

# **Has the Universal Forum of Cultures improved the quality of life in La Mina?**

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## **Project Aims and Plan**

### **Aim**

**To investigate whether the Universal Forum of Cultures has improved the quality of life in La Mina**

I will use the following questions to aid my study

1. Is the area closer to The Forum more gentrified?
2. Does the Environmental Quality vary with distance from The Forum?
3. Does the Residential Quality vary with distance from The Forum?
4. Are there more government funded renewal schemes closer to The Forum?
5. Does the new 'Rambla' encourage more community inclusion, as it is predicted to?

### **Introduction**

Barcelona is one of Spain's largest cities with a population of just over 1.5 million. The Forum, see below for description, was a cultural event planned specifically to continue the urban regeneration and renewal program that was started by the 1992 Olympic games. The Forum is situated only 500 metres from one of Barcelona's most socially deprived areas, La Mina, see below for description. It was hoped that The Forum and all its agglomerations would help gentrify this socially and economically deprived peripheral area.

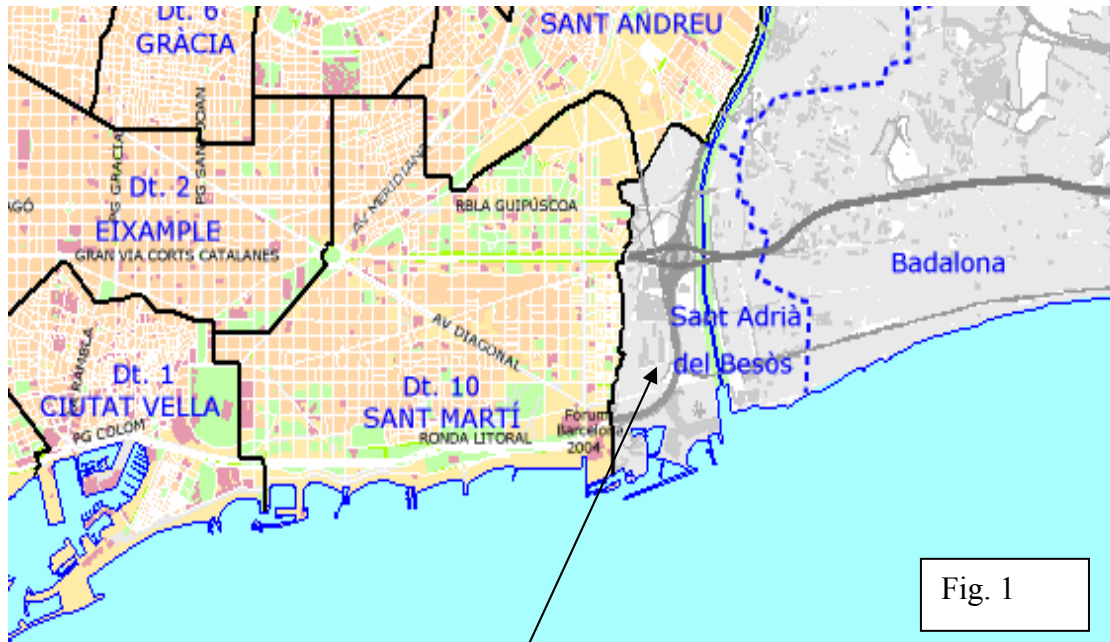
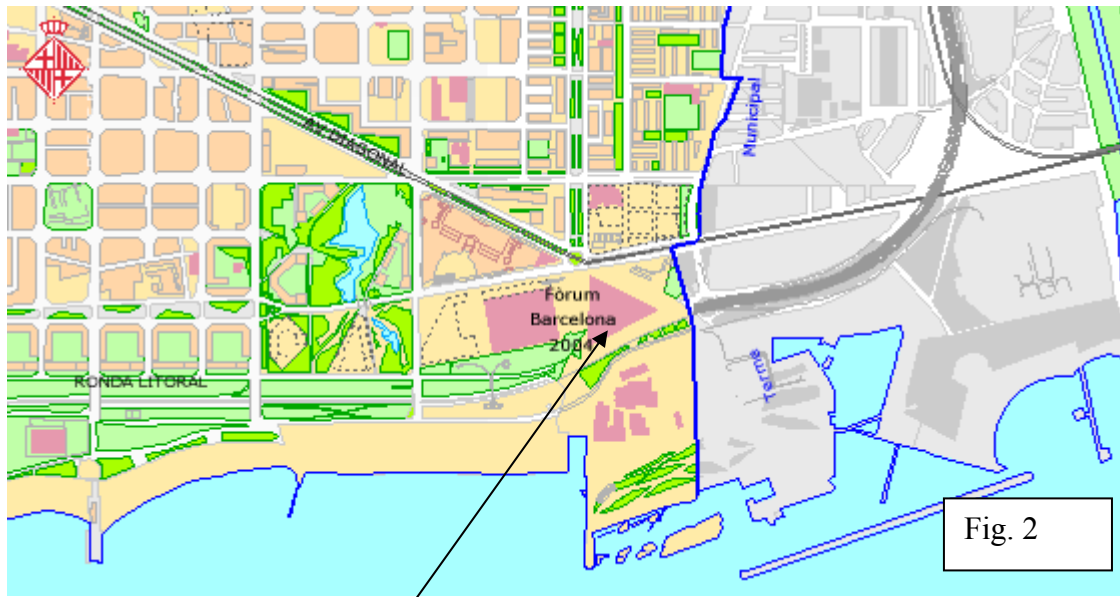


Fig. 1

La Mina is situated in the Sant Adrià del Besòs district of Barcelona. It was created in 1969 as a solution to the problem of numerous immigrants living in shanty towns throughout the Barcelona area. La Mina was built in two stages, Old La Mina, to a supposedly better quality and in 1975, New La Mina as by this time Old La Mina already had more than 15.000 inhabitants in 2.029 dwellings. More houses were desperately needed, so New La Mina was built but this time to cater for the larger numbers, to a lower quality. The neighbour was an ‘instant creation’ with a high density, which has led to social, economic and labour deficits. 35% of the neighbourhood are of Gypsy origin and there are high levels of crime and unemployment throughout. The high drug and crime rates in this area have acquired it an extremely poor reputation throughout the whole of Barcelona. La Mina is also suffering from the cycle of poverty and decline, as the area gets worse, people try and move out, but this in turn makes it worse, as the housing is cheaper, letting worse people into the neighbourhood.



The Forum is a UNESCO funded organisation dedicated to forwarding ongoing world dialogues and events promoting world peace, cultural diversity and sustainable economic development. A marina, shopping centre, 5 star hotels and new homes are either built or in the process of being built. It is hoped that The Forum will draw different types of people in the area and promote a new wave of regeneration and gentrification. Cultural events have been used a number of time to flagship regeneration schemes, for example The Guggenheim Project in Bilbao. The ‘Barcelona Model’, which the government are hoping to implement in this area, can also be known as ‘The Hilton Effect’. This means moving 5 Star Hotels into the area, and other such services, to gentrify the area due to the new influx of ‘higher class’ people and their money. The implementation of The Forum has also been designed to kick start an economic and social multiplier effect in the La Mina area. The presence of more gentrified services surrounding The Forum is hoped to spread into the surrounding areas.

**The idea of Quality of Life**

The Calvert – Henderson Project has identified the factors affecting quality of life as, education, employment, environment, health, income, infrastructure, public safety, re-creation and shelter. If an inhabitant of La Mina is lacking any of the above, in Calvert – Henderson’s view the inhabitants quality of life is not as good as it could be. However, every person has a different perspective of their quality of life, the area they live in could be seen as awful, but they could be happy with it. Therefore, the factors that affect of life are the things that can make the inhabitants life better or worse. For example, new roads, lifts and schools in La Mina would be a universal indicator for an improved quality of life.

I have chosen to study La Mina and the affects that The Forum has on the area as I am keen to see whether the impact of the governmental renewal plans will only be superficial, to make La Mina look better or to genuinely better the quality of life for the inhabitants.