

negotiation processes and international and national planning and programming. The activism of that decade opened new opportunities for engagement with the UN, and we worked to highlight the very different situations that women in the South experienced from those in the North, to differentiate the experiences of middle-class and working-class women, and to link micro and macro issues. The negotiated outcomes of these conferences continue to be monitored by the UN and women's groups around the world.

A large number of members played an active role at the 1995 NGO Forum on Women, which ran parallel to the Beijing Conference (the 4th World Conference on Women). There were multiple IWAC panels, and as the organizer of the Forum's official weeklong program of plenaries, I brought IWAC women into the mainstream of the Forum's activities. The linking of scholarship and activism through such interactions with women activists from across the globe enabled a more complex understanding of social movements and gender as they were playing out around the world.

For over a decade, the energy of the international women's movement fueled IWAC's numerous activities and widely distributed newsletter. IWAC meetings and panels organized at the AAA and elsewhere received enthusiastic responses, and members helped spearhead the establishment of the Women's Commission of the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES).

As the heyday of feminism and the international women's movement waned, so did IWAC. Members found less time to devote to IWAC activities. The late 1990s saw a sharp decline for the group, and after several planning meetings, the New York City core members decided to give IWAC a rest until someone had the time and energy to take it forward. By maintaining IWAC's valuable UN consultative status, it would be possible to regroup when the opportunity arose.

And, indeed, IWAC continues to be represented at UN meetings, conferences, and consultations. Partnering with other civil society groups, IWAC representatives follow, lobby, and help inform the work of various UN Commissions and other UN bodies. The connection to the UN has

enabled anthropologists participate in a variety of meetings, official and unofficial. For example, in 2001, Faye Harrison represented IWAC at the World Conference Against Racism in Durban. In 2009 IWAC organized a side event panel on Women, Agriculture and Land for the 17th meeting of the Commission on Sustainable Development. Currently, I am part of the NGO Committee on Financing for Development, which works to bring the social dimensions of economic policy into UN deliberations around international economic issues. Several of us are also involved with preparations for the Rio+20 meetings on Sustainable Development in June 2012, providing input into the negotiating text and lobbying delegates.

It is difficult, indeed impossible, to map out IWAC's impact in the international arena or to distinguish the accomplishments of one organization or network from another as it is an inherently collaborative project. Certainly, during the couple of decades that it was most active, IWAC contributed to a groundswell of activity, adding its voice to those of many other organizations and helping to create and sustain the networks that continue to exert pressure for change and to enrich our lives.

As we plan for the years ahead, we have learned a great deal about how best to engage at the UN and bring the expertise of anthropologists into this intergovernmental arena, providing a path for effective engagement with international processes. Today, we plan to use online resources to build a truly international network with headquarters rotating to different parts of the world and with focal points in different geographic regions that can mobilize anthropologists to share information and experiences. With the lessons we have learned and with new communications tools, it should be possible to reestablish and revitalize IWAC in ways not possible before. We hope many of you, our readers, will get involved and help create a more vital and publicly engaged anthropology.

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**Eva Friedlander**, *Ph.D. Planning Alternatives for Change (PAC)*,  
Partner and President of IWAC; [efriedlander@igc.org](mailto:efriedlander@igc.org)

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## Review

# Barcelona's *Repensar Bon Pastor*: A Collaboration of Anthropologists and Architects

**Denise Lawrence-Zuniga**

*California State Polytechnic University*

*Repensar Bon Pastor* ("Rethinking Bon Pastor") is a multidisciplinary collaboration between anthropologists and architects—urban designers concerned about the proposed demolition of one of Barcelona's oldest public housing projects, Bon Pastor (see <http://repensarbonpastor.wordpress.com/>). This project reveals the possibilities of

social and political impacts when anthropologists collaborate with environmental designers. The latter give visual expression to ethnographic research that can be used to engage and mobilize research subjects, and critique elite power structures. This review is based on correspondence with the participating anthropologists, review of the competition website, and research documents posted by the collaborative on their website (<http://periferiessurbanes.org>).

Located in the northern edge of the city, the low-income, low-density barrio was built in 1929 to house workers who migrated from rural Andalusia and Murcia. The 784 single-story worker cottages, or *casa barates* (“cheap” or economical houses), are owned by Barcelona’s City Council and leased to residents who informally pass them on to family members. Lacking sufficient upkeep by the city, residents have invested their own meager resources to maintain their houses. In 2007, 145 of the houses were demolished as part of the first phase of an urban renewal project, known as the *Plan de Remodelacion*, which proposes to build 1,000 new apartments in multistoried buildings on land currently occupied by the barrio. The violent eviction of some residents opposed to the project attracted public attention and outcry.

For critics, the urban renewal project was a speculative neoliberal vision of public space planning that grew out of Barcelona’s experiences with remaking the city for the 1992 Olympics. According to Barcelona anthropologist Manuel Delgado, the city characterized the houses in Bon Pastor as obsolete (“obsoleto”) and uninhabitable (“Vidas Baratas,” *El Pais*, Feb. 13, 2007). Moreover, although the planning process included a so-called “participatory” component, many of the residents claimed their representatives in the *Asociacion de Vecinos* (Residents’ Association), whose consent gave legitimacy to the project, were co-opted by the City Council and therefore did not actually speak for them. In 2007, after the first phase of demolitions, architects at a local technical college organized a seminar and workshop in the neighborhood. Their investigations into the physical conditions of the remaining buildings determined that Bon Pastor houses had historic significance as early 20th century “social housing” and exhibited conditions that could be repaired without resorting to demolition.

From the very beginning some residents had also opposed the city’s project, and in 2003 they formed the *Avis del Barri* (Catalan for “Grandparents of the Quarter”). Because some anthropologists were already involved in organizing residents of several Barcelona neighborhoods to oppose real estate speculation, *Avis del Barri* approached them for help in documenting their claims of resident opposition. Anthropologists conducted an initial 100 interviews with residents in 2004 to provide that support. By 2009, *Avis del Barri*, with support from Professor Delgado at the University of Barcelona, received funding from the Generalitat de Catalunya’s IPEC (Inventory of Ethnological Patrimony) program for an ethnographic study entitled “Social struggles and collective memory in Barcelona’s *casa baratas*.” The three anthropologists—oral historians who oversaw the study, Stefano Portelli, Nuria Sanchez Armengol, and Ulrike Viccaro, proclaimed they were not “academics” but participants in a “social movement.” They formed the “Peripheries Urbanes” collective within the Catalan Institute of Anthropology. These are activist anthropologists who collaborated with barrio residents in participant-observation research and conducting over 250 interviews to develop a comprehensive understanding of the barrio with which to contest the claims of the city, press, and *Asociacion de Vecinos*.

The Bon Pastor research documented residents’ strong sense of place and attachment toward their houses and neighborhoods and described the sense of familial relations and long-term social ties that held the community together (see <http://periferiesurbanes.org> for details). The researchers also revealed how residents had internalized the City Council’s discourse of power that stigmatized them by association with their “cheap” dwellings. They argue that stigma inhibited residents from fully expressing their rejection of the “modernization” project, which, rather than enabling their escape from poverty, would evict them from their homes.

Government stigmatization of working-class families as living in “blighted” housing has justified urban renewal projects.

In searching for a way to intervene in Barcelona’s urban renewal project, anthropologists collaborated with architects who had also been working in Bon Pastor. They decided to convene a “competition,” typically used in the design professions for exploring architectural solutions, to create a space for dialogue between residents and experts in imagining what Bon Pastor could become. They judged entries according to four criteria: respect for social, historical, and architectural patrimony of the *Casas Barates*; a resident participation component; interdisciplinarity; and feasibility and sustainability. Of the 45 proposals presented, the jury, which included anthropologists (among them, Harvard’s Michael Herzfeld), architects, and an activist, selected 20 projects and gave out four awards. A wide variety of issues were considered among all the projects, some of which included the social effects of real estate speculation, the unique lifestyle of single-story residential neighborhoods, and the power of developing a new collective memory to counter stigma—as well as recommendations for physical designs.

Although the proposals have not yet had an effect on Barcelona’s City Council’s thinking about saving the *casas barates*, they are being used by anthropologists to further engage residents in rethinking the material conditions of home and to reconstruct identities and revitalize barrio social life. The proposals are also evidence of a collective discourse among residents, anthropologists, and environmental designers aimed at critiquing Barcelona’s neoliberal planning paradigm, although it is already weakened by the worsening economic crisis in Spain. With the fate of the proposed urban renewal project still unclear, public anthropologists’ collaboration with socially conscious architects has produced research with a highly visual dimension that engages communities where they live in a language intelligible to political elites. These multiple outcomes may be well worth overcoming the challenges of working in a cross-disciplinary encounter.