoods and the social effects that are associated with them, while the latter is an example of the impact of large-scale urban transformation occurring, in this case, with an industrial district that had become obsolete.

### **The Processes of Gentrification and Urban Renewal**

The word “gentrification” designates a phenomenon of social and urban change. The areas of the city that have historically been subject to urban degeneration and neglect and that were once mainly occupied by low-income socioeconomic groups undergo transformations associated with rehabilitation aimed at bringing about the urban renovation of the zone, which leads to increased housing prices and the expulsion of the social groups living in the area and their substitution by others that are better educated and with greater acquisitive power.

### **The Conditions of Gentrification: a Proposal for an Explanatory Model**

The processes of gentrification are understood today as the result of a complex series of factors in which a certain kind of urban planning intervention, a number of particular urban agents and a specific social demand interact in and with a zone that has certain urban, economic and social characteristics. It is thus possible to discern the necessary and sufficient conditions for gentrification. In other words, not all areas lend themselves to gentrification.

What are the features of gentrification?

- Urban planning characteristics: 1) state of the zone’s degradation; 2) the zone lends itself to rehabilitation; 3) symbolic value.
- Housing market and characteristics: an old, run-down housing area (in some cases the houses are self-constructed); sometimes the presence of housing is residual in favour of other urban functions; a structuring of property and a regime of occupancy that is amenable to change and an eventual substitution of population; low housing prices and a stagnating construction sector.
- Population: low-middle socio-economic groups; high proportion of elderly people.

The areas that best comply with these conditions traditionally tend to be historic city centres and former industrial areas now in decline. In the case of Barcelona, these two examples are paradigmatic.

### **The Case of Barcelona: The Urban Transformation of a Mediterranean City and its Social Effects**

The strategic lines that have been taken in Barcelona's development in the last few years have been giving shape to a new model of the city, a different social and urban model in which economic growth, modernization of activities, tourism and urban marketing have become priority spheres. Barcelona offers the urban values of symbolism and centrality.

In recent years, Barcelona has initiated a great number of projects of urban transformation that have had effects on very different scales. The huge-scale urbanistic transformations, mega-projects carried out in order to adapt to the requirements of the new economy, have occurred along with micro-interventions that respond the specific needs in different neighborhoods. Both, especially the former, have contributed to substantial change in the city's social structure.

In this regard, there has been a clear phenomenon that explains the changes while also becoming one of the main effects of these transformations: this is the process of invasion-succession. Many of the transformations that have been occurring in different sectors of the city have meant the expulsion of the lower-income social classes, basically through a complex market-governed process that has had the effect of exorbitant increases in housing prices. The middle classes have been caught up in the process and this has contributed to their moving to other municipalities in search of accessible housing. Housing and price increases have acted as a filter.

#### ***Ciutat Vella: rehabilitation of the historic city centre. The process of microgentrification.***

- The district coincides with the old quarter and the historic city centre. It was the locus of early industrialization.
- It has undergone the typical processes of neglect in the historic centres of post-industrial cities, going from the period of industrial splendor to overcrowding, to abandonment, decay and then partial rehabilitation. It has attracted low-income foreign immigrants and also a sector of population of high acquisitive power.
- Since the mid-1980s, the district has been undergoing a process of reform.

- Before rehabilitation: the great majority of the population is of low socioeconomic profile: the majority of the inhabitants have little education and a correspondingly low professional status, with an average family economic capacity that is lower than the general city average.
- After rehabilitation: the newly-undertaken processes of reform encourage private capital to intervene in the housing market. Speculation and mobbing are the worst results. In the early 2000s, gentrification was clearly manifest in some zones of the district. The proportion of population with low education dropped very notably, although considerable percentages still remained. Meanwhile, there was a major increase of inhabitants with higher education and high-level social and professional categories, especially in the Born neighborhood.

***Sant Martí: rehabilitation of an industrial district. The process of macro-gentrification***

- Sant Martí was Barcelona's industrial area. It was so much the locus of industrialization that it came to be called the Catalan Manchester. The process of Fordist-style deindustrialization led to the abandonment of its industries and also a good part of its neighborhoods.
- In recent years it has been the setting of Barcelona's greatest urban transformation: the Olympic Village, the reforms of the industrial district (on the basis of 22@BCN District of Activities project), the opening up of the Diagonal Avenue, the recovery of the seafront and construction of the facilities for the Universal Forum of Cultures and an adjacent residential area.
- In the mid-1980s, the social structure of Sant Martí was similar to that of Ciutat Vella, although with some slight differences due, in part, to its small residential population. In the early 2000s, there is a process of gentrification that indicates that it is very large-scale although not yet consolidated. The example par excellence is the Olympic Village, more than 50% of whose population has higher education and a high socio-professional standing. Diagonal Mar and the Diagonal Avenue area are the other two zones where gentrification are evident. The changes envisaged indicate that this process will spread throughout the entire district.
- The Sant Martí model of gentrification is different to that occurring in the historic city centre. Intervention based on mega-projects has meant that coexistence of different social groups is inferior here because of a more sweeping process of invasion-succession