

PRACTICES

seaUbarcelona

Georgia Kountouri — Landscape architect
Contact: g.koud@yahoo.gr

Noelia Rodríguez — Architect and Landscape architect
Contact: noelia.rodrr@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

As a result of doing the Contemporary Projects Design Critique workshop at the Master of Landscape Architecture (UPC), we explore and define a new strategy to analyze and interact with the site of study, which we call Site Vibration Tool. In continuation, we tested the tool through the seaUbarcelona performance at the Port Vell of Barcelona waterfront. We came into a double conclusion. The first one, derivate from the site. Having as a start point, the Barcelona's 92 strategy of opening the city to the sea, we think over how that strategy has respond those 92 expectations in today's reality and will transcend in the future of the city's waterfront, considering the climate change. And in second place, an invitation to enter into our mind. The experience using Site Vibration Tool, we perceive and add tangible and intangible aspects of the place in a landscape proposal, encouraging our colleagues to incorporate it to their practice.

KEYWORDS

Waterfront, Landscape Analysis, Site Performance, Site Vibration Tool, Barcelona.

<https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2612-0496/16835>

ISSN 2612-0496

Copyright © 2023 Georgia Kountouri and Noelia Rodríguez

Before we start the reading, we want you to travel with us into our world, from the site to our *mind*, so you understand the different factors contributing to this study.¹ This is our study of the Barcelona's '92 waterfront strategy, formulated after the landscape performance² that took place in Port Vell of Barcelona in various acts.³ We want to present you the site vibration tool that we tested during the performance. It is a subjective action of interacting with the site, tangible and intangible, and a subjective action of interacting with its users after a previous analysis. The aim of the **site vibration tool** is to confirm and discover characteristics, dynamics, and future necessities which can better define the project's areas of influence and thus reflect into the areas of effect,⁴ and the way of perceiving the project site as area of control, area of influence, and area of effect. For better results it is necessary that the enactor executes an extensive previous site analysis to be able to prepare and interpret better the site vibration. Part of this analysis, it is the chords definition. The chords are those areas from the site, where the interaction it is going to take place. In continuation, we are going to try to transmit our own experience of the site vibration tool practiced in the Port Vell of Barcelona, through the seaUbarcelona performances.

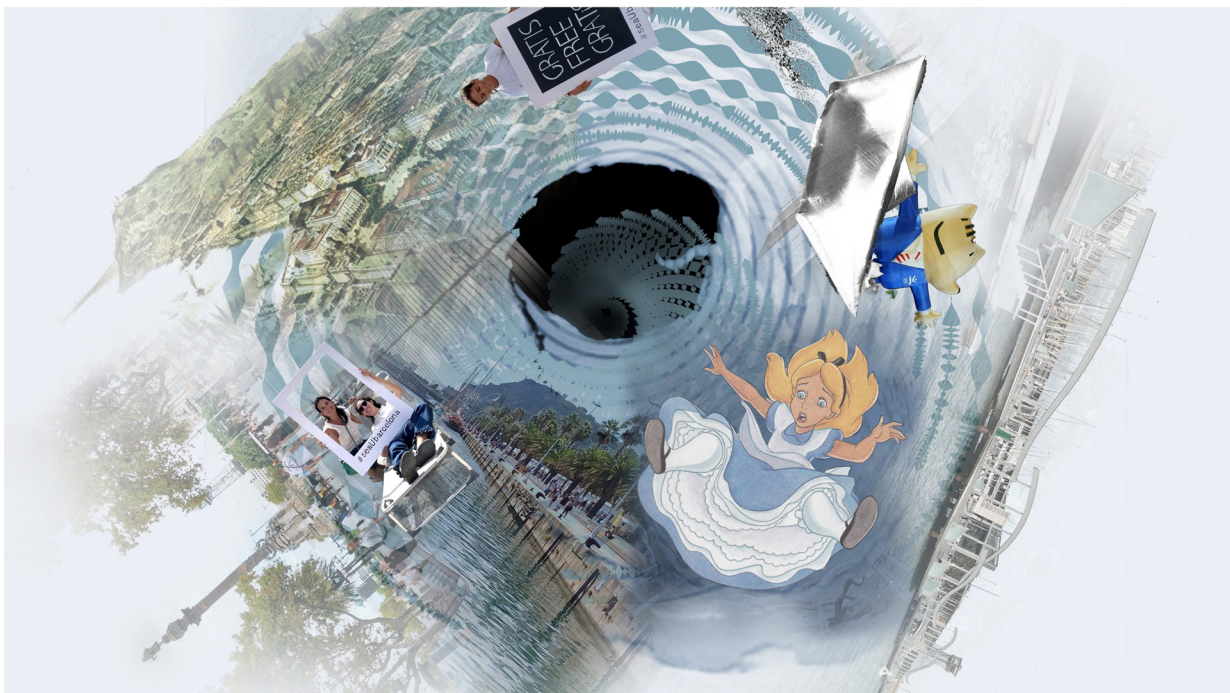


FIG. 1 Collage of our site vibration experience in SeaUBarcelona.

1 Notice that the text format changes to help the reader to understand when the mind talks, or the site expresses itself.

2 UPC – Master of Landscape Architecture (MAP) - Contemporary Projects Design Critique Workshop (November 2022)

3 #seaUbarcelona

4 The site thinking method and the interpreting methodology defined by Carol Burns and Andrea Kahn (Site Matters 2005/2020).



FIG. 2 Collage showcasing the history of Barcelona's city and port growth. Exploring how the history can inspire the future, as first part of the site vibration process.

We are using this critique to argue that the Olympics Games' 92 strategy to open Barcelona to the Mediterranean, although intelligent and contemporary, did not establish a concrete landscape relationship between the city and the sea. We want to engage with the ongoing discussion about this relation, in order to enrich it with a tool of analysis and develop an urban intervention of this magnitude. We call this tool: site vibration.

We use the site thinking method and the interpreting methodology defined by Carol Burns and Andrea Kahn (Site Matters 2005/2020). We argue that the architects and responsible committee for the strategic design of the Barcelona's Port Vell in 1992, did not prioritize as design's area of influence neither the historical, patrimonial, and collective memory of the place, nor the environmental conscience and future necessities (derived from the climate change).

Our initial thesis, in the analyzing site process, has a recurrent thought that for a long time, from the roman areas, till the end of 19th century, Barcelona had a concrete relationship between the city and the sea. It was defined by the city's walls. and this idea of intramural and extramural accompanies us in our critique. The Olympics Games' '92 strategy to open Barcelona to the Mediterranean, was to change this relationship, to connect the city to the sea. Using our site vibration tool, we want to look at the future and participate in this discussion. We started the traditional site analysis. We focus on our area of control, the chords appeared, as the places to perform the interactions.

The interactions performed had a double scenario in each chord: in the access as a perturbation, and in the public space as a reception.

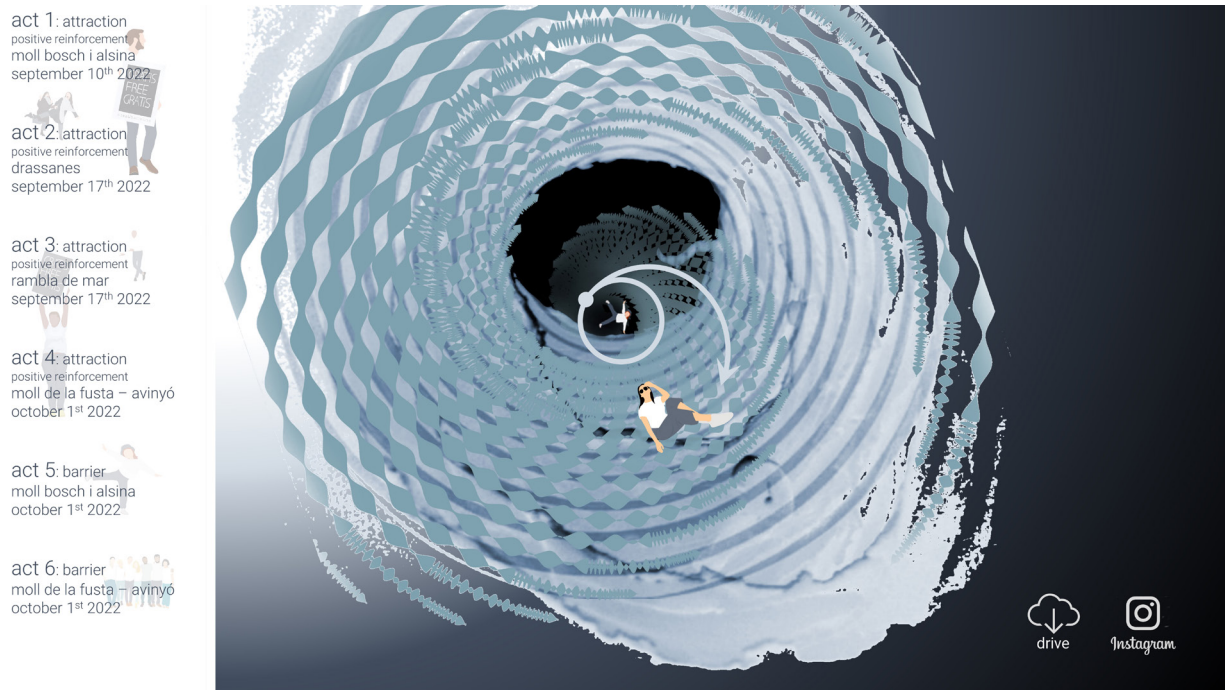


FIG. 3 Collage explaining the different site vibration tool acts/installations that took place in Barcelona as part of SeaUBarcelona performance, also featuring interactive moments on Instagram.

During October 2022, we obtained the data to construct our critique by interacting with the place and the social media through site vibration process. Previously, we did a site analysis, based on an initial critical thesis, in order to define the site vibrations' chords. In continuation, we conducted our site vibration, which were an extensive series of interactions site vibrations in the waterfront and Instagram, where the participants, willing bystanders, and usual users, were given the opportunity to think over about the history, the present, and the future of the relation between the city and the sea. Thus, it allowed us to obtain information and street data, outside of the traditional analysis tools.

We analyzed the site with a conventional urban analysis. That considered the site's history, the mobility's plans, the formal and informal usages, the municipality's plans, the critiques, the aesthetic character, the possibility of visual connecting, the barriers, the landscape, and the ecological value. Our initial thesis was centered in the idea that this opening to the sea strategy didn't take into consideration the city legacy: Barcelona's in and out of the wall relationship and within the sea. The chords that we identified in Port Vell, are small areas near populated intersections-crossroads (accesses) with an aesthetic and "instagrammable" value and a potential to attract more users in order to interact with them.

Based on an initial critical thesis, we defined the site vibrations' chords.

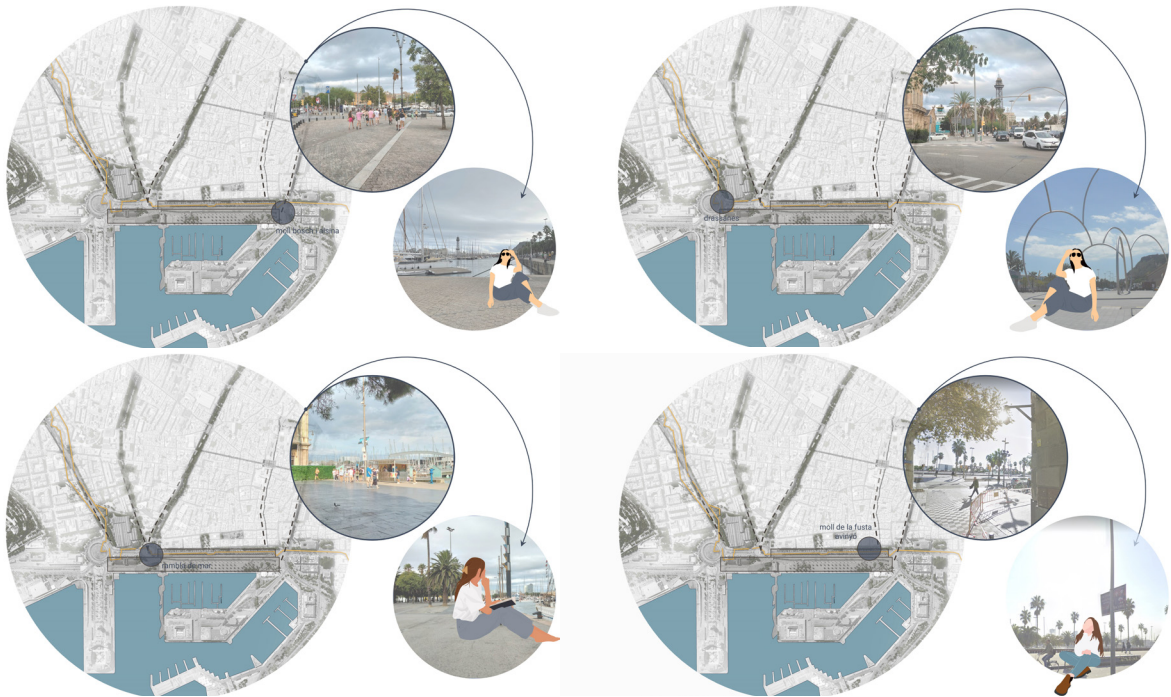


FIG. 4 Collages explaining the different site vibration tool acts/installations, in the chosen locations -chords, that took place in Barcelona as part of SeaUBarcelona site vibration performance.

In continuation, we conducted our site vibration, named SeaUBarcelona. This is a sum up of the 6 acts, and the Instagram feedback. Plus, we invite you to visit this link to the Instagram account.⁵



FIG. 5 Collage graphically illustrating the key conclusions from the site vibration performance SeaUBarcelona.

We want to address the technical teams who will be called to redesign and intervene the waterfront in the future. We believe that the designers, by using the site vibration tool, will be able to enrich the proposals areas of control, influence, and effect.

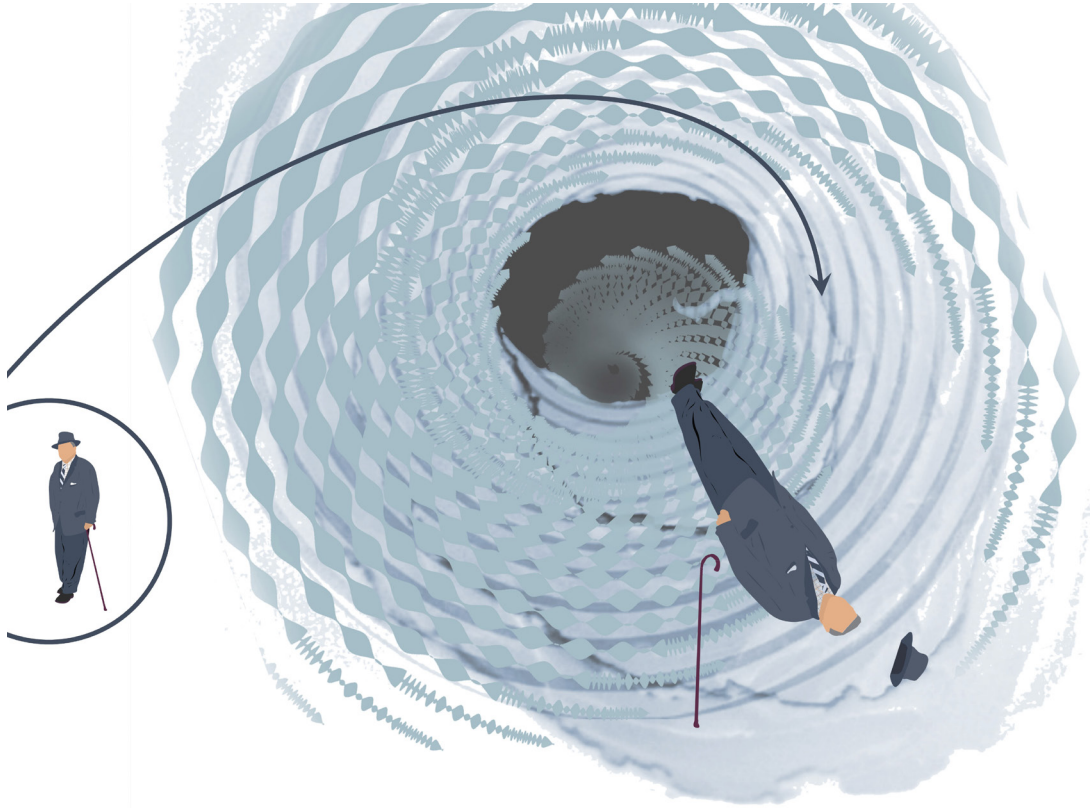


FIG. 6 Collage depicting how the site vibration tool can contribute to rethinking design factors.

Thus, it allowed us to obtain information and street data, outside of the traditional analysis tools. But also, this data has a double influence on us: a data from the site and a data that vibrates in our minds. Both, combined, helped us to enrich our site critique. That is why we encourage our colleagues to find their own site vibration in order to enhance their proposals.



FIG. 7 Collage illustrating final thoughts on the future of Barcelona's old port waterfront.

The critique's purpose is to bring up to the spotlight the 1992 strategy to connect Barcelona to the sea. In reflection to how in the past, far and close and until now, we have perceived and realized our connection between the city and the sea, and proposed some directions for the future, enriched by the site vibration process. Meanwhile, the subjective experience derived from the interaction process, has brought up a second purpose, to introduce and to highlight site vibration as an important tool of analysis and development for future urban and public designers.

The site vibration process showed the importance of the site's legacy, the environmental criteria and social consciousness as projects' areas of influence, otherwise occulted, for future site interventions. The tool confirmed that there are different ways to relate to the sea, obvious but seemed forgotten. Therefore, we conclude that the upper zone of Moll de Fusta is an area of high potentiality to recuperate the open visibility and usage relationship between Barcelona and the sea horizon. The down zone of the Moll de Fusta, we conclude, is an area with the aptitude of constant change and an area of battle between nature and man. Where the vibration process sound louder, was in the chords, as expected. But in the process of site vibration, the chords resonated differently and emphasized the necessity to redefine them.

Georgia Kountouri, Landscape architect (Master in Landscape Architecture, UPC - Universitat Politècnica Catalunya) and architect (Integrated Master in Architecture, NTUA – National Technical University of Athens) with 4 years and counting of professional experience. Specialized in landscape and urban analysis and design, Through the studies and work experience have learnt to deal with a project holistically, taking in consideration social, technical and sustainability factors. Currently especially interested in the ecosystem services and how they can be incorporated into our profession.

Noelia Rodríguez, Architect and Landscape Architect at the UPC (Universitat Politècnica Catalunya), born and resident in Barcelona. Specialized and working actively for more than 15 years in restoration of historical Catalan heritage, construction of public facilities, public space, social housing and public procurement procedures. Recently graduated in Master of Landscape Architect, with honors grades and my final project *La esencia de la trama* was about the connection of the collective memory in the constructed natural and historical landscape. A transversal profile, creative and with resolution capacity and adaptability.