



Previous state

Since 2013 a group of researchers from Universitat Rovira y Virgili (URV) and Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya (UPC) is working on the analysis, diagnosis and the elaboration of propositions for the regeneration of Carles Buigas area, property of Ayuntamiento de Salou. Avenida Carles Buigas is one of the principal axis of connecting nightlife and commercial areas of the coastal municipality of Salou. This street gives continuity to the principal maritime passage of the municipality, Avenida Jaume I and is detected in a process of progressive urban degeneration. During the realization of the analysis and urban diagnosis, there was found a very high occupation of the public space by private vehicles and a progressive expansion of commercial spaces in front of the street, which results to a low quality urban space and a big uniformity in the offer. Taking advantage of the common feeling in the area, it was proposed to the Ayuntamiento de Salou to make a pilot test, in only one tram of the avenue, to test the acceptance by the merchants, inhabitants and pedestrians, of a new 'section' of the city.

Object of intervention

The avenue Carles Buigas is the communication axe of the touristic nucleus of Salou. The objective of the pilot test is to stimulate the life and use of the public space in the Carles Buigas area, inviting the pedestrian to use the area out of its ordinary limits. The proposition gives priority to pedestrians instead of vehicles in an environment with a high intensity of use during summer season. The Calle Piloto has a character clearly ephemeral and reversible, thus the proposition is set up in a way that it can be removable, recyclable, quickly assembled (modifies 7.500m² in 3 weeks maximum, without bothering the road) and economic (has a coast of 16euros/m² instead of 84euros/m² which is the average price for the re-urbanization of a street).

Description of the intervention

Regarding the construction side, the project is identified by three main elements, with which the use of space is reconfigured and the interchanges with public are made visible.

a. Anti-slip acrylic paint of yellow color, applied in two different types of 58 cm diameter - circled patterns. One of the patterns is established by circles with a major distance between them and is applied in areas where the pedestrians and the vehicles intersect, like the case of the pedestrian crossing patterns or the fords of parking access. The other pattern is applied in high density circles in the pedestrian areas, painting the previews sidewalk and the asphalt area now recovered for pedestrians.

b. A recycled oil tank of 58cm diameter and 85cm height, as well painted in yellow. This element configures the vertical plan of the new limit between the pedestrian zone and the restricted area. The tanks are placed every 2.1m, enough distanced for the vehicles not to invade the pedestrian area. This tanks are filled with sand and are anchored to the ground with chemical plugs to avoid their displacement from vandal acts, mainly associated to nightlife or individual interest in the space configuration.

c. A vertical lamp of 160 cm, model Airfal TR4, transparent, held by a wooden post, fixed on the tanks. The aerial installation follows the street longitudinally, creating a continuous visual line between the tanks. Its placement and form generates a pre-thought light effect that transforms the perception of the street at night, giving it a festive atmosphere, which is the initial intention of the proposal. Once the principal elements of design are settled down, other variations of the same elements will be placed with the help of wisa-wire counter-plywood boards and iron tubular profiles to equip the road with urban furniture and fulfill its new condition of giving priority to pedestrians. By simple operations, the tanks get transformed to obtain tables, banks, bicycle parking and big blinds, for the purpose to facilitate the use of the public space.

Evaluation

The result of the test confirms that the extension of the free space limits and the priority given to pedestrians instead of vehicles are indispensable to ameliorate the urban conditions of Avenida Carles Buigas and its surroundings.

The installation of the elements of urbanization takes place during the month of May and rests operative during the months of high intensity of visitors, from June to September. The occupation of the new accessible spaces is very high, especially in the hours after the sunbathing period in the beach areas. However, the absence of shade elements like the umbrellas, that finally were not installed, may have decreased the number of actual users during the rest of daytime. Likewise, despite the initial distrusts from neighbors and businesses managers, common in every process of change, the increase on the number of visitors and the absence of the anticipated vandal acts has make opinion evolve towards a common support of the action implemented.

Furthermore, it is visible the number of people using bikes and running in the surroundings, encouraged by the absence of motor vehicles, an indicator that evidences people demand for common space for practicing sports or move by using alternative transport modes. Nowadays, the street has maintained the restriction of the passage of vehicles and is waiting for the development of the project of re-urbanization.