

# SUMMARY OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS

Learning is remembering.

PLATO

Urban heritage, as custodian of collective memory, reflects and gives identity to a certain society; it represents a unique and irreplaceable asset whose maintenance relies on its recognition by society. Urban heritage is built upon several factors, and any change in public spaces may result in places for people to meet, crossing points or places that may be abandoned.

This research aims to find out whether the interaction between social and economic stakeholders, public administrations and legislations –which come together in the most sensitive areas, such as protected historic centres–, are responsible for the formation of border areas and micro-edges within the consolidated city.

During the 20th century, several theories on the suitability and ways of intervening in the city were developed, each of them as a result of strong political and, mostly, economic interests. These theories, which shared the common goal of creating quality cities, have left their mark on the cities through their planning.

This study, which focuses on the city of Valencia, specifically in its protected historic centre, the *Ciutat Vella* (old city), has analysed the influence and traces of the different urban development theories which emerged in the late 20th century; their planning and how such theories, along with land and heritage legislation and social stakeholders, have contributed to the changes in the city.

The starting point is a traditional, compact city model, consisting of monuments and multi-storey dwellings which, in theory, promote social integration. An efficient city with good development planning, services and mobility adapted to the development needs of its society. A field of study with a significant historical legacy, an inherited scheme and urban landscape; represent spaces that have the legal requirements of the conservation of its historic urban fabric and buildings with heritage values. The research also has found out that implementing changes that tear the scheme or the urban morphology may generate the risk of prompting the disappearance of the inherited city.

The research has analysed the interventions carried out by the government during the first decade of the 21st century in areas of significance and importance and recognised heritage value in the city, with the aim of identifying the processes and factors that may formalise border areas or urban borders within the consolidated city. Given that each neighbourhood is different and with specific physical characteristics, morphology, uses, activities, and public spaces, and the fact that these singularities are joined by the existence of Heritage of Cultural Interest and its protective environments. Unique locations that act as strategic focus of great attraction.

The analysis focuses on five urban projects promoted by the local government which, according to the legislation, were authorised by the regional government while taking into account its heritage nature. The study has revolved around the following squares belonging to public spaces in the protected historic centre: *Plaza de Décimo Junio Bruto*, *Plaza del Patriarca*, *Plaza del Pilar*, *Plaza Redonda* and *Plaza del Tossal*.

Among other issues, the variables that may influence the transformation of public spaces depend on political and economic opportunities, on the multifunctionality of each space, their adaptation to new uses and on social aspects related to the quality of life of the inhabitants. Hence the variation and complexity when choosing indicators for analysis and diagnosis. The following have been taken into account:

- Cultural and historic aspects, as well as economic, legislative, with the morphology of each area, economic activities, particularly those related to tourism and how it influences the transformation of the building types.
- Non-biotic elements on urban quality such as the compatibility between accessibility and mobility or street furniture, among others.
- Biotic elements of spatial sensory perception and urban sustainability indicators such as the quality of green spaces or the permeability of the soil.

