



Regional and Urban Planning

of

València



Edited by

Eric Solomon and Dimitrios Voulgaris



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THE LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE
DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY AND ENVIRONMENT
REGIONAL AND URBAN PLANNING STUDIES

This report is written in terms of the MSc in Regional and Urban Planning Studies in terms of the students' fieldtrip in Valencia, Spain held on 26-9 of March 2018.

Editors: Eric Solomon and Dimitrios Voulgaris

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Front cover:
Tiles on walls around Valencia, Spain.

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Landing in Valencia

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INTRODUCTION

From March 26th-March 29th, 2018, my fellow LSE planning students and I were fortunate enough to receive a first-hand, comprehensive tutorial on planning in the real world. We put away our laptops and notebooks (not to mention our raincoats as well) and decamped for sunny Valencia, Spain. There was ample paella eaten and plenty of beach time enjoyed. More importantly, and thanks to the enthusiastic cooperation of our hosts at the Valencia Regional Government and the University of Valencia, we left Valencia with much more than just fun memories and a Mediterranean sunburn. This trip was a chance to put the theories we had learned about all year to the test, and to immerse ourselves in the urban issues of a city in some ways similar but in many more ways different than the London that had been our urban laboratory since September. I think I can speak for all of us when I express my deep gratitude to everyone that shared their planning expertise with us, especially Helena Buenza at the Generalitat Valenciana, Ramon Marrades of Marina Valencia, Alberto Traval and Joaquin Farrinos of the University of Valencia, and Eva Alvarez of Universitat Politècnica de Valencia. We look forward to bringing the lessons we learned in Valencia with us as we continue our planning careers around the world.

Eric Solomon

Studying planning is not only an understanding of the theory, but also the understanding of space. The MSc in Regional and Urban Planning Studies at the LSE combines both. Thus, the 2017-2018 class had the opportunity to travel to Valencia in order to experience the vibes and observe the city. This report describes our fieldwork experience as well as presents some opinions and observations about a variety of topics we encountered in Valencia.

Having spent a year debating academic arguments, studying key literature, and performing field work, this report synthesises much of what we learned by approaching the topics covered in a critical way. The aim, and the importance, of this report is to imprint how a spatial planner thinks, feels, and interacts with the real space which is transformed each and every day. Thus, the structure we follow is firstly a description of our activities in Valencia and secondly a discussion of the topics and some case studies we met during our field trip.

Dimitrios Voulgaris





El Cabanyal
Photo credits:
Rebecca Slocum

ACTIVITIES

DAY ONE

CABANYAL WALK

by
Dimitrios Voulgaris

The field trip started on Monday morning with the group at the Plan Cabanyal offices. RUPS students had the opportunity to discuss with spatial scientists the implications of regeneration and revitalisation policies in the neighbourhood of Cabanyal as well as the whole seaside district. ‘El Cabanyal’ is the old fishermen’s village near the beach of Valencia where the landscape changed a lot during the last years, after the expansion of the main avenue to the beach. Following the discussion with the ‘Plan Cabanyal’ staff, the students, guided by the ‘Plan Cabanyal’ officials, had the opportunity to walk around the area and explore the traditional architecture. This historic fabric will potentially be interrupted by a modern boulevard that is planned for the area, and planners had the opportunity to analyse how this disruption could affect the nature of the Cabanyal.



MARINA TOUR AND TALK WITH RAMON MARRADES OF MARINA VALENCIA

by
Eric Solomon

On Monday afternoon RUPS students took a tour of the Valencia Marina. The Marina is part of Valencia's port, which is still active cargo and passenger port and an integral part of Valencia's regional economy. Students were taken on a guided tour of the Marina by Chief Strategy Officer Ramon Marrades. This first-person look at the Marina as experienced by the sailors, ship ferry captains, cruise passengers helped traversed the entire port facility, including the area recently redeveloped to host the America's Cup race as well as a short sail out into the Mediterranean offering amazing views of the Valencian coastline, the city, and the surrounding mountains. Once back on shore, Ramon presented a short history of the Marina's economic and cultural role as well as key issues pertaining to its redevelopment, followed by a lively Q & A session.

RUPsies on tour
Photo credits:
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La Marina de València
Photo credits:
Dimitrios Voulgaris



DAY TWO

LECTURE AND DISCUSSION ON THE SHARING ECONOMY IN VALENCIA WITH ALBERTO TRAVAL OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VALENCIA

by
Rebecca Slocum

On Tuesday afternoon RUPS students visited the University of Valencia for a lovely lunch and lecture by Alberto Traval from the Faculty of Economics. Alberto Traval gave a talk on the sharing economy and spoke specifically about AirBNB in Valencia. Students came to understand how sharing models have the power to transform the market but without regulation companies like AirBNB will increasingly impact affordability in the city. Even if city planners and officials enact regulations to limit the number of AirBNBs in



the region, enforcement will be difficult because AirBNB does not share its data with city officials.

Old city of Valencia

*Photo credits:
Eric Solomon*

DAY THREE

EVA WALK IN OLD VALENCIA ON GENDERED PERSPECTIVES OF PLANNING AND ARCHITECTURE

by
Eric Solomon

The final day of our visit was highlighted by a walk through Valencia's old city led by Eva Alvarez of Universitat Politècnica de València. A trained architect, Eva's walk focused on a gendered approach to planning and design as expressed through Valencia's architecture. We started by viewing a floor-sized model of medieval Valencia, and then after lunch at the historic Valencia Central Market, we meandered through the winding streets of the medieval old city. Stops included a beautiful 16th-century wool exchange complete with a courtyard with fountains and orange groves and multiple cathedrals and plazas. We ascended one of Valencia's old city gates for an amazing bird's-eye view out over the old and new cities, the Jardín Turia, and the Mediterranean Sea, before finally finishing the tour at the city's art museum. It was an informative and active end to a fantastic trip.

The Beach of Valencia

Photo credits:

Dimitrios Voulgaris





IMPLICATIONS OF TOURISM AND THE SHARING ECONOMY

by
Eric Solomon

Any traveler keen on saving money in the last 5 or so years can share the wonders of AirBNB. For sometimes half the price of a traditional tourist hotel, travelers can experience more “authentic” areas of a city and have novel experiences beyond traditional chain or tourist hotels. But this explosion of short term rentals has transformed the economic and cultural fabric of many cities; Spain has been particularly hard-hit by the negative effects of the AirBNB boom.

Tied into this Airbnb boom is a concept called “over-tourism.” Thanks to a combination of low-cost transportation options, holiday packages, and relative economic prosperity, more and more people are traveling abroad to popular destinations such as Barcelona, Madrid,

and Valencia. Like any congestion externality, this “over-tourism” is beginning to draw the attention of Spanish regulators. Madrid recently put a 90 day cap on tourist rentals, and has required apartments in the central zone have a separate entrance for visitors if they are to be let out on sites such as AirBNB¹ Barcelona, long the face of tensions between tourists and locals related to over-tourism, has doubled the size of holiday-let inspectors to ensure better enforcement of its own licensing requirements for holiday rentals (the city council claims almost half of holiday rentals in the city are unlicensed)². Valencia, although smaller and less internationally well-known as Madrid or Barcelona, is taking a similar route as its larger neighbours in regulating AirBNB. The City has proposed banning any holiday rentals above the ground or first floor of apartment blocks, probably in an effort to dampen demand in a city whose beautiful Mediterranean vistas and views over the medieval Old City are huge attractions.³

These regulations are on way to help remedy the negative effects of over-tourism. The United Nations just released a report which details other non-regulatory solutions, such as a focus on tourism development outside of the city centre, promoting more tourism during off-peak times, creating designated drop-off infrastruc-

Valencian yard
Photo credits:
Eric Solomon

ture around crowded tourist sites for tour buses, and advertising a city's less well-known or visited attractions.⁴ Thus, it seems that a combination of regulatory and non-regulatory control mechanisms will become commonplace in Spain and around Europe to help prevent over-tourism and an AirBNB explosion that could ruin the fabric of some cities. The key to prevent a tourist backlash, and the loss of the significant economic benefit that tourism has on city, regional, and national economies, is multi-stakeholder involvement. A collaboration and open dialogue between government officials, key stakeholders in the tourist economy, and local residents to establish compromises and common-sense solutions should go a long way in both retaining the economic and cross-cultural benefit that tourism brings to cities like Valencia, while ensuring it remains affordable and enjoyable for its longtime residents.

***Carrer de l'Església del Rosari (Church at
Plaça/ Square del Rosari), Valencia***
*Photo credits:
Dimitrios Voulgaris*





La Marina de València

*Photo credits:
Dimitrios Voulgaris*

MARINA VALENCIA REGENERATION

*by
Eric Solomon*

The regeneration of Valencia’s Marina over the last ten years is a great example of the complex nature of large-scale urban redevelopment projects. The international media attention and investment that megaprojects like the America’s Cup bring to the host city have many diverse implications. In the case of Valencia, the 2007 competition transformed part of the Marina into a new, vibrant tourist destination with new bars and restaurants. Boosters called the event a catalyst for the region, and cited a \$1.1 billion boost to the regional economy⁵. The government invested 500 million Euros on the redevelopment, attempting to refocus locals and tourists attention seaward; despite natural beauty, mild weather, and a short distance from the medieval centre to the sea, Valencia always seemed to “turn its back to the sea.”⁶

Yet, like with the recent criticisms of sporting mega-events like the Olympic Games and Football World Cup, some have raised concerns about the toll heavy investment in mega-events has on both the urban fabric and social justice issues. These concerns tend to revolve around governance issues, the favoring of business over local interests, the negative impact on locals of Valencia asserting itself as an externally-focused “mega-events city,” and the opportunity cost of investing in these events in lieu of social services.^{7 8}

The conflicts and contradictions reflected by the Marina Valencia regeneration are in many ways similar to issues of redevelopment in Greater London. Both this case study and many recent regeneration

projects (like the Southbank area or Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park) pose many similar questions; who is the city for? How much input should local concerns play vs. encouraging development? Hopefully, Valencia can learn how best to balance these concerns from by observing redevelopment in London, both its positives and negatives. But London, too, can learn from Valencia. Despite cultural and contextual differences, stakeholders in both cities just want to do what they believe is best for their city. With more research and shared experiences, best-practices for hosting mega-events that adequately address all stakeholder concerns can be developed.

Avinguda Regne de Valencia
Photo credits:
Dimitrios Voulgaris



Cabanyal regeneration implications

by
Dimitrios Voulgaris

Cabanyal is a traditional fisherman's neighbourhood in Valencia, located adjacent to the Mediterranean coast. This traditional neighbourhood has survived over time and has been integrated into the modern industrial and commercial city. In terms of spatial planning, "el Cabanyal" is an interesting example of the debate between the protection of cultural heritage and encouraging newer development.

The discussion about the expansion of Blasco Ibanez Avenue (the main Avenue of the city of Valencia) towards the beach started in the summer of 1998 by the conservative local government of Rita Barbera⁹. The announcement of this plan (PEPRI) caused the reaction of a variety of people who wanted to resist the situation by preserving this historic area of the city. Three years later, the plan was approved by the Valencia City Council⁹. The plan recommended the creation of a 48m wide avenue, and 100 more metres width for the construction of a number of six storey buildings¹⁰. The implementation of this plan required the demolition of more than 1500 homes and approximately 500 buildings¹¹, with some of the buildings to be demolished even having been characterised for "Special Protection" since they were built during the 19th century (and replaced the 'barracas'



which were destroyed after a fire).^{12 13}

‘El Cabanyal’ remains an important part of the historic part of Valencia. Indeed, its particular architecture indicates the long history of the area as well as its evolution¹³. Currently, the landscape of the area is still interesting since one can encounter there not only a variety of small shops, workshops and studios but also an active community which boosts the social life of the area. Although the population of the neighbourhood has decreased in recent years, most of the buildings are still used for residential purposes and a possible regeneration will result in not only the demolition of important buildings (in terms of cultural heritage) but it will also affect the structure of the local community.

As long as parts of ‘el Cabanyal’ are legally protected by the Ministry of Culture, a possible regeneration should be followed with idea of protecting the neighbourhood’s cultural heritage. Thus, the expanded Blasco Ibanez could be considered as a dangerous snake which is able to poison a whole area, and cause the death of the cultural heritage as well as the sense of community.

El Cabanyal
Photo credits:
Dimitrios Voulgaris

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Roof of Mercado Central (central Market) of Valencia
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“By far the greatest and most admirable form of wisdom is that needed to plan and beautify cities and human communities.”

Socrates

Street art in Valencia

*Photo credits:
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