

The city: A place for communication? Controversies around public space in real/virtual Barcelona

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The question that leads this paper is one of the queries to be developed in a larger project on European cities, communication practices, and citizen's democratic participation on urban politics. The paper wants to focus on the case of Barcelona. The main objective is to generate discussion on different dimensions of the research. First dimension is the theoretical one. Important concepts are going to be questioned: "Information society", "city of knowledge", "e-democracy", "communication as political practice", "public space", "guerrillas of communication". Second dimension is the methodological one. Fieldwork methods are going to be presented as product of both Barcelona's historical materiality and the researcher's epistemological positioning. This last question leads us to the third dimension of the work. Epistemological issues refer to the connections between theory and practice, academic research and participation in social change. Reality, far from being considered simply "objective", is going to be presented as conflictive, complex, changeable, and multidimensional in his turn. Special attention will be focussed on the articulation between global/local processes, planned/spontaneous city representations, real/virtual political participation, the streets and the media, old and new technologies, institutions and margins, visible and invisible (public?) spaces, cultural recognition and misrecognition, and other kind of urban-placed social divides.