

# Inclusive City

## Poblenou, Barcelona



Poblenou, 2017. Photo: Adrià Goula

**Master of Urban Design**  
**Master of Architecture Design Studio 2020**

**Studio led by Eva Prats, Ricardo Flores and Ian Nazareth**  
**RMIT University, October 9th to December 18th 2020**



# Building Communities

Building communities implies creating relationships that hold together people and things from different backgrounds and different times, a community between new and old neighbours, between new and old fragments of a built city in which, in the end, everyone, people and things, live in a new unity.

When we talk about building communities we are thinking about a new community built within the city that exists, inviting new neighbours to interact with those who already live there. We propose to work in urban contexts in transformation, observing and identifying the valuable social and physical qualities embedded in the area, and testing its capacity to be expanded and amplified as the basis to create a new urban chapter.

But not only people contain the memory of a neighbourhood, the buildings are also loaded with memories of the uses of the place: the built fabric is the reflection of social behaviour. It speaks of a way of using the ground, the sky, of a way of inhabiting... To read the memory contained in buildings and in people is to think about a future that counts on that past.



# The Studio

With the aim of building a community, we propose to work with a collective housing program but also with workshops for productive activities of local scale, with the interest of keeping manufacturing inside the city. A mixed program of housing and working spaces that can facilitate exchange within the members of the new community and people from outside of it.

This new program should be inserted in the area in a way that it provides a good articulation with the existing fabric, and that it is able to interact with the place, activating it, bringing new energy to the neighbourhood. Between the two, what arrives and what exists, a community must be built: of new and old neighbours, of new and old built structures. It is important that the new collective housing and productive project absorbs the time of the place in it, counting with everything that exists, being able to read the qualities that the city is offering and incorporating them into the new project.

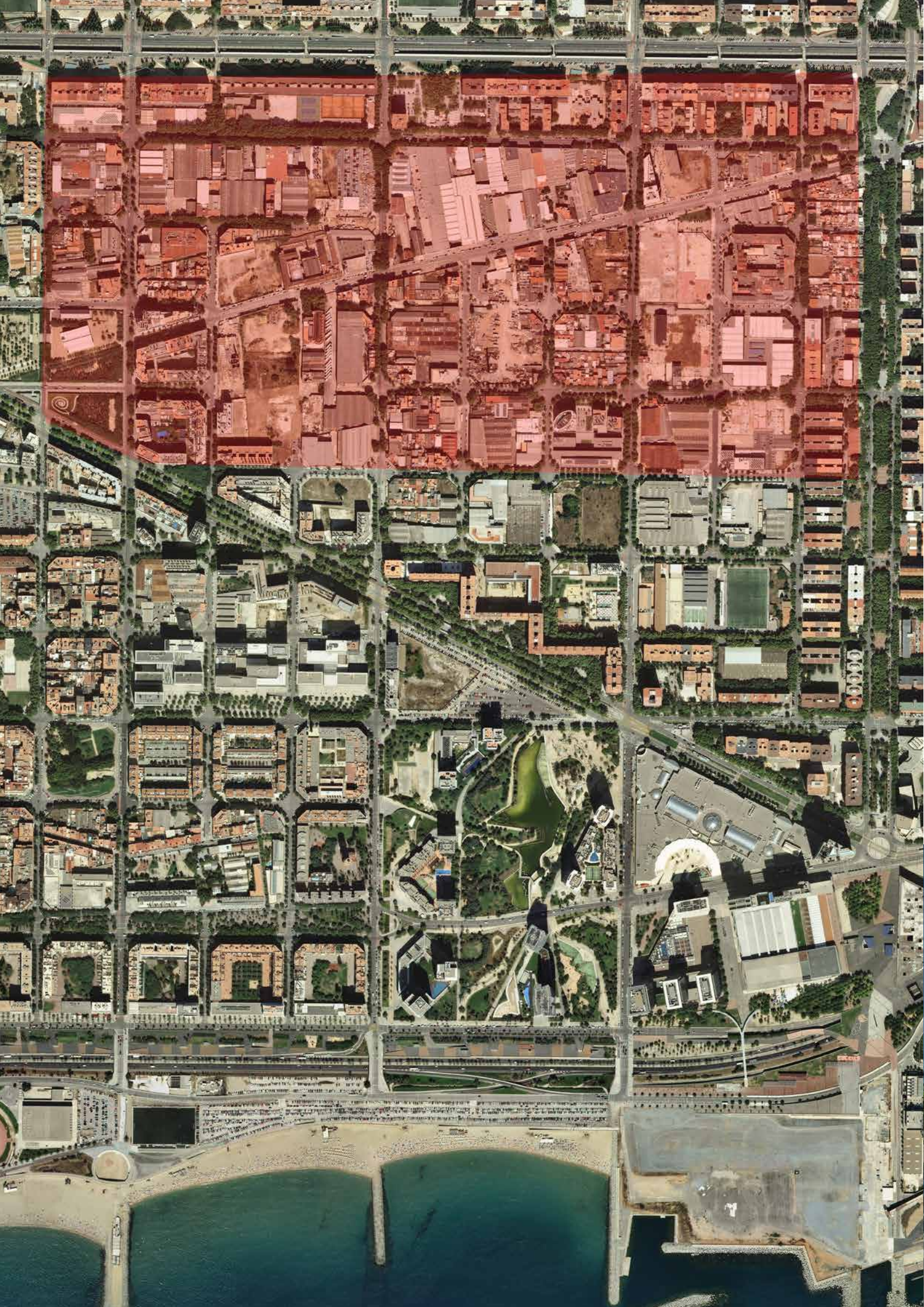
The studio is interested in building a community in time, which counts on everything that exists, amplifying the qualities that are already there, or adding new ones. The studio proposes to work with two parallel objectives:

1. The rehabilitation of a discontinuous urban fabric by the incorporation of new programs of housing and local scale production, studying the possibilities of physical transformation of existing structures. The studio will focus in avoiding demolition but encouraging dismantling and reuse of existing obsolete elements.
2. The definition of the typology of housing and its grouping -the community- adapting it to the area of the city where it is located. To achieve this, the definition of the intermediate spaces between the house and the street are of major importance, working to enrich the sequence of possible situations in between the public and the private.

Poblenou 2017. Photo: Adrià Goula







# Working area

We will work on a very blurred fragment of the city of Barcelona, an area of discontinuity between urban fabrics: the Poble Nou district, and in particular the meeting of the old traces of the farmlands and the Eixample, when Carrer Pere IV leaves the center of the neighborhood and goes towards the Besòs River.

The area of work is wide: it follows Carrer Pere IV, it includes old disused and empty industries between this street and the grid of the Eixample, barren lands caused by the demolition of old houses... It is an aim of the studio to work with industrial and other unused buildings, in the interest of recovering and rehabilitating them for the new program.

In this area there is still indefinition on the boundaries of the plots, streets that blur and become open, not hinting at where one property begins and where another ends. Changes in direction due to the old traces of the farmland mixed with the Eixample, which generates surprising and unexpected situations that open up new possibilities for interpretation and work.

There is also a mix of scales of the built fabric, with pieces of single-family housing coexisting with large industrial buildings -often empty-, and collective housing buildings. The demolition of old houses and industrial buildings has produced large open spaces and long distances between buildings, with no intermediate scale between the gaps and built. The demolition is also leaving traces of previous occupations of the site.

Mix of scales of the built fabric. Photo: Adrià Goula





# Ruins, vacant spaces, passages

Poblenou 2017. Photos: Adrià Goula



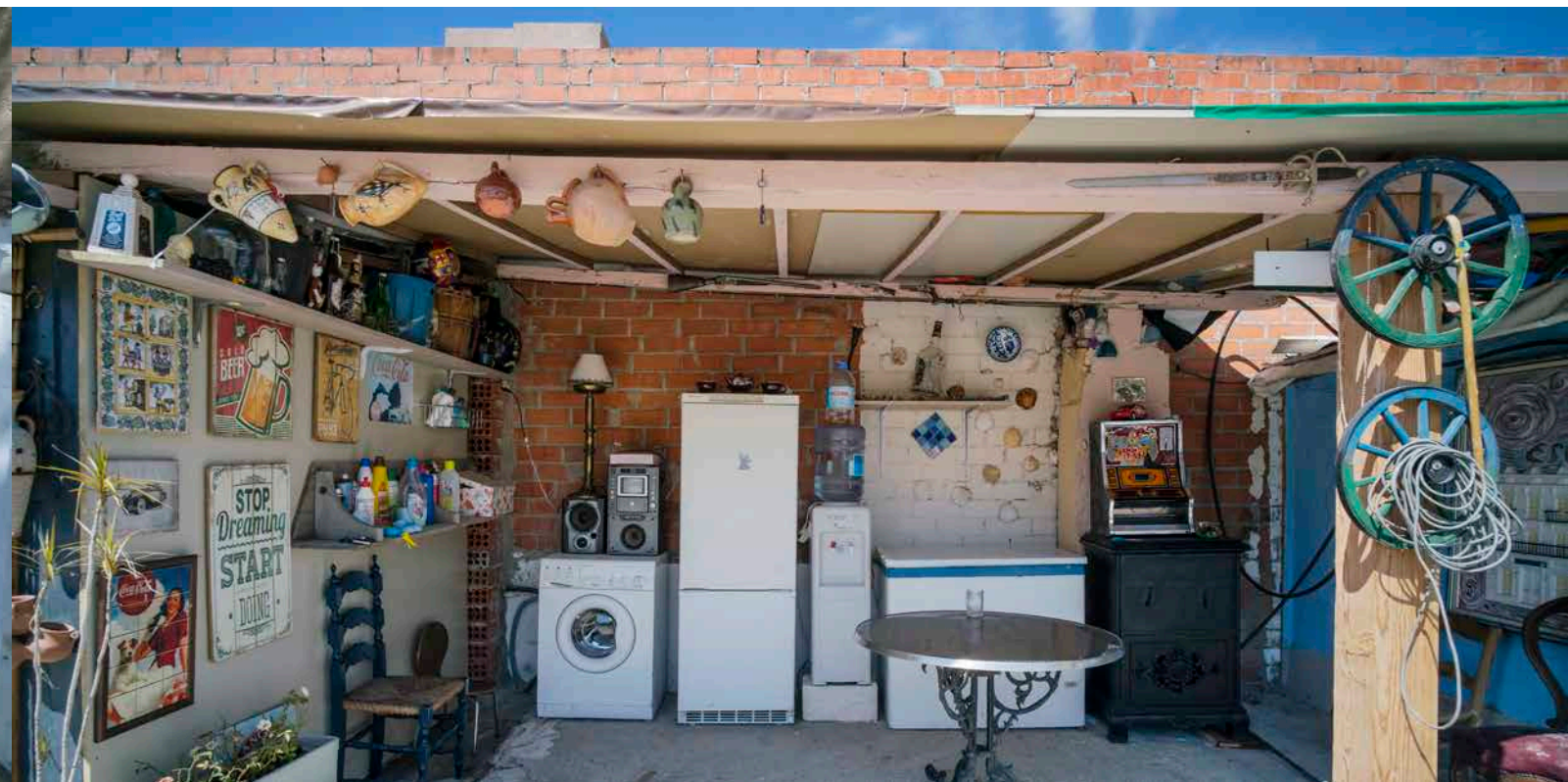
Blocked doors or windows conform a pattern of textures, suggesting hidden lives behind. Abandoned constructions often merge together to build a new scale in the street, made out of fragments that now have lost their individual character.



Changes in the level of the streets over time have meant that many old single-family homes have become “sunken” with respect to the new streets, with windows touching the floor, or doors that have been reduced in its height...



In this sense, the careful observation of the temporary occupations that many groups of people have already been doing in the area should serve as a guide and learning in how to approach and appropriate the built and unfinished fabric, so characteristic of this neighborhood.



Temporary settlements that occupy the area serve as a record of the different social profiles that coexist there, as a useful information when designing new types of housing.



# Background of the site

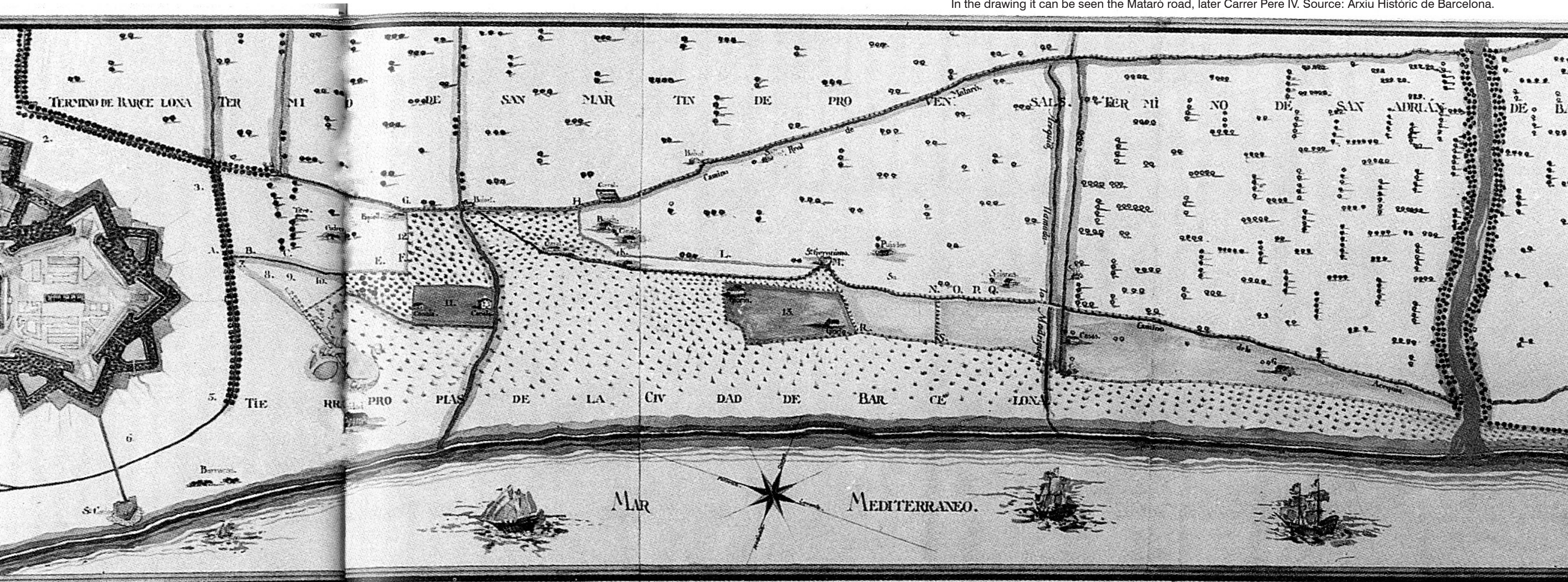
“Until well into the nineteenth century, the building in the surroundings of the city was varied; in all that is today the Lagoon and the Poblenou, the building was very scarce because the lands were not good: half negated and occupied by the activities of intensive exploitation of hemp cultivation.

Forming irrigation channels and laying roads are two operations that always go together: on the one hand, to form water corridors and pipes to remove the water out, drying the ground, and, in parallel, to build roads alongside. The building in the eastern part of the city begins to place respect for these paths.

What was the old Lagoon, once dried, is organized according to the way out of the city to Mataró, the current street Pere IV. The appearance of this road causes the formation of new types of plots: on those crops more or less irregular and of sufficiently extensive measurement for rural exploitation, they begin to appear, with facades on the road, smaller orchards or suburban building plots that, due to their size, give us an understanding of the path of ownership that has taken place, the origin of which many of these towns will be.”

*Manuel de Solà Morales, Ten lessons on Barcelona.*

The lands of Sant Martí, compressed between the drain of *La Madriguera* and the walled Barcelona. In the drawing it can be seen the Mataró road, later Carrer Pere IV. Source: Arxiu Històric de Barcelona.





# Observing historic maps

Observing historic plans during the design process expresses an interest in considering the current city as a place in evolution, with changes and reconstructions, understanding time as a design tool. This will allow to have more freedom in continuing to modify the territory and in incorporating personal interests as the project evolves.

At the beginning, one thinks: At what point in the evolution of the site to start working, at what time of its chronology should we locate, and what is the nature of the site at this particular time: are the fields or streets worth more?

Looking at the historic plans of Barcelona, the lack of definition in the evolution of this area is a continuous in the drawings since the moment when the Eixample begins to approach the old cultivated fields, the torrents, the Cemetery, the *Rambla del Poblenou*...

“At the time of extending the Eixample, overlooking the towns of the plain, the resistance of the municipalities was tough and the will to integrate the government of Barcelona with respect to the smaller municipalities involved thirty or forty years of fights and intense struggles.

The conflict with Sant Martí de Provençals was one of the most difficult ones, since it saw how its land was affected by the Cerdà Plan, passing literally over the town nucleus. The owners of Sant Martí did not want to hear about the *Pla de l'Eixample* -the Cerdà Plan-, as they considered it an unfair taxation and also had their own plans and criteria on their future growth. The main axis of this population, which had led to drying up everything that was wetlands and marshlands, connected from the old nucleus to the sea, where they thought to create a seaport. They had seated a new population by the sea, in Poblenou, which responded to a clear desire for the structure of this City Council.”

**Manuel de Solà Morales, *Ten lessons on Barcelona*.**

Planning for the surroundings of the city of Barcelona. Idelfons Cerdà, 1855



Historic map of Barcelona, 1929.





# Interests of the Studio

**1. To recognize the qualities of the built fabric.** The exercise will focus in recuperating existing urban structures, and therefore a key aspect will be to observe carefully its physical and spatial qualities, beyond the use for which they were built. Themes to reflect in the studio will be: the reuse of existing buildings as a possibility to incorporate new occupancies; the definition of sustainability criterias, based on the obsolescence of certain structures and programs; the consideration of the design process as an action that can be both additive and subtractive at the same time.

**2. To intensify the city.** Considering collective housing as an activator, an intensifier of the city and trusting in its capacity of adaptation, this program will be incorporated into existing urban systems in order to prevent social exclusion and be absorbed into the actual dynamics of the city.

**3. To understand the project as research.** The studio investigates and questions on the basis of the design, considering this as a research and experimentation tool to recognize the limits and possibilities of the material with which we work.

**4. To study the program of housing.** Study which are the limits of housing, considered not only as the area that is within the house itself, but in the sequence of spaces that join it with the city.

**5. Assess collective housing with its ability to generate community.** Taking this aspect into account will allow the design of meeting and social areas, understanding the community as the place that will help its members to gain confidence.

**6. The typology is always specific.** Housing typology and its variations are always linked to the urban, social and historical form of the urban context in which it is inserted. Understand the ability of variation of the housing typologies according to urban, solar or social orientation, the size and relationship with the common spaces, is the basis of the project of collective housing which creates community.

**7. The limits of the project.** Define the area of influence of the project, its scale, limits and position, always in relation to the conditions that we find and that we want to care. The quality of the future project is implicit both on the selection of a working area and the way of occupying it.



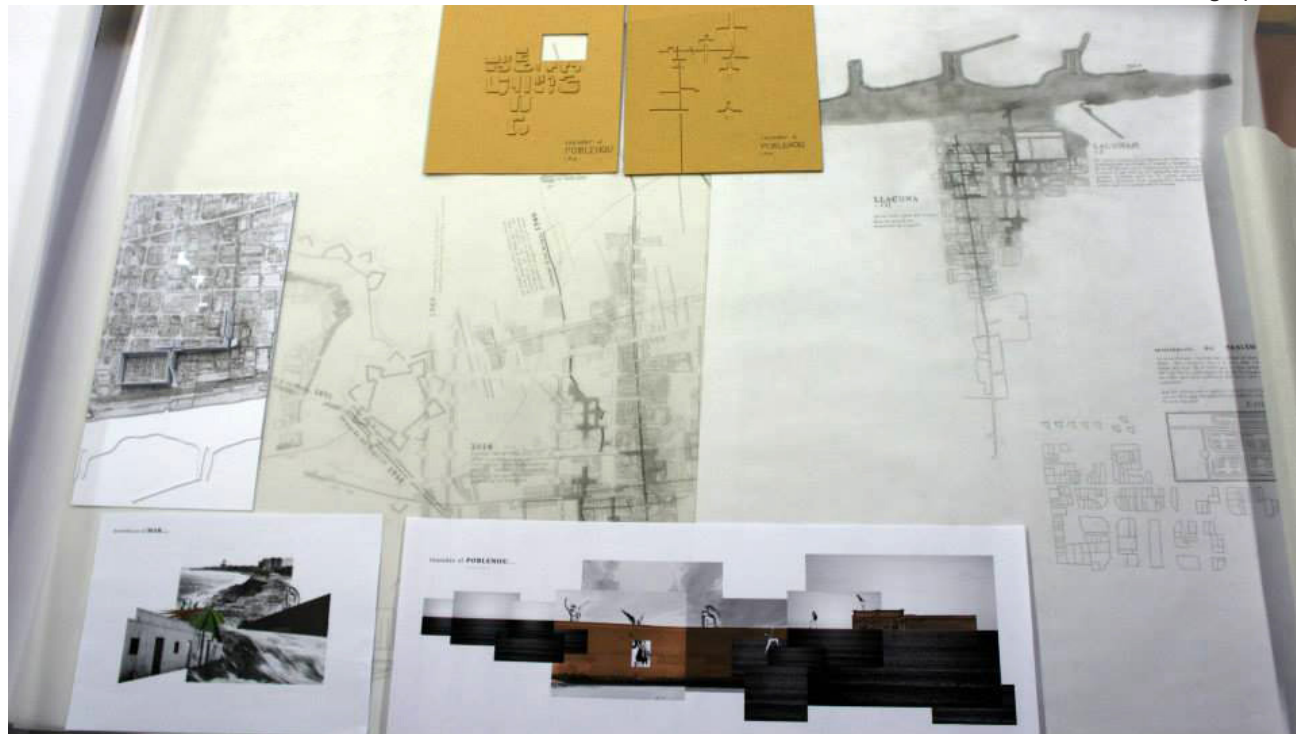
Poblenou 2017. Photos: Adrià Goula



# Process

The Design Studio is a combination of individual and group work. In the first part of the Studio, each student will work on the development of an observational cartography, based on the historical maps of the site. This document will be a first introduction to the site through a 'promenade' with the pencil... Later, a general Master Plan for the area will be developed in groups of three students. The group will then develop the project, having in mind the idea of community. Both scales of the project for a community -the housing and the aggregation of them-, should be coordinated and worked on in correspondence.

Nerea Mota. Observation Cartographies



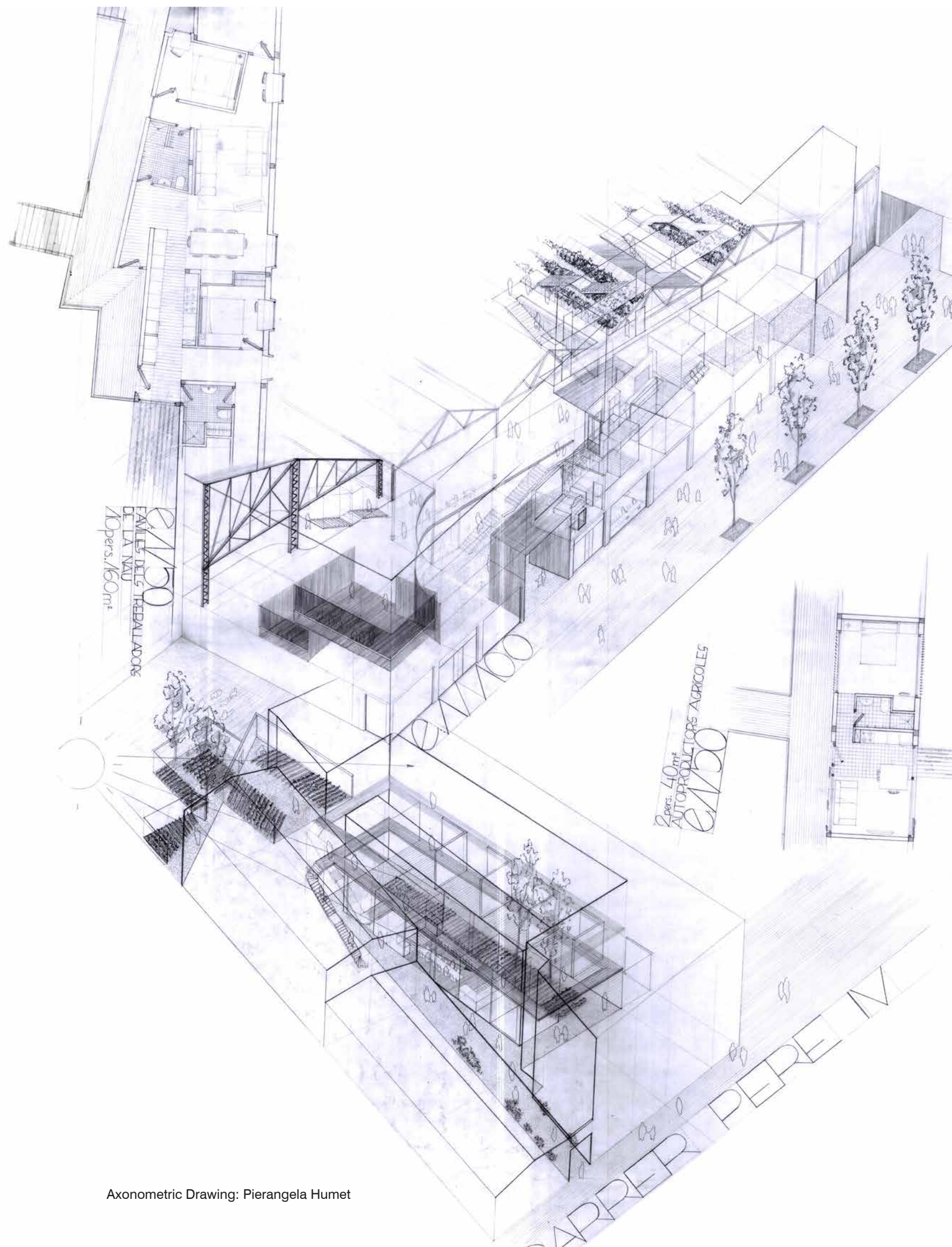
**1. Collect data** from historical maps, films, photographs... in order to incorporate the multiple qualities of the place into the project, synthesizing them into a proposal which does not lose the intensity and complexity of the place.

**2. Scales of work.** Every thought has a graphical scale to develop. Work at various scales in order to understand the site and the program as a whole.

**3. Documentation and discussion.** Documents developed by the different students will be shared and discussed in class, paying attention to the common values, useful for all the groups.

**4. Representation techniques.** Investigate and experience how different representation methods of can be relevant to each aspect of the project. Use different techniques for the development of the project. Hand and computer drawings, models, collages, short filming...

**5. All the documents produced in the design process are already presentation material.** The material of work has an own value, independent of any further use. A project is also the sum of all these, and thus the project can be narrated through all the documents that form its evolution.



Axonometric Drawing: Pierangela Humet



# The program in two objectives

## Objective 1: Rehabilitation

The studio opens the option to place the new housing program in an existing structure, in any physical state, or in a vacant plot, or that it is a combination of both.

In any case, the decision of the location of the new program must involve activation of the urban fabric where we are.

The total area of the new or renovated dwellings will be about 9,100 square meters that will be distributed together or scattered, depending on each project:

- 1.600 m<sup>2</sup> for Dwellings for 1 person of 40m<sup>2</sup> (40 units).
- 3.500 m<sup>2</sup> for Dwellings for 3 people of 70m<sup>2</sup> (50 units).
- 3.000 m<sup>2</sup> for Dwellings for 5 people of 100m<sup>2</sup> (30 units).
- 3.000 m<sup>2</sup> in workshops linked to some of the dwellings.

## Objective 2: Building communities

One of the objectives of the program coincides with the title of the studio: the dwellings proposed should invite the building of a community. One first stage to build a community will be inside the collective housing itself: the exercise has to develop with special interest the qualities of the spaces that are for communitarian uses, spaces of circulation, of gathering, or spaces just to stay, which invite neighbours to casual encounters, a greeting, a short talk... to get to know who lives around you.

There is a second stage that the design should take into account, which is the relationship of the new building with the neighbourhood around. The outdoor spaces surrounding the project, the doorways to the street, the sequence of access to the building, the orientation of the openings in its facade, not only in relationship to the sun, but also to the urban situation...

And there is a third stage in this circle of communities. The proposal will also include spaces of production, workshops or factories of small scale, which will cover a total area of around 3.000m<sup>2</sup>. These spaces should help preserve the productive identity of the neighbourhood that has been historically prevailing in the area for over a century. The disaffected industrial buildings can represent an opportunity to welcome these productive uses. It will be up to each group to define which activities will happen there and how they can involve the neighbours.

Summer Workshop at the Sala Beckett in Poblenou. Photograph: Nani Pujol.





# Schedule

## Week 1.

### - Friday 9th October.

9.00h **Welcome**, by Eva Prats, Ricardo Flores and Ian Nazareth.

Presentation of the Studio + *Observation Cartographies*

## Observation of the site.

## Week 2. Observation of the Site

### - Friday 23rd October.

9.00h **Eva Prats: on *Building Communities***.

10.00h Review of the Observation Cartographies

12.30h Distribution in groups of 3 students, to see and study one film on Barcelona.

Introduction to the *Fragment of a Domestic Space*.

## Week 3. Observation of the Site

### - Friday 30th October.

9.00h Presentation of the films on Barcelona + Presentation of the Fragment of a Domestic Space in plan and model 1/50 or 1/20.

11.00h Form groups of 3 students to work on the Master Plan. Start working on the Master Plan in drawings at 1/500 scale, to be reviewed next class.

## Urban Response.

## Week 4.

### - Friday 6th November.

9.00h Presentation and review of the first ideas for a Master Plan, in drawing 1/500 scale, plans and sections. Prepare some fragments of the Master Plan in models at 1/200 scale.

## Week 5.

### - Friday 12th November.

9.00h Development of the Master Plan proposal in drawing 1/500 and model in 1/200.

12.30h Introduction of *The House and its Aggregation*.

## The House and its Aggregation.

## Week 6.

### - Friday 20th November.

9.00h Review of the House and its Aggregation: work in the Collective Housing project in plan and section at 1/200 scale, focussing on the aggregation of housing units. Work in model at scale 1/200.

For next class, start to draw one Housing Unit at 1/50 scale (using your fragment of domestic space as a base).

## Week 7.

### - Friday 27th November.

9.00h Review of the different Collective Housing projects in each group, in 1/200 + Housing Unit in 1/50.

12.30 Introduction of *Intermediate spaces through Axonometric drawings*.

## Intermediate Space.

## Week 8.

### - Friday 4th December.

9.00h Review of Axonometric Drawings 1/100.

Development of the Project. Work on all documents at different scales, from the aggregation to the Housing Unit.

## Week 9.

### - Friday 11th December.

9.00h General Review of the projects, in all the different scales.

## Final Review.

## Week 10.

### - Friday 11th December.

9.00h **Final Review, with guests**.

- Observation Cartographies.

- Observation Documents: Fragment of a domestic space in drawing and model 1/50.

- Master Plan drawings and model 1/500.

- Collective Housing projects in plans, sections and model 1/200.

- Axonometric Drawing 1/100.

- Housing Unit in plans and sections 1/50.