Urban History (2024), **51**, 827–857
doi:10.1017/S0963926823000627

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Beyond formal and informal: mid-twentieth-century residential architecture in Barcelona's El Carmel neighbourhood

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Abstract
This article discusses houses on the periphery of Barcelona and in particular in the El Carmel neighbourhood, which were built by poor country-to-city migrants from southern Spain in the post-World War II period. They were constructed following two typologies: *barracas* (sheds), one-storey huts on an irregular street plan, and *coreas* ('Korea houses'), more formally looking one- to three-storey structures lined up on orderly laid-out streets. Based on archival documents, contemporaneous publications and interviews with former *autoconstructores* (self-builders), the article analyses both social conditions and physical structures. While these buildings were often unauthorized and constructed by informal means, they were just as often built with the landowner's consent, involving architects and building professionals, and retroactively legalized. The article concludes that in this respect Barcelona's 'informal neighbourhoods' in fact straddled the realms of the formal and the informal, to the extent that the habitual distinction between formal and informal architecture has to be considered inadequate.

Informal Barcelona

The residues of informal Barcelona are only a few hundred metres away from Parc Güell, Antoni Gaudí's masterpiece visited by up to 14,000 tourists per day. El Carmel[1] east of the park is a working-class neighbourhood, which has largely retained its quietness and modest everyday life, despite signs of beginning gentrification. Perched against the steep slopes of the Turó de la Rovira (Rovira Peak) overlooking the city

[1]The neighbourhood is called El Carmelo in Spanish and El Carmel in Catalan, named for a nineteenth-century sanctuary dedicated to Our Lady of Carmel. To avoid confusion, this article will use current (Catalan) names for places, streets and people, even when referring to the Franco era (1936–75) when Catalan names were banned from official use. All translations are by the authors.

centre and the harbour, it consists of winding roads and solidly built, small, two- to three-storey houses interspersed with occasional tower blocks. Few people would guess that in the 1950s informal settlements built up by impoverished migrants from rural southern Spain merged with the few weekend mansions existing at the time in the hilly area and converted El Carmel into a densely populated neighbourhood that did not look very different from the barriadas of Lima or the favelas of Rio de Janeiro (see Figures 1 and 2).

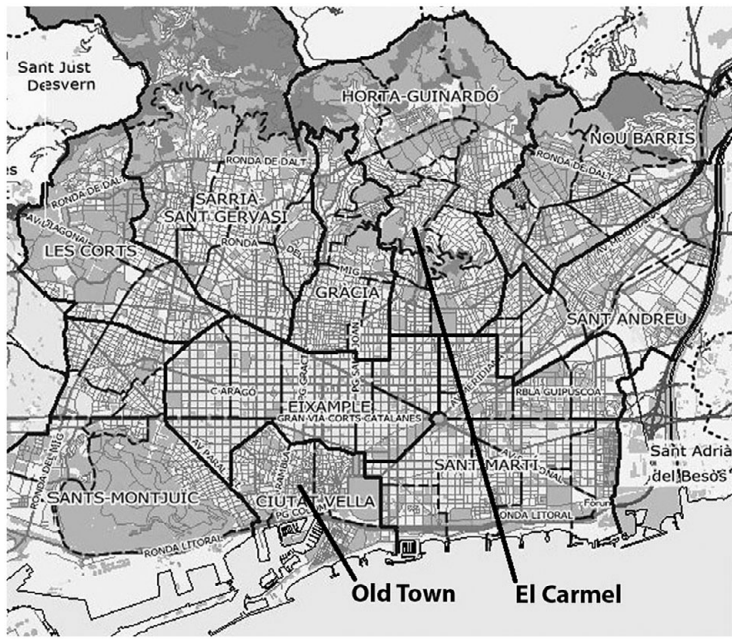

Figure 1. Plan of Barcelona with El Carmel neighbourhood (authors).

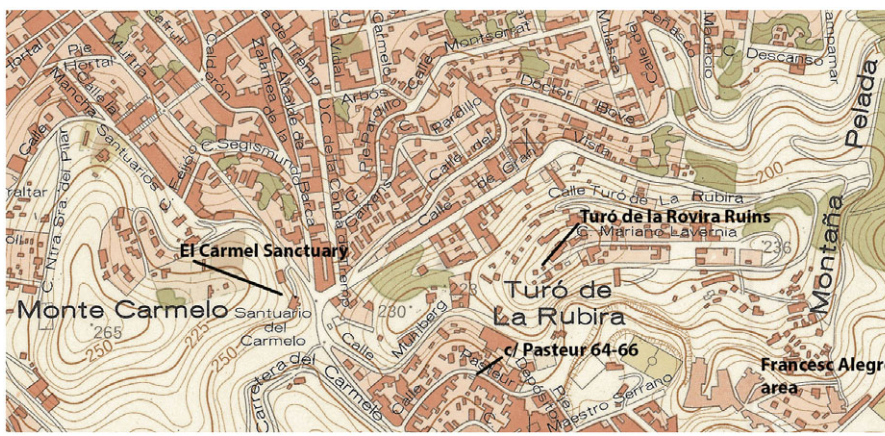

Figure 2. El Carmel, *c.* 1970 (authors).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0963926823000627 Published online by Cambridge University Press

This article traces the architectural history of informal residences in El Carmel from the mid-twentieth century to the present. It also points to the contributions of the architectural profession to this form of urbanization and to the role of architects engaged in the licensing of buildings erected by 'autoconstruction'. The article is based on construction documentation from Barcelona archives, on recent publications and on interviews with inhabitants.[2] The article shows that throughout this period formal and informal elements and actions went hand in hand in the city's urbanization process, to the extent that it questions the validity of the term 'informal'.

This is already reflected in the variations of informal housing, that is, buildings that were self-built by the inhabitants and unauthorized by the municipality and/or the landowner. These include *barracas* and *coreas.* Both terms have been used in Barcelona and elsewhere in Spain for decades, although the term *corea* now feels dated.[3] *Barracas* were what corresponds most to the stereotype of an informal abode. They were squatter settlements erected in irregular compounds mostly without the landowner's permission, often on non-parcellated public land, and usually consisting of one-storey buildings assembled from wood or brick with a tiled or tin roof. *Coreas* looked more orderly: they were one- to three-storey brick buildings lined up on a street like terraced houses; they were mostly built on parcellated rural land on the margins of the city.[4] The term *corea* ('Korea') for these buildings is of unknown origin; some relate it to the images of wasteland, battlefield or exotic 'other' connected to the Korean War that took place roughly at the time when these neighbourhoods evolved.[5] *Corea* neighbourhoods are also referred to as *urbanizaciones marginales* (marginal urbanizations). In contrast to *barraca* settlements, they were mostly built with the landowner's consent through sale or rent of land, which gave the builders–inhabitants greater protection against eviction, even if their construction was not authorized by the planning authorities and often violated land-use regulations.

While some *barracas* and *coreas*/marginal urbanizations were shoddy and run-down, others were well built and quaint looking, as many self-building inhabitants were building tradespeople. Some had bright whitewashed walls and red tiles, and some had ornamented façades and adorned windows. The visual distinction between *barracas* – scattered huts – and *coreas* – slightly larger buildings with regular street fronts – did not necessarily reflect the legal status. But the strong perception of

[2]The history of *autoconstrucción* is to a large extent the history of its actors, their circumstances and motivations. Our interview partners consented to the publication of their names. We believe in the importance of naming actors who were not professionals or famous architects, and whose contributions to construction in traditional history writing have been marginalized and obliterated. Our interviews were non-structured, casual conversations that reflect individual memories of events that took place over 50 years earlier. We therefore did not base the thrust of our argument on these conversations, but rather used them to complement and mostly confirm the information gathered from archival documents.

[3]For an early analysis of *coreas* in Barcelona see J. Busquets, 'Las coreas de Barcelona: Estudio sobre la urbanización marginal', Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya doctoral thesis, 1974; for a recent definition of these types see also, for example, A. Ferrer, 'Barracas y polígonos de viviendas en la Barcelona del siglo xx', in M. Tatjer and C. Larrea (eds.), *Barracas – la Barcelona informal del siglo XX* (Barcelona, 2011), 62–79, at 75. Ferrer mentions several Barcelona areas that were originally *corea* neighbourhoods, including Torre Baró, Vallbona and Montflorit.

[4]Busquets, 'Las coreas de Barcelona', II/68.

[5]A. Zabalbeascoa, '¿Cuántas coreas hay en el mundo?', *El País*, 11 Jul. 2017. See also A. Garrido, 'Corea. Una historia paralela' (Barcelona: Caixaforum, 2017) (exhibition catalogue, documenting *corea* neighbourhoods in various Spanish cities).

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barracas as a disturbance, connected with the fact that they were often built on squatted public land, including parks and beaches, led to their gradual eradication in the 1970s and 1980s. *Coreas*, in contrast, were more prone to morph into formal parts of the city, not only because they visually fitted better into the urban fabric, but also because of their greater degree of compliance with ownership and planning regulations. They were renovated, extended or partially replaced, attaining more and more formal shapes that were often retroactively legalized and no longer recognizable as formerly unauthorized portions of the city.

Barcelona has a long history of informal urbanization, dating back to the early twentieth century. The city almost tripled from 0.6 million inhabitants in 1910 to 1.7 in 1970, with the largest waves of in-migration in the early twentieth century and in the decades after the Spanish Civil War (1936–39).[6] Already in 1914, there were about 5,000 people living in substandard huts, mostly on the Montjuïc hill south-west of the Old Town. Later informal settlements include Camp de la Bota and Somorrostro on the beaches north-east of the Old Town, which were only cleared in the 1980s and are now upmarket waterfront areas cherished by locals and tourists.[7] After the Civil War, Barcelona once again became Spain's economic powerhouse, and rural migrants from all over Spain flocked to the city in search of work, often defying restrictions against domestic migration, and often ending up in self-built huts and shacks. In 1949, an estimated 60,000 people lived in about 15,000 informal abodes, about 5 per cent of the city's 1.2 million inhabitants.[8] Likewise, throughout the twentieth century the city had a history of slum clearances, often tied to large events such as the 1929 International Exhibition, the unrealized 1982 Universal Exhibition and the 1992 Olympic Games.

El Carmel is a typical case not only for Barcelona. It aligns with many European cities that in the decades after World War II experienced country-to-city migration, rapid industrialization and economic upturn. They responded to the growth with watered-down functionalism interspersed with both pre-modernist and post-modernist elements carried out on a small scale with multiple actors. During that time, municipal governments in Barcelona and elsewhere promoted both eradication and upgrading of informal housing, and often both strategies co-existed. Our research suggests that there was never a clear-cut difference between 'informal' and 'formal', but always a hybrid development with pragmatic decisions. Likewise, implementation of functionalist top-down planning was never purist, but, mostly out of necessity, always mixed with a certain degree of tolerance for bottom-up informal construction.

The blurring of formal and informal urban practice stands in opposition not only to the aspirations of municipal bureaucrats who at the time were aiming at slum clearance and an orderly functionalist city. It also amplifies the significance of the

[6]Census data available at www.amb.cat/s/es/web/area-metropolitana/dades-estadistiques/demografia/serie-historica.html (accessed Feb. 2023).

[7]B. Iglesias and J.L. Oyón, 'Las barracas y la infravivienda en la construcción de Barcelona 1914–1950', in Tatjer and Larrea (eds.), *Barracas*, 24–37, at 26. The former Camp de la Bota settlement is of peculiar significance within recent efforts to do justice to historic memory, as it was also an execution site for opponents to the Franco regime until the mid-1950s. See K. Golda-Pongratz, 'Place-making from the urban palimpsest', *Estudis Escènics*, 44 (2019), 371–85, at 376.

[8]'El fin de las barracas', theme issue of the municipal journal *Barcelona Informa – Suplemento de la Gaceta Municipa*, 2 (1972), 4; Arxiu Municipal Contemporáni de Barcelona (AMCB) Q-108, 29509.

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'pro-autoconstruction' attitude of architects and sociologists from John F.C. Turner to Janice Perlman, who in the 1960s and 1970s celebrated the informal as liberating and enfranchising.[9] Along similar lines, the architect Joan Busquets in 1974 praised the flexibility of Barcelona's *coreas*.[10] This approach also informed recent historiography of informal architecture in the Global North, which included Barcelona as well as other European cities.[11] In Barcelona, the topic has recently gained popularity, as evidenced in the 2011 exhibit *Barracas* by the Museu d'Història de Barcelona (MUHBA) or in the attractiveness of the Turó de la Rovira ruins among locals and tourists. These informal houses, spectacularly located on the hilltop, had fallen victim to slum clearance in the 1980s, and in 2014 became part of a historical site after MUHBA had the remainders of their tiled floors and partially destroyed walls musealized and signposted.[12] Likewise, views on the informal as a concept related to modernization ideologies and particular to the mid-twentieth century are recently gaining more and more ground.[13]

Informal housing in El Carmel evolved in a particular context: an economically booming region under a politically repressive and at the same time stable regime in southern Europe; groups of immigrants that were ethnically similar to the resident population (although speaking Spanish rather than Catalan) and thus comparatively easy to integrate; and an urban agglomeration that at the time still had comparatively large land resources available. At the same time, El Carmel reflects some of the most significant forces that during the post-World War II period applied in many parts of the world: a wide-ranging wave of modernization that raised standards of living and introduced new lifestyles for large parts of the population; extensive country-to-city migration that transformed both urban and rural areas; and the only partially successful efforts to manage these changes through reactive planning by modern and powerful (welfare) state institutions that had not yet been transformed or dismantled. In this sense El Carmel is typical of similar areas around the world that increasingly elude the categories of formal and informal.

[9]J.F.C. Turner, 'The squatter settlement – architecture that works', *Architectural Design*, 38 (1968), 355. Other authors who pioneered the new view on informal neighbourhoods include C. Stokes, 'A theory of slums', *Land Economic*, 38 (1962), 187–97; C. Abrams, *Man's Struggle for Shelter in an Urbanizing World* (Cambridge, MA, 1964); J. Habraken, *Supports: An Alternative to Mass Housing* (London, 1972); J. Perlman, *The Myth of Marginality: Urban Poverty and Politics in Rio de Janeiro* (Berkeley, 1976); or R. Neuwirth, *Shadow Cities: A Billion Squatters, A New Urban World* (New York, 2005).

[10]Busquets, 'Las coreas de Barcelona'.

[11]L.M. Bou Roura and E. Gimeno Cases, *El Carmel ignorat. Historia d'un barri impossible* (Barcelona, 2007); X. Camino, Ò. Casasayas, M. Díaz, C. Larrea, F. Muñoz and M. Tatjer, *Barraquisme, la ciutat (im)possible: els barris de Can Valero, el Carmel i la Perona a la Barcelona del segle XX* (Barcelona, 2011); F. Urban, 'The hut on the garden plot – informal architecture in twentieth-century Berlin', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 72 (2013), 221–49; C. Vorms, *Batisseurs de Banlieues* (Paris, 2012); F. Hauer and A. Krammer, 'Das Wilde Wien. Rückblick auf ein Jahrhundert informeller Stadtentwicklung', *Dérive*, 71 (2018).

[12]Tatjer and Larrea (eds.), *Barracas* (exhibition catalogue), online at www.barcelona.cat/museuhistoria/sites/default/files/barracas.pdf (accessed Jul. 2022).

[13]K. Golda-Pongratz, 'The self-built city as palimpsest: (re)constructing urban memory in Lima's hybrid peripheries', in N. Reis and M. Lukas (eds.), *Beyond the Megacity* (Toronto, 2022), 167–96; F. Urban, 'La Perla – 100 years of informal architecture in San Juan, Puerto Rico', *Planning Perspectives*, 30 (2015), 495–536; Urban, 'The hut on the garden plot'.

Corea/marginal urbanization: Carrer Pasteur

Carrer Pasteur on Rovira Peak's south-western slope forms the southern fringe of El Carmel and the border with the Can Baró neighbourhood (see Figure 3). The street exemplifies the evolution of *coreas*/marginal urbanization at the intersection of legal and illegal. The plot Pasteur 64–66 is typical of the area's complex construction history. A 1960 block plan shows a street front that is not yet fully built up, and an inner part of the block that contains select buildings, as well as patios and orchards, somewhat complying to the image of 'intensive garden city' that was the official designation in the municipal master plan.[14]

Pasteur 64–66 currently features a formal six-storey front building (four storeys on top of the street level and two storeys below the street level) with 12 self-contained two-bedroom flats on each floor, a three-storey back building with four two-bedroom flats and a two-storey side wing with two two-bedroom flats (see Figure 4). The back building and the side wing are situated in the inner part of the block. They are accessible from the street through a covered pedestrian passage. The front and back buildings are inconspicuous modernist structures with unadorned concrete façades and balconies on every floor, architect-designed and built by skilled workers.[15] The side wing, at first sight similar to the back building, nonetheless originated from unauthorized construction, carried out by a family of committed inhabitants, starting at the height of Barcelona's economic growth in the 1960s.

The builder-owner-occupier of the side wing in the courtyard is Eliseo Sarabia Vico. He was born in 1937 into a family of impoverished peasants in Granada province, Andalusia region, and grew up in a traditional single-storey hut without power or running water. Having received only a few years of schooling, he came to Barcelona in 1961 aged 23 in search for a better life, accompanied by his newlywed wife Josefa Lozano (see Figure 5).[16]

Their experience of personal advancement from the beginning was tied to the modernization of the city and the long-term economic stability that the Fordist economy would afford even to unskilled workers. Josefa secured a job as a cleaner and household worker for the family of industrialist Joan Recasens and his wife Carme Marimón, with whom she remained for over 30 years. Recasens, in turn, gave Eliseo a job in the Philips Lámparas Z factory on Plaça Espanya, where for the following decades he would spend six days a week from 6am to 2pm assembling lightbulbs and TV sets, first walking an hour to work and back, and later, from the 1970s onwards, commuting in his own car. The six-storey extension of the factory in the Sants-Montjuïc neighbourhood (1959, designed by Josep Maria Soteras i Mauri) would become one of Barcelona's modernist icons.[17] Eliseo's gilded 25-year work anniversary certificate of 1987 still hangs in their living room. Their two sons both ended up completing higher education. At the same time, the couple would spend every spare

[14]'Plan del estado de edificación' dated 1960, AMCB Q-132, 53284.

[15]For the back building, planning permission was sought in April 1957 (as 'amplification project') by owner Alfonso Pascual and architect Francisco Sanllehi Pont. The front building on a 578 square metre plot was begun in 1974, replacing a more modest predecessor building (now under owner Francisco Villamon Mor and architect Ramón Canosa). It had a roof terrace towards the south, two commercial premises towards the north, and flats on all floors, including the first basement, which opened up towards the south. See application for planning permission dated Dec. 1973, AMCB Q-132, 53284.

[16]Eliseo Sarabia Vico, interview with the authors, Barcelona, 11 Jun. 2022.

[17]The building still stands on Passeig de la Zona Franca 191.

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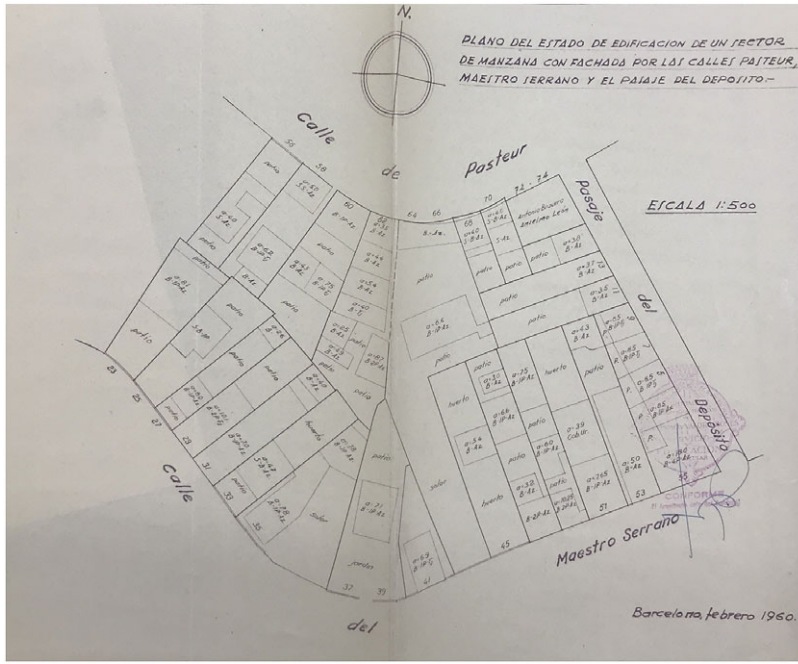

Figure 3. Pasteur 64–66 and surrounding plots in 1960 (AMCB, Q-132, 53284).

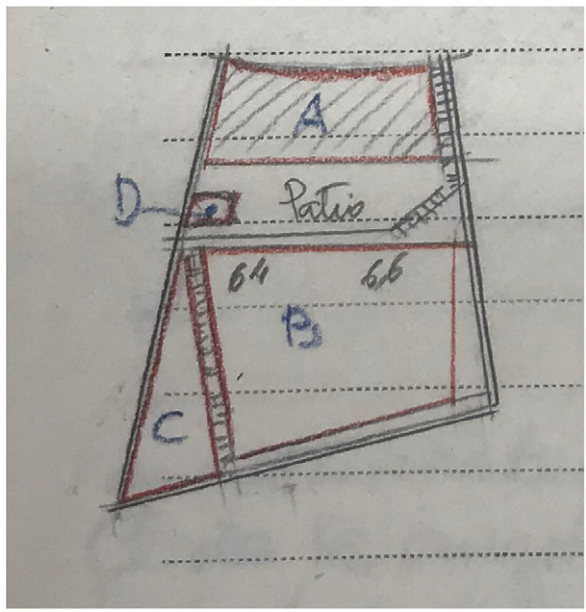

Figure 4. Pasteur 64–66, survey plan from 1970. A: front building (designed 1954?), B: back building, designed 1957 by Francisco Sanllehi Pont, C: 'sobrante' with Eliseo Sarabia's building (AMCB Q-132, 53284).

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Figure 5. Eliseo Sarabia and Josefa Lozano posing on their self-built balcony at the back side of their house around 1964 (personal archive of Eliseo Sarabia).

peseta on their home. The back building evolved in stages over years as a result of their work during afternoons, evenings and Sundays.

What sounds like a success story from a textbook of free-market ideology – a disadvantaged rural family rising to modest wealth in the city through entrepreneurialism, self-discipline and hard work – was in fact an accomplishment favoured by very particular socio-economic circumstances: unprecedented and continuous economic growth over three decades and an extraordinary stability of the manufacturing industry. It also relied on the opportunities of formal and informal activity afforded by Barcelona's urban morphology and the implementation of municipal regulations.

Sarabia's and Lozano's improved life started with the opportunities of the El Carmel neighbourhood in the 1960s. Carrer Pasteur, like the surrounding streets, was unpaved and had patchy water supply, but was situated reasonably close to formal houses and factories, and inhabited by working-class families that supported each other through neighbourly and kinship ties. The young couple found their first abode through Sarabia's aunt Juana who had moved up from the south a few years earlier. It was a windowless *almacen* (storage shed) with no water supply, situated on the slope on the very plot Pasteur 64–66 beneath the landowner's dwelling. The owner was Alfonso Pascual Casellas, a tradesman of modest wealth, who inhabited the house towards the street together with his wife, five children, pigs and chickens. It was also aunt Juana who would engineer the deal that in 1962 changed Sarabia's life. Sarabia remembers his landlord 'señor Alfonso' as a clever businessman involved in a variety of enterprises. At some point, he needed money, and thus consented to selling a

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sobrante ('leftover'), a portion of his plot that was considered unfit for construction because of its irregular triangular shape.[18]

The terms of the transfer were particular to the time. The price was established at 34,000 pesetas, for which Sarabia gave his family's savings of 8,000 pesetas as a down payment. For the remaining sum Pascual gave him an informal loan backed exclusively by the trust of a neighbour and fellow community member. A contract was signed, but no bank was involved and no interest charged, making the deal immune to the fluctuations of the financial industry. For years, Sarabia would pay 500 pesetas every month to Pascual, about a quarter of his salary of 2,000 pesetas, cash and against hand-written receipts that he would keep in his drawer.[19]

Sarabia completed the first inhabitable structure in 1964, two years after the sale. The house was simple enough to be built by a semi-skilled worker like Sarabia with the help and consultation of neighbours and family members. It was a single-storey two-room building on a trapezoid plan. Walls were built from *tochos* (hollow bricks) and mortar, uninsulated, but subsequently plastered and built without foundations directly on the solid rock ground. Non-load-bearing walls were 15 centimetres thick, load-bearing walls 30 centimetres thick. The ceiling was made from hollow bricks forming a *bóveda catalana* (Catalan vault), a low arch resting on concrete beams. These beams were lifted by two to three people without the help of a crane. Windows were single-glazed and made from wood. Plumbing and electricity were carried out by professional tradesmen, who were all acquaintances and residents in the neighbourhood. Materials were purchased at a local shop and carried over by hand, sometimes aided by a van that Sarabia would hire from a neighbour on an hourly basis.[20]

The necessity to ask for an architect-backed planning permission was acknowledged in theory but, as was the rule in El Carmel at the time, ignored in practice. Applications were often handed in after construction had started, and *aparejadores* (surveyors) frequently signed that a building was constructed according to the plan even if it was not.[21]

It appears that landlord and tenant were complicit in ignoring or circumventing building regulations. At least three fines were issued for ignoring building regulations on Pasteur 64–66, referring to both Alfonso Pascual and Eliseo Sarabia. The first was handed to Pascual in 1958 before Sarabia's arrival, for building an abode of 3.0 by 3.90 metres without permit.[22] After payment of the fee, however, Pascual was allowed to keep the structure.[23] The second was given to Sarabia in 1961, after which he took action, and received a building permit in 1963.[24] The preparation for the building permit was worked out by architect Francisco Cañellas Vidal in August 1963, asking for an amplification of the existing one-storey building.[25] A memorandum specifies

[18]Eliseo Sarabia Vico, interview with the authors, Barcelona, 11 Jun. 2022.

[19]*Ibid.*

[20]*Ibid.*

[21]*Ibid.*

[22]Letter from municipal building authority to Alfonso Pascual dated 7 Jul. 1958, AMCB Q-132, 53284 (Pasteur 64–66).

[23]AMCB Q-132, 53284 (Pasteur 64–66).

[24]Report to the police dated 19 Jun. 1961, AMCB Q-132, 53284 (Pasteur 64–66).

[25]Application for a building permit dated 2 Oct. 1963, with plan dated 17 Aug. 1963, AMCB Q-132, 53284 (Pasteur 64–66).

the structure of the additional floor: 'Walls of massive brick, covered with prefabricated reinforced-concrete joists and vault, insulated with cellular concrete slopes and asphalt roofing paper and rasilla de Vendrell tiles. Plastered and painted with tempera. Power fixtures and plumbing of good quality.'[26] The plans are shown in the 1963 application for a building permit.[27] An inspection note from April 1970 confirms the plan, showing a triangular outline of 50 square metres labelled 'C' – Sarabia's 'leftover plot'.[28]

A third complaint was handed to Pascual in 1963, after which he applied for a building permit that was granted in 1964. He still would receive a further complaint in 1967. A 1970 memorandum by the municipality painstakingly lists the permits Pascual applied for in 1954, 1957 and 1964, and concludes that none of them complied with what he had actually built. Plans were different and several extra dwelling units were added. The municipality threatened demolition, but still gave the option of retroactive permission if Pascual were able to prove that he complied with building regulations.[29] It must be assumed that he was, as two of the three structures on the plot mentioned in a 1969 inspection are still standing: the back building and the side wing erected by Sarabia.[30]

Alfonso Pascual was not alone with this practice. The municipality regularly issued complaints for unauthorized building construction, extension, or non-compliance with the granted permission. For example, Vicente Navarro, owner of the building on Pasteur 70, was threatened with a 15,000 pesetas fine for adding an unauthorized third storey to his building. This case confirms that not all landlords in El Carmel were also residents – Navarro lived in a wealthy city centre neighbourhood, and was possibly a professional landlord.[31]

It would be wrong, though, to imagine construction on Pasteur 64–66 as chaotic and makeshift. Both Alfonso Pascual and Eliseo Sarabia employed a number of professional architects, both to draw plans that were to support construction permits, and to guide retroactive legislation of unauthorized structures. In 1954, Pascual commissioned the architect Aurelio López Puyuelo to design a building on Pasteur 64 (see Figures 6 and 7). The plans show a traditional single-level house with a symmetrical façade, a central entrance and an accentuated cornice.[32] The plan was executed over the following years.

In 1957, he commissioned a plan for a back building drawn by architect Francisco Sanllehi Pont.[33] The legalization of Sarabia's building was backed by architect Francisco Cañellas Vidal (see Figures 8 and 9). And the 1974 plans for the six-storey building that was eventually erected on the street front were drawn by architect Ramón Canosa.

[26]Memorandum by architect Francisco Cañellas Vidal dated 19 Aug. 1963, AMCB Q-132, 53284 (Pasteur 64–66).

[27]AMCB Q-132, 53284.

[28]*Ibid.*

[29]Memorandum dated 22 Apr. 1970, signed 'El Arquitecto Jefe del Servicio R.G.', AMCB Q-132, 53284 (Pasteur 64–66).

[30]Municipality of Barcelona, Pla de la Ciutat, Sevei d'Edificacio, inspection note dated 31 Mar. 1969, AMCB Q-132, 53284 (Pasteur 64–66).

[31]Complaint dated 5 Jun. 1967, AMCB Q-132, 53284.

[32]Plan dated Nov. 1954, AMCB Q-132, 53284.

[33]AMCB Q-132, 53284 (Pasteur 64–66).

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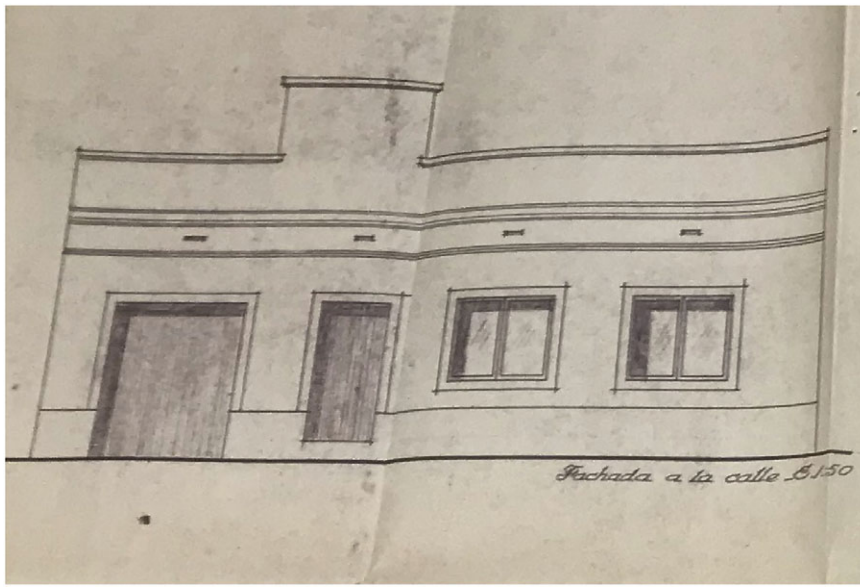

Figure 6. Pasteur 64, designed in 1954 by Aurelio López Puyuelo, façade (AMCB Q-132, 53284).

Marginal housing typologies

Much of the semi-formal construction in both *barraca* and *corea* areas reproduced dense small-town or rural typologies, in particular the traditional single-level terraced house, which was, for example, exemplified in a design from 1917 by José Mancha for owner Pablo Badia on carrer Mariano on the Turó de la Rovira hill (probably not executed) (see Figure 10).[34] It has a symmetrical façade, two or four window axes featuring vertically elongated windows with lightly ornamented pediments, a pronounced cornice and a roof terrace secured by cast-stone balustrades. The central entrance leads to a short hall with four approximately equally sized rooms: two bedrooms towards the front, and a bedroom and a living room towards the back. There is a terrace or patio on the back. The small kitchen is either integrated into the living room or attached and protruding onto the terrace, but accessed through the living room. The toilet is attached on the backside of the building and accessed through the terrace/patio. Buildings following this typology were often designed by a licensed architect. They were the rule for El Carmel as well as other marginal areas up to the 1960s. This typology also was the basis for a later design that had a more modern appearance (unornamented façades and iron banisters on the roof), and allowed for higher density through additional floors with self-contained flats.

In a variation of this plan, the entrance and hall are designed on the right side and the two rooms next to it on the left, achieving an unsymmetrical façade. This was used, for example, on the plot Pasteur 20, designed in 1955 by architect Ignacio Brugueras for owner Vicente Valero Martínez.[35] Between the front rooms and the

[34]Plan dated Nov. 1917. Mancha is referred to as *facultativo* (expert, technician), which suggests that he was not an architect. AMCB Q-127, 131 (Mariano and Labernia streets).

[35]Plan dated Mar. 1955, AMCB Q-132, 53284.

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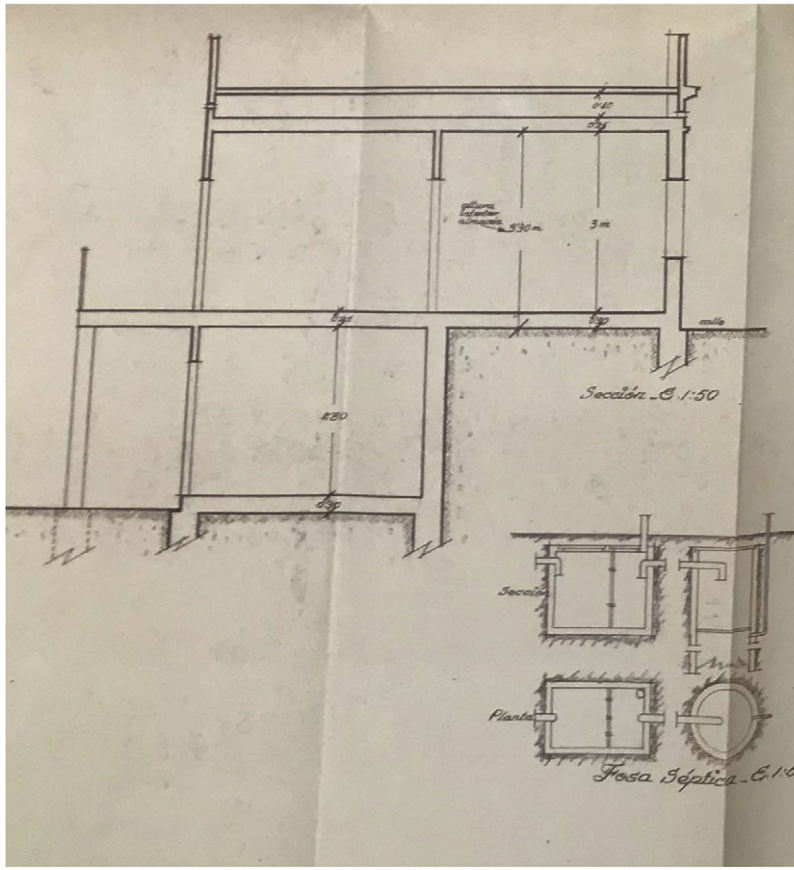

Figure 7. Pasteur 64, designed in 1954 by Aurelio López Puyuelo, section (AMCB Q-132, 53284).

back rooms, a small patio is added, which allows the toilet to be accessed from the inside of the house, nested between the back bedroom and the patio, and featuring a window towards the patio.

Variations on this theme were also the result of particular architects adapting to the requirements of the plot. On the passatge del Dipòsit, a steep flight of steps leading down the slope from carrer Pasteur towards carrer de Josep Serrano, the architect Francisco Sanllehi Pont designed three similar buildings. Number 10 on the east side of the street (see Figures 11 and 12), owned by Sebastián Arguello Cuenca, was designed in 1953 on a symmetrical plan with an identical four-room flat on each side of the entrance, situated behind four window axes under a roof terrace.[36] Number 11 directly opposite, designed by Sanllehi Pont in the same year for owner Ana Caña García, mirrors this design on half the amount of floor space, featuring a single four-room flat behind two window axes (see Figure 13).[37] Number 13, also designed by Sanllehi Pont in 1953 for Francisco Martínez

[36]Plan dated Jun. 1953, AMCB Q-132, 49554 (Pasaje Depósito 10).

[37]AMCB Q-132, 49554, 49471 and 49435 (Pasaje Depósito 10, 11 and 13). The architect mentioned that the unit on no. 11 could be rented out for 100 pesetas per month.

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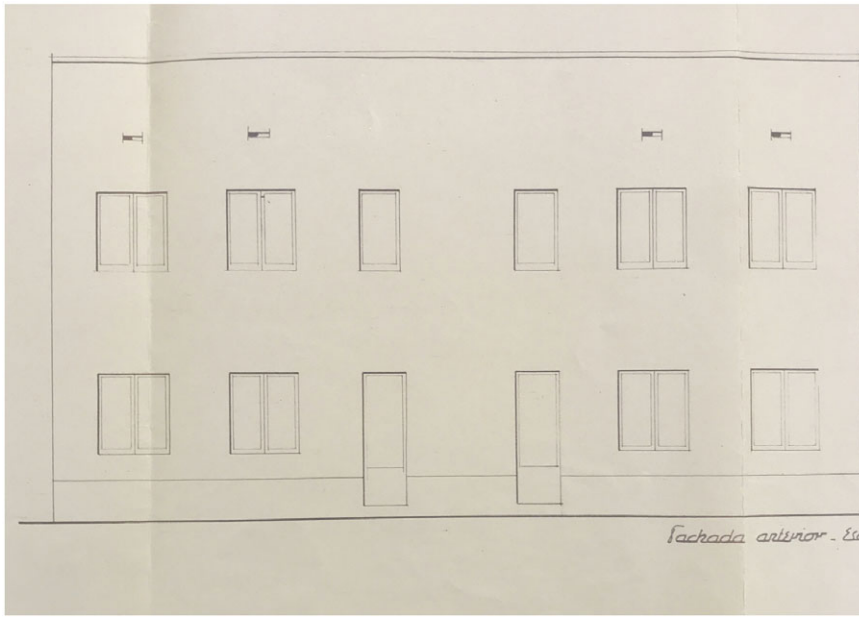

Figure 8. Pasteur 64, back building, 1954 plan by Francisco Sanllehi Pont, and view in 2022 (AMCB Q-132, 53284).

Mañus, has the same design (see Figures 14 and 15).[38] Sanllehi Pont redesigned the building on number 11 in 1955 only two years after his first design through the addition of an extra storey with a self-contained flat that could be entered from the street (see Figures 16 and 17).[39] The plot now had a new owner, Manuel Palacios.

Over the years, these buildings were altered and extended, most likely resulting from similar combinations of authorized and unauthorized construction. Windows were modified, upper storeys were added to single-level buildings, and entrances to a shared corridor, as in passatge del Dipòsit 10, were replaced by separate street doors for every property. The differences are visible if compared to a mid-twentieth-century building with few modifications: passatge del Dipòsit 14, which still looks like Sanllehi Pont's designs (see Figure 18).

Architect-designed and architect-signed unauthorized construction

Marginal urbanization did not occur outside the architectural profession. Since any building application required an architect's signature, it was architects who designed the buildings that were then illegally transformed or extended, and it was architects who took care of retrospective legalization. Many of them specialized in housing, and although none was widely known some appear to have had some standing in the profession.

[38]Plan dated Jun. 1953, 1955 AMCB Q-132, 49435 (Pasaje Depósito 13).
[39]Plan dated Jul. 1955, AMCB Q-132, 49471 (Pasaje Depósito 11).

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Figure 9. Pasteur 64, back building in 2022 (authors).

Francisco Sanllehi Pont was already mentioned as the architect who drew the 1957 plan for Alfonso Pascual's first house. He was the author of several designs in the area, not only the buildings on Passatge del Dipòsit 10, 11 and 13 (all 1953), but also amplifications of Gran Vista 106 (1965) and Pasteur 72–74 (1967). In the 1960s, he also designed the now demolished Trinidad Cinema on vía Favencia 404 in Barcelona's northern periphery. Aurelio López Puyuelo, the author of the 1954 design for Pascual's house on Pasteur 64, also designed the neighbouring house on Pasteur 62 (see Figure 19). Born in 1913 and in his forties at the time, he probably was an established architect, which is also suggested by the fact that he later designed residential buildings in the city of Cáceres, some of which are now listed.[40]

[40]He apparently was the designer of a modernist housing development 'Alfonso Izarra' in Cáceres, commissioned by the Hermandad Católica Ferroviaria, c/ Julián Murillo, completed in 1967, and he also designed modernist and eclectic houses in Cáceres in 1963 that are now listed. https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/70/Cat%C3%A1logo_Oficial_de_Monumentos_de_la_Parte_Nueva_de_C%C3%A1ceres.pdf (accessed Feb. 2023).

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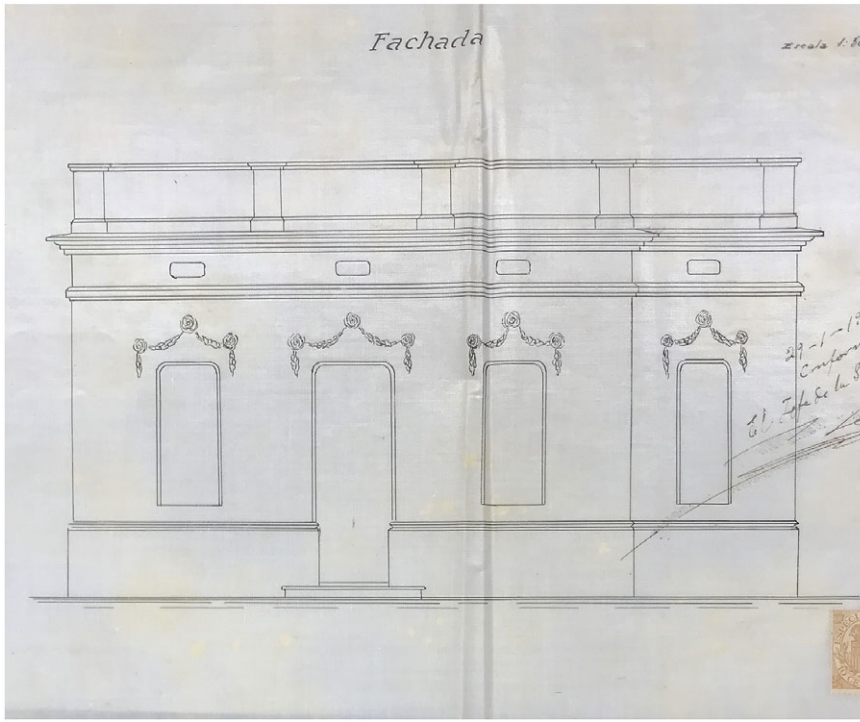

Figure 10. José Mancha, design for a house on carrer Mariano on Turó de la Rovira, 1917, unbuilt (AMCB Q-127, 131).

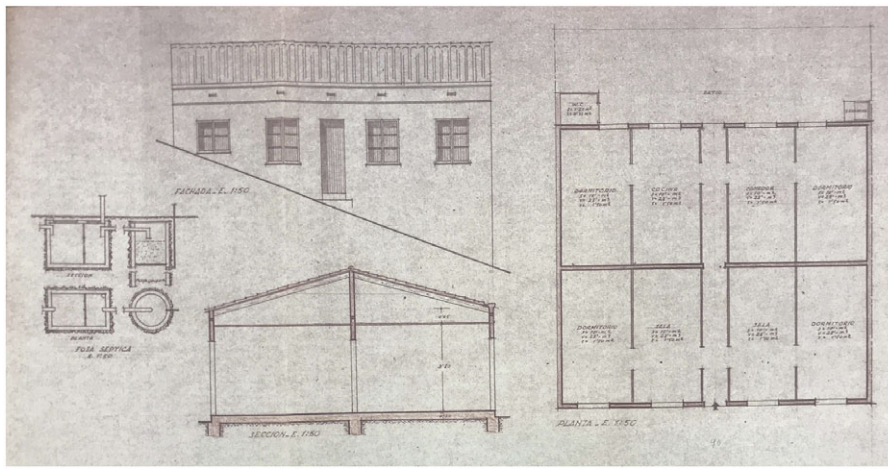

Figure 11. Passatge del Dipòsit 10, design by F. Sanllehi Pont (1955) (AMCB Q-132, 49554).

Joaquín Puchades Cortés, who authored designs for Pasteur 62 (in 1951) and Pasteur 72–74 (in 1960), must have had a similar standing in the profession – he later worked as municipal architect in the small town Santa Eulàlia de Ronçana. Also, Vicente Pascual Ocheda, the author of designs for Pasteur 68 in 1953 and Josep

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Figure 12. Dipòsit 10 in 2023 (authors).

Serrano 50 (in 1951 and 1964), was not an unknown person: he designed several buildings in Barcelona including the Fitó Seed Factory (1952–56). He was also involved in industrialized design, participating, for example, in the *Concurso sobre la industrialización para la vivienda en España*, an influential competition on the industrialization of housing in Spain organized by the Madrid-based Instituto Torroja in 1949.[41]

The intermingling of formal and informal construction is also evidenced in the building Pasteur 62. Design by licensed architects and orderly building applications were mixed with improvisation and unauthorized construction. A first design for a building was submitted in 1953 under owner-occupier Carlos Fuentes Moreno

[41]P. Casinello, 'Una lección del pasado. Eduardo Torroja 1949 – estrategia hacia la industrializaciòn de vivienda en España', *Proceedings of the Jornadas internacionales de investigación en construcciónvivienda: pasado, presente y futuro 8* (Madrid: Instituto de Ciencias de la Construcción Eduardo Torroja, 2013).

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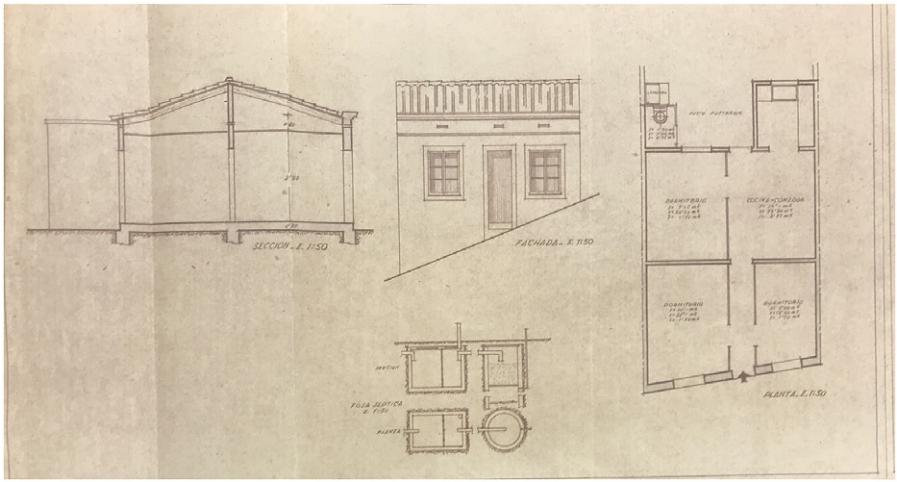

Figure 13. Passatge del Dipòsit 11, first design by F. Sanllehi Pont (1953) as a single-storey building (AMCB Q-132, 49471).

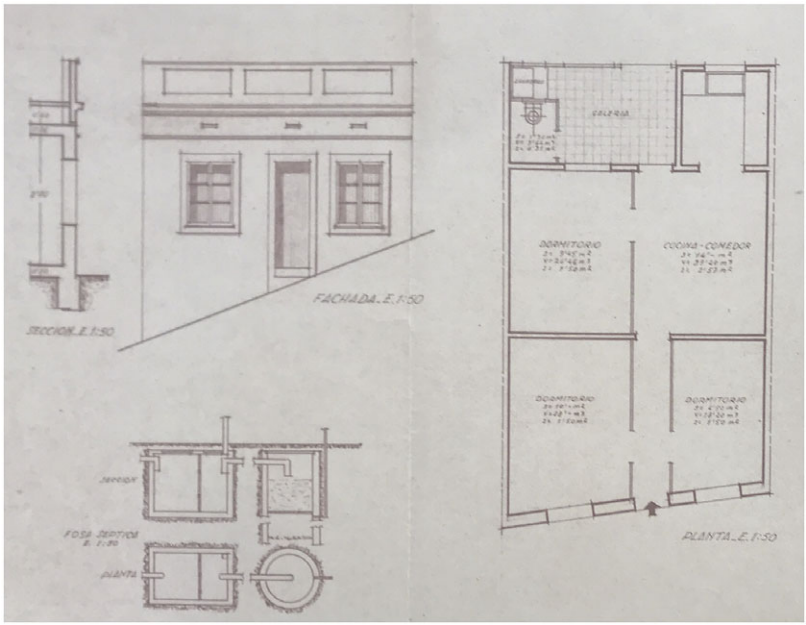

Figure 14. Passatge del Dipòsit 13, design by F. Sanllehi Pont (1953) (AMCB Q-132, 49435).

(architect Aurelio López Puyuelo).[42] The design comprised four attached single-storey buildings, staggered on the slope between carrer Pasteur at the top and carrer Josep Serrano at the bottom. The three lower ones were accessed through a flight of

[42]Memorandum and plan dated 17 Oct. 1953, AMCB Q-132, 50303 (Pasteur 62).

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Figure 15. Passatge del Dipòsit 13, view of the building in 2023 (authors).

stairs leading down from carrer Pasteur. Each contained three bedrooms assembled around a small patio, a kitchen–living room and a small bathroom/toilet. The architect mentioned in the documents that the four units would yield about 150 pesetas per month (probably for each).

However, the following construction on Pasteur 62 proceeded without permission. The new owner-occupier Eleuterio Vela González was reported in 1958 for building a flight of stairs and preparing the addition of an extra storey to the front building. He was fined 150 pesetas, the equivalent of a month's rent. In 1959, he commissioned the architect Joaquín Puchades Cortes to supervise retroactive authorization, which was probably given.[43] In 1963, Eleuterio Vela González added two storeys on the front building (plans drawn by architect Francisco Beltrán Roca), this

[43]Memorandum by Joaquín Puchades dated 17 Aug. 1959, confirming that the works had been carried out 'in accordance with the norms of good construction', AMCB Q-132, 50303.

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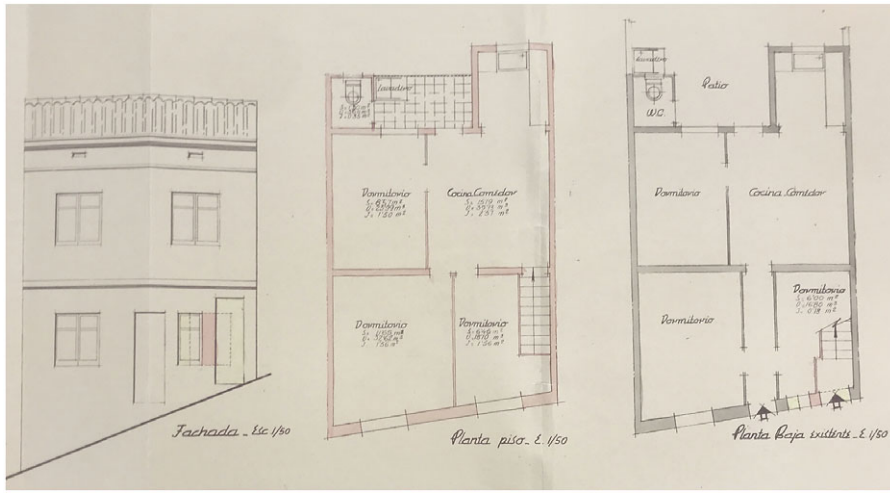

Figure 16. Passatge del Dipòsit 11, second design by F. Sanllehi Pont (1955) with an added first floor and an added street entrance for the first-floor users (AMCB Q-132, 49471).

time with permission.[44] But only two years later, in 1965, the plot was targeted again by the authorities. Now a certain Ana Travé was denounced for having illegally built a back building, and asked to either tear down or ask for retrospective legalization within 15 days, while being fined a sum three times the building permit fees.[45] He received a further report in 1967.[46] The front building is still standing, featuring a run-down façade that was subsequently altered to convert the ground-floor bedroom into a garage.

The municipal office responsible for building permits was the Agrupación de Servicios Técnicos (Technical Services Group), of which the subsection Servicio de Edificación Particular (Individual Construction Service) dealt with private homes. There is little information about the size and staffing of this office, but one can imagine that in light of the sheer number of newcomers they must have been overwhelmed and unable to deal with large numbers of unauthorized buildings – only in the five years 1961–65 about 288,000 migrants came to the Barcelona metropolitan area.[47] The scarcity of resources is also evidenced in other details: in 1969, the Technical Services Group still used Catalan language-forms that had been printed before 1939 – sometimes 'hispanized' with a red stamp that read *¡Arriba España!* (Long live Spain!).[48]

[44]Plan dated Jun. 1963, AMCB Q-132, 50303 (Pasteur 62).

[45]Memorandum by Arquitecto Jefe del Servicio dated 25 Mar. 1965, AMCB Q-132, 50303.

[46]Memorandum by Arquitecto Jefe del Servicio dated 4 Nov. 1967, AMCB Q-132, 50303.

[47]A. Jutglar, *La immigració a Catalunya* (Barcelona, 1968), quoted after Ferrer, 'Barracas y polígonos de viviendas', 72.

[48]Report by the Technical Services Group on non-authorized construction on carrer Pasteur 64–66 dated 31 Mar. 1969, AMCB Q-132, 53284 (Pasteur 64–66). The ¡Arriba España! stamp was more common in the 1940s, for example on the minutes of a report on the building Gran Vista 65 dated 19 Aug. 1941, AMCB Q-132, 21402 (Gran Vista 65).

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Figure 17. View of the building in 2023, more or less as in the 1955 plan (authors).

Adaptation, extension, redesign

Population pressure, in line with the owners' attempt to increase revenue through additional structures and storeys, seems to have been the main driver of incremental and often haphazard construction. At the same time, the sheer amount of construction was the most influential factor for the lenience of the authorities. Possibly overwhelmed by the number of complaints, they mostly tolerated the violation of building and zoning legislation, and pragmatically issued retroactive permission if the unauthorized building complied with the rules. For example, the building on carrer de Josep Serrano 50 was altered repeatedly. A design was submitted in July 1951 by owner Tomás Gómez Belda (architect Vicente Pascual Ocheda). Four months earlier, he had submitted a plan for a single-storey building (architect Juan Echeverría).[49] In 1959, he received permission for adding a first storey built with

[49]Plan dated Mar. 1951, AMCB Q-132, 45113 (Maestro Serrano 50).

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Figure 18. Passatge del Dipòsit 14, possibly also designed by F. Sanllehi Pont and barely modified, 2023 view (authors).

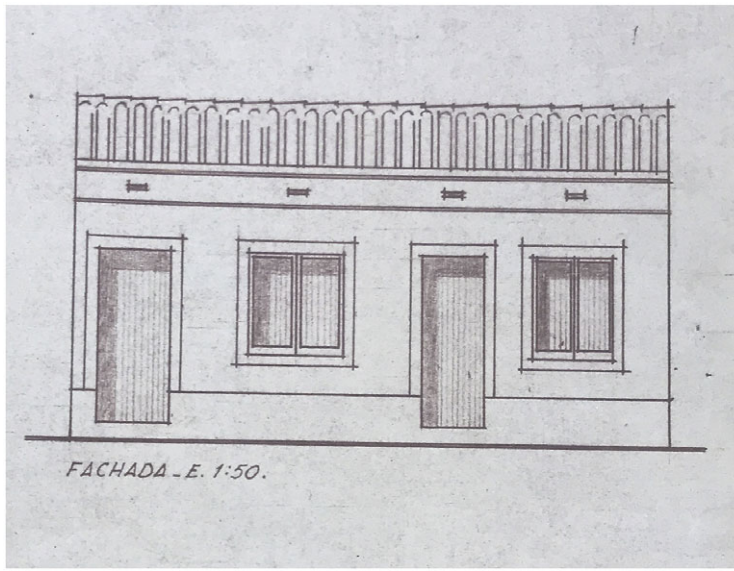

Figure 19. Pasteur 62, design by Aurelio López Puyuelo (1953), not realized (AMCB Q-132, 450303).

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reinforced concrete and wood (architect Ramón Masferrer).[50] In 1964, Gómez Belda submitted a proposal for remodelling and adding housing in the basement of the back building (again by architect Vicente Pascual Ocheda).[51]

Along similar lines, the owner Gonzalo Manjón Martínez submitted a design for his plot on Pasteur 3 in 1953, signed by architect L. Durán Reynal. The building featured two window axes on a façade with ground-floor rustication and first-floor brickfacing, a roof terrace and a shop at street level.[52] Manjon wanted to extend his property in the early 1960s and was promised a building permit in 1966.[53] He nonetheless started without, and in 1967 was denounced for unauthorized construction.[54] The building is still standing; the ground floor is now clad in black stone.

In some cases, owners allowed for self-built informal structures on their premises. For example, in 1967, Bartolomé Santiago de la Rosa, the owner of the house on Pasteur 31, was denounced for building a *barraca* of 7.2 by 3.6 metres without permit.[55] The fine was issued not to Santiago but to a certain Francisco Soto, which suggests that Santiago had rented out his land for construction. Both formal building and *barraca* were later replaced; the plot now features a modern four-storey building with a garage and commercial premises on the ground floor.

A typical example of extension and modernization is the building Pasteur 68 (see Figures 20 and 21), the adjacent building to the east of Eliseo Sarabia's and Alfonso Pascual's plot Pasteur 64. The structure was originally built to a traditional geometrical single-level design with a symmetrical façade, submitted in 1953 by owner Daniel Martin Picaso (architect Vicente Pascual Ocheda).[56] A decade later two upper storeys were added by the new owners Teresa Valella and José Antonio Serrano, designed in 1962.[57] The building now features a modern façade. Only the slightly different colour scheme and not-matching window axes show that ground floor and top floors were built at different points in time.

Over the years, Eliseo Sarabia's and Josefa Lozano's two-storey house on the leftover plot has undergone a series of small modernizations – also done by the family. The younger son, also named Eliseo, has, after living some years elsewhere in the city, moved back into his birthplace and accommodated the lower storey for himself, well aware of the high quality of life of the El Carmel neighbourhood. Since Josefa's death in 2021, father and son share the house, and Eliseo son has ideas for future transformations and further improvements.

The *barraca* settlement: Francesc Alegre

Intermingling of formal and informal aspects is also characteristic of *barracas* settlements such as Francesc Alegre (Francisco Alegre in Spanish) at the border of El Carmel and Can Baró, which from the very beginning was perceived as a disturbance of rather than an addition to the urban fabric (see Figures 22, 23, 24,

[50]Plan dated Dec. 1959, AMCB Q-132, 45113 (Maestro Serrano 50).
[51]Plan dated Jul. 1964, AMCB Q-132, 45113 (Maestro Serrano 50)
[52]Plan dated Nov. 1953, AMCB Q-132, 54013 (Pasteur 13)
[53]Memorandum by Arquitecto Jefe de Servicio dated 24 May 1966, AMCB Q-132, 54013.
[54]Memorandum by Arquitecto Jefe de Servicio dated 4 Jul. 1967, AMCB Q-132, 54013.
[55]Denuncia and fine dated 26 Jul. 1967, AMCB Q-132, 54013.
[56]Plan dated Dec. 1953, AMCB Q-132, 53284 (Pasteur 64–66).
[57]Plan dated Jan. 1967, AMCB Q-132, 53284 (Pasteur 64–66).

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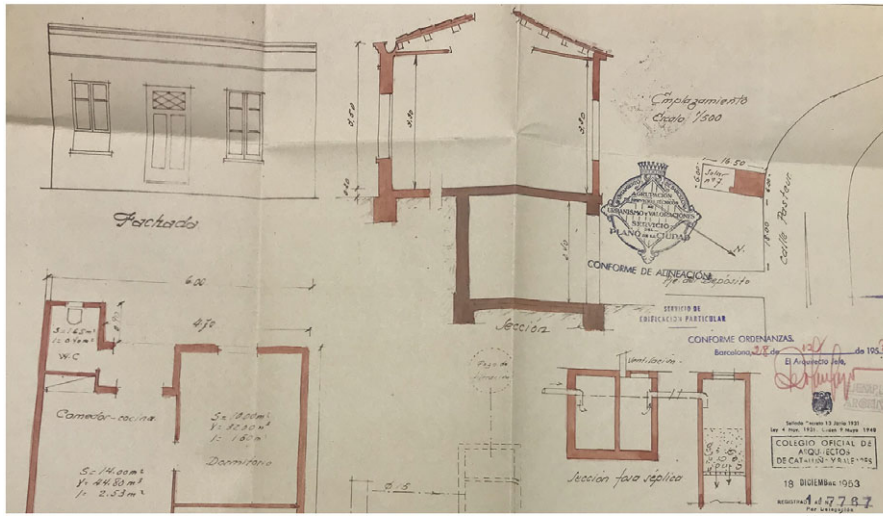

Figure 20. Pasteur 68, one-storey building, design by Vicente Pascual Ocheda, 1953 (AMCB Q-132, 53284).

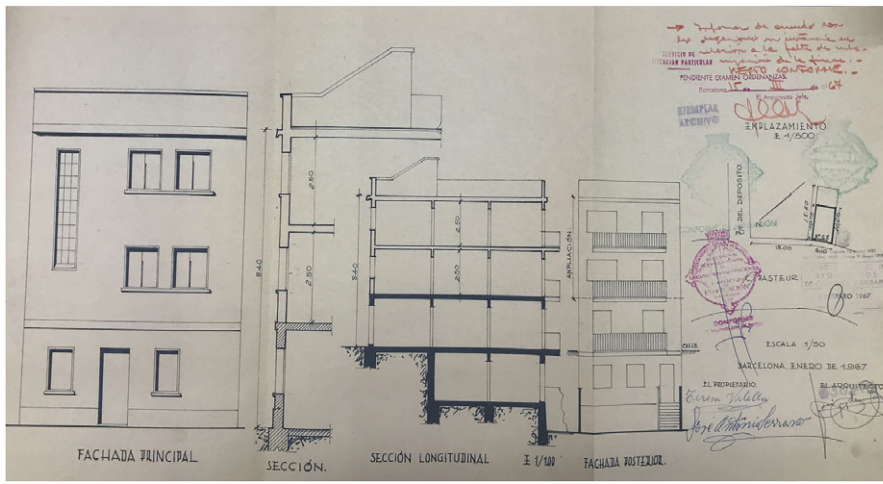

Figure 21. Pasteur 68, extension and redesign, 1962 (AMCB Q-132, 453284).

25 and 26). Francesc Alegre was a settlement of huts and shacks that dated back to the years of the Civil War. They were situated north of the carrer Francesc Alegre (calle Francisco Alegre in Spanish), a cul-de-sac ending on the slope of the Turó de la Rovira. The mansions on its eastern side as well as the 12-storey towers added on its western side in the early 1970s contrasted with the ramshackle sheds that started to appear there in the 1940s and 1950s. In 1943, the first shacks were built in the 'Los Cañones' area on top of Turó de la Rovira, and subsequently in the sectors El Hoyo and Raimon Casellas on the south-east slope of the mountain. 'Los Cañones' (the cannons) around carrer de María Labernia on the hilltop, was named for the anti-air-raid cannons that were placed there during the Civil War (1936–39) and taken down

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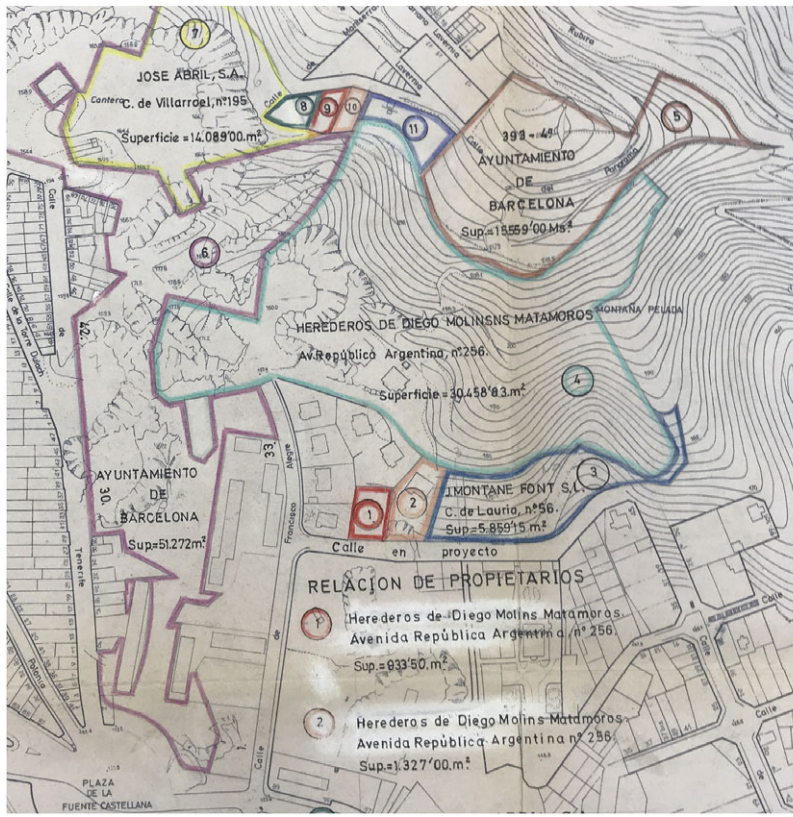

Figure 22. Francisco Alegre settlement in 1972, landownership plan (AMCB Q-108, 29509).

immediately afterwards. When municipal officers surveyed the area in 1956, they counted 570 shacks.[58] A 1972 survey still counted 317 shacks in the wider area. Of these, 187 were situated near carrer de Francesc Alegre on land owned by the heirs of a certain Diego Molina Matamoros and 59 were situated on the eastern side of carrer de Tenerife on municipal land.[59] Both areas are now parks.

Most of them were single-storey structures constructed from wood or brick, with roofs from cardboard, uralite or tiles, some with a single room, and some with divisions into kitchen, living room and bedrooms. A few dwellings were also accommodated in the subterranean locales of the anti-air-raid cannons.

The municipal definition of a *barraca* – a self-built hut of no more than 18 square metres, 2.2 metres ceiling height, and 5 square metres per person – reflected the substandard facilities.[60] Nonetheless, the definition acknowledged that some of these abodes were structures far beyond the bare minimum: up to two storeys, brick walls, tiled wooden truss, cement floor as well as electrical wires and fittings to power radio

[58]'El fin de las barracas', p. 10.

[59]Subunidad Plano de la Ciudad, 'Relación de fincas urbanas en esta ciudad en las que existen barracas', dated Oct. 1972, 48–50, AMCB Q-108, 29509.

[60]Definition by La Comisaria de Acción Urbana de Madrid, quoted in 'El fin de las barracas', 4.

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Figure 23. Aerial view of the Francisco Alegre settlement in 1972 (AMCB Q-108, 29509).

and television sets. While the majority lacked sanitation services, running water and proper woodwork and metalwork (as well as 'aesthetic pretensions' as the municipal report put it), the variations were considerable, and in the best cases the huts were not different from formal construction. The quality of a shack dwelling was directly related to its distance from formal portions of the city, as a 1972 report pointed out, since infrastructure, as well as social networks, could more easily be extended than built from scratch.[61]

The same report described poverty, but not utter deprivation. Virtually all shacks had electricity and most were equipped with radio and television, some also with telephones. There was a regular postal service and two bus lines. The sanitary situation was still precarious, but the municipality had built communal toilets and bathrooms. All approximately 150 children were bussed to school and adult literacy campaigns had reduced the number of people unable to read or write.[62]

Unlike the marginal urbanizations on carrer Pasteur and elsewhere in the neighbourhood, the huts around carrer Francesc Alegre and on Turó de la Rovira were not upgraded and integrated into the neighbourhood. The shack dwellers were resettled in several waves, starting with 123 families relocated to the Canyelles estate in 1977,

[61]'El fin de las barracas', 4.
[62]*Ibid.*

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0963926823000627 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Figure 24. Plan of the Francisco Alegre *barracas* in 1972 (AMCB Q-108, 29509).

and ending with 87 families moved to Can Carreras estate in 1990.[63] The huts were cleared and the area was converted into a park. Around the same time, the inhabitants of the Los Cañones area were resettled and their buildings demolished. The reframing of the ruins as an open-air museum occurred in 2014.

Planning for both clearance and upgrading

Histories of informal architecture frequently point to shifting policy, from the widespread 'slum clearance' strategies in the mid-twentieth century to the upgrading policies connected with the UN Habitat Conference of 1976 and the World Bank's 'slum upgrading' programmes of the 1980s. Indeed, also in Barcelona, municipal policy in the beginning was almost exclusively geared towards clearance, at least officially. Measures to end informal construction were discussed from the late 1940s. A 1949 memorial by Francoist deputy mayor Carlos Trías Beltrán outlines slum

[63]X. Camino, Ò. Casasayas, F. Muñoz, P. Díaz, M. Díaz, M. Tatjer and C. Larrea, 'Shantytowns in the city of Barcelona: Can Valero, La Perona and El Carmel', *Revista d'Etnologia de Catalunya*, 40 (2015), 18–28 (first published as 'El barraquisme a la ciutat de Barcelona: Can Valero, La Perona i El Carmel', *Revista d'Etnologia de Catalunya*, 33 (2008)).

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Figure 25. View of the Francisco Alegre settlement from the Turó de la Rovira hill, looking south, 1972 ('El fin de las barracas', theme issue of the municipal journal *Barcelona Informa – Suplemento de la Gaceta Municipal*, 2 (1972), 10, AMCB Q-108, 29509).

clearance strategies.[64] Subsequent steps were the establishment of the Servicio de Intervención de Barracas (Shantytown Intervention Service) in 1949 and the passing of the Plan de Urgencia Social (Social Urgency Plan) in 1958. The big wave of clearances happened after 1961, when the Spanish Housing Ministry passed a programme of replacement housing for shack dwellers, and Franco, during his 1963 visit to Barcelona, expressed his support for putting an end to the *barraca* areas. This was to be achieved through mass construction of modernist *polígonos de vivienda* (tower block housing schemes) which in the following years significantly reduced the pressure on the housing market. By 1972, the number of shacks had been reduced to 3,227.[65]

As in other parts of the world, the authorities legitimized the 'repression of *barracas*' (this was the term used for clearance and building prevention policies) as being in the inhabitants' own interest, for example to prevent situations in which

[64]C. Trias Beltrán, *Las barracas ante el problema de la vivienda*, 1949, AMCB, Q118, 1268.
[65]'El fin de las barracas', 4.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0963926823000627 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Figure 26. View of the area transformed into public spaces, 2020 (authors).

shacks cave in after heavy rain (probably not a common occurrence).[66] At the same time, just as in other parts of the world, those affected by these policies increasingly resisted them, which led to the slowing down of slum clearance from the 1970s onwards.[67]

And yet, it seems that the standard modernization narrative does not sufficiently explain the events on the ground. Barcelona's paternalistic policies, which replaced substandard dwellings by standardized mass housing blocks, for example, were not universally criticized. They did, in some cases, retain patterns of marginalization, but in other cases led to well-accepted solutions. Much criticized, for example, was the 'vertical slum' La Mina (1969–72, Galán Martínez), a system-built tower block development of 2,700 units north-east of the Old Town. Much better reputed was the Canyelles neighbourhood (1972–74, Guillermo Giráldez, Pedro López Iñigo, Xavier Suías i Fages), with a total of 3,500 units in eleven-storey buildings, which was praised for retaining the neighbourhood relations in close proximity to the former *barracas* site, as it bordered the hills north of El Carmel.[68]

[66]Ayuntamiento de Barcelona, Sección de Obras Públicas, 'Expediente de constitución de una comisión para entender de las cuestiones derivados del derribo de barracas', dated 1949, AMCB Q-108, 1402.

[67]See for example Perlman, *The Myth of Marginality*; J. Turner and R. Fitcher, *Freedom to Build* (New York, 1972), or B. Fischer, *A Poverty of Rights – Citizenship and Inequality in Twentieth-Century Rio de Janeiro* (Redwood City, CA, 2008).

[68]M.C. Moreno, 'Las luchas vecinales: El barrio de El Carmel', in Tatjer and Larrea (eds.), *Barracas*, 167–78.

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Similar ambiguities can be detected at the level of individual actors. A good example is the architect Joan Busquets (born 1946), already mentioned as a pioneer of pro-informal housing attitudes, who directed Barcelona's Urban Planning Department from 1983 to 1989, at a time that saw many clearances. Subsequently, he became a key figure in the preparations for the 1992 Olympics, an event that kick-started the displacement of poorer residents from the city centre and the conversion of Barcelona into a pricey magnet for international business and tourism. In his doctoral dissertation written two decades earlier, he hailed the city's *coreas* as *casas-piel* ('skin houses'), their flexible structures that were easily adaptable to changing needs, and thus at many levels superior to normal *casas-cáscara* ('carcass houses'), which were formal houses that are rigid and hard to adapt.[69] Busquets republished these views in 1999, a few years before he became a professor at Harvard.[70] His positive assessment of *coreas* reflects the reframing of informal housing across the globe. But it would not restrain clearances connected with redevelopment and gentrification in Barcelona and elsewhere.

The El Carmel neighbourhood shows that from the inhabitant perspective upgrading and clearance/relocation strategies have always been intertwined. From the very beginning, the residents of both marginal urbanizations and *barracas* engaged in the improvement and upgrading of their abodes. At the same time, the perspective of being resettled into a modern block was an attractive option for many once it became available.

This double strategy is reflected in the activities of the area's most prominent community organization, the Asociación de Vecinos del Carmelo (El Carmel Neighbours' Association). Founded in 1970, the association fought for better water, power and garbage removal and at the same time pushed for increasing social housing by the municipal authorities.[71] It also led the protest against the controversial Rovira road tunnel from 1972 to 1987, which cut through the neighbourhood and led to the displacement of scores of inhabitants. In 1974, it organized the influential mobile exhibit *El Carmelo – ¡Ignorado!* (El Carmel, ignored), an activity that was particularly noteworthy since it took place under the repressive Franco regime that only ended with the dictator's death in 1975.

Eventually, the association settled for a solution that involved both infrastructural improvements and relocations. The 1973 meeting between community representatives and Mayor José María de Porcioles was a milestone in the relocation of shantytown dwellers to the Canyelles towers in close proximity to the neighbourhood, where they became homeowners at affordable prices. Relocations from the Raimon Casellas section of the Francesc Alegre settlement started in 1978, after the neighbours' association successfully lobbied for further social housing in Canyelles and the adjacent La Guineueta area. The last *barracas* in El Carmel were demolished in January 1991 in the presence of Mayor Pasqual Maragall, and celebrated as a success not only by the municipal authorities but also by neighbourhood activists.

[69]Busquets, 'Las coreas de Barcelona', VI/28–9.
[70]J. Busquets, *La urbanización marginal* (Barcelona, 1999).
[71]Moreno, 'Las luchas vecinales'.

Figure 27. Recent large-scale installation of a historic photograph by Pepe Encinas (1976) on the site that recreates, as a project of the municipality's 'Pla de Barris' (neighbourhoods' plan) initiative, the memory of its former barracks and housing struggles, 2023 (authors).

Conclusion

The first inhabitants of El Carmel came from a background hardly imaginable in Europe today: they lived in huts or earthen hovels without electricity and running water and in many cases, they were illiterate. All the big city had to offer them was life in squalor and working long hours in low-paid jobs, followed by even longer hours on improvised construction sites. And yet their opportunities were much better than those of today's migrants from Africa or the Middle East. Their labour was direly needed in the booming factories of Catalonia, and employment was continuous and secure even for the unskilled. They were supported by family networks, often tolerated by those who had a slightly better social status (such as Alfonso Pascual) and treated with lenience by those in charge of implementing laws and regulations. Hard work was rewarded and homeownership was within reach, favoured by informal networks of financing and community expertise. Most managed to secure better education for their children than they had enjoyed. Most importantly in the context of this article, the great majority were able to improve their housing situation compared to where they had grown up. Barcelona's marginal urbanizations were thus less marginal than the term may suggest. As Busquets pointed out, the inhabitants of El Carmel and other neighbourhoods from the very beginning were fully integrated into the urban economy and progressively into the city's social fabric.[72]

[72]Busquets, 'Las coreas de Barcelona', I/25.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0963926823000627 Published online by Cambridge University Press

El Carmel therefore epitomizes what possibly applies to architectural and planning all over Europe and beyond: 'formal' and 'informal' were not antagonistic principles, but rather two aspects of the same process. The architectural strategies in the neighbourhood from the very beginning combined formal and informal elements to an extent that questions the validity of this distinction altogether. The self-built houses straddled the boundary between both at many levels. They were built illegally in the sense of defying construction and zoning regulations, but often legally in the sense of receiving permission from the landowner. They were often unauthorized by the municipal planning authorities, but just as often authorized in retrospect, with the contribution of a licensed architect. They were self-built by the inhabitants. But given that the inhabitants were often skilled construction workers they used the same materials, techniques and expertise that were also applied in formal construction, including vernacular models such as the traditional peasant cottage or local techniques such as the Catalan vault. And they formed neighbourhoods that were not planned as city extensions. But at the same time, streets and parcels were laid out on formerly rural land in a comparatively orderly way by registered surveyors, thus generating an urban fabric that was easily integrated into the existing city. Whether or not one deems them informal, Barcelona's marginalized urbanizations in El Carmel and elsewhere were an integral part of the city's urbanization process in the twentieth century. El Carmel has entered the twenty-first century with an overall high quality of life, having also benefited from the municipal programme 'Pla de Barris' (neighbourhoods' plan) and investment in public infrastructures such as public escalators in steep areas (see Figure 27). As a consequence of the collective efforts in self-building and place-making, it also has a relevant degree of social cohesion and a high level of identification with its architecture beyond formal and informal.

Acknowledgments. This article is dedicated to the Sarabia–Lozano family and the self-builders of El Carmel.

Cite this article: Golda-Pongratz, K. and Urban, F. (2024). Beyond formal and informal: mid-twentieth-century residential architecture in Barcelona's El Carmel neighbourhood. *Urban History*, **51,** 827–857, doi:10.1017/S0963926823000627