

# Introduction

*“No one can survive merely by conservation. If there is no new construction, the city cannot stand; not even the old will endure. Each city must find its own formula for combing existing symbols with new ones. Without the latter antiquity becomes mere repetition.”*

*Pasqual Maragall, Mayor of Barcelona 1982-97*

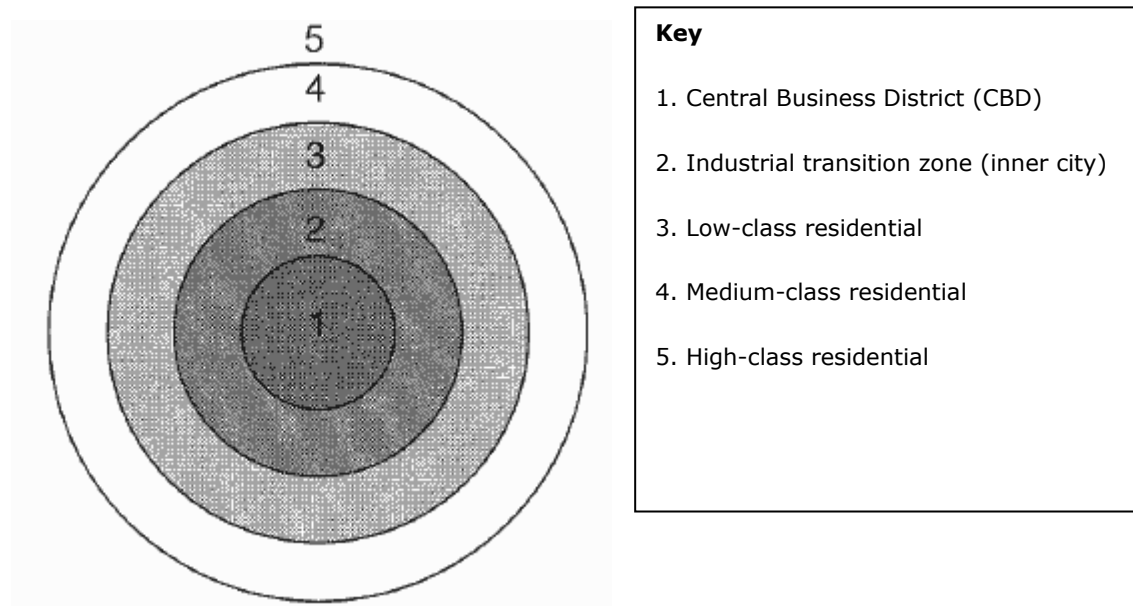
El Raval, located in the medieval quarters of Barcelona (see page 90), has recently undergone serious changes due to government urban renewal schemes to try and improve the area, which in the past had a particularly bad reputation of being the slum of Barcelona. In my study I wish to identify the changes that reflect the social, environmental and economic factors of land use, by collecting various data. I will classify or categorize the land use of certain zones in El Raval and do a comparative study between the different zones. I plan to make some observations on the environmental, residential and social qualities of the area. I will also see how prices change in the various areas. I am predicting that the closer I get to the cultural centre and areas that have undergone recent improvements the services and amenities will become more gentrified, land value will increase and the environment, residential and social quality of the area will improve.

El Raval is an area that has recently undergone a lot of planned change and the actions were deliberately made by the Government to try and improve the area. This makes it an interesting place to study, as we can see how and if the regeneration schemes of the government have been successful. This means that we are able to predict and plan what will happen in the future and it will help us not to make the same mistakes again, avoiding the cycle of poverty.

In Catalan, ‘El Raval’, means suburb. In 1395 new walls were built around the busy city of Barcelona to enclose the suburbs of El Raval, to the west of the city. This was the third expansion of the city walls (see page 90, for deeper history of the birth of Barcelona). The area consisted mainly of farmland, monasteries or convents, or trades too polluting to be allowed into the inside of the old city (Barri Gotic) where the wealthier inhabitants lived. The dry riverbed of ‘La Rambla became the main artery of the city dividing the old city (Ciutat Vella) from El Raval. In 1800 much of El Raval had not been built up, but consisted of small market gardens that supplied the city. During the Industrial revolution, around 1850, much of the farmland in El Raval was built on for coal-powered factories and textile mills, or tenement blocks (for worker immigrating from the countryside) and living conditions were extremely bad. These buildings competed for space with the older industries, such as slaughtering and tanning leather. The building during this time was rapid and buildings were built several storeys high to maximise space. The construction was restricted due to the defensive walls. The tenement blocks were high-rise slums. Toilets and taps were shared in the courtyard of each block, and epidemics when death rates were high-many dying in their late teens. The southern half of El Raval, became also known as

‘Barrio Chino’ or Chinatown, this district has no Chinese connections but was given this label in the 1920’s by a local journalist, Francesc Madrid, after he saw a film about vice in San Francisco’s Chinatown, and was swiftly adopted. The ‘Barrio Chino’ was the area nearest to the port, gained a reputation as a centre of low-life and the sex industry, with high-class brothels for the rich and far worse conditions for the poor in the hundreds of bars and hostels, it was where the underclass lived. El Raval has always been the underworld of Barcelona.

*A diagram of the Burgess model*



If we look at the Burgess model we can see that growth from a city tends to fan out from the city centre in concentric rings over time. Surrounding the central business district (CBD) is an area called the industrial transition zone or twilight zone. This is where the oldest and highest density housing is either deteriorating into slum property or being ‘invaded’ by light industry. The inhabitants tend to be of poor social groups and first-generation immigrants. Recently, in richer countries, governments have been purposefully interfering with these areas to try and improve the quality of the district and the quality of life of the inhabitants and to encourage tourism in the area. Tourists, and even Spaniards, would generally be intimidated and unwilling to go to this inner city area. This affects the land use within the inner cities, either directly or indirectly. Government investment in construction usually initiates the change. They may decide to change the streets, gentrifying and sometimes pedestrianising them. This encourages people to buy properties in the area as well as personal constructional developments. People may be educated by government investment. The influx of education as well as people coming into the area, initiates people to start up better businesses in the legal sector of work. The buildings in the area will be used more for offices and shops. The shops will also be gentrified, as a result of the increase of money in the area. Government intervention, due to interests into improving districts, is causing land use to change within inner cities in general.

The Generalitat de Catalunya, the local government have initiated recent regeneration schemes that have dramatically altered the social, environmental and economic

characteristics of some parts of El Raval. The Olympic games of 1992 seriously impacted and encouraged these government urban renewal schemes, due to television rights money and the desire to create a better and safer image of Barcelona especially the rough districts of El Raval, which had a particularly bad image. However the government schemes begun a lot earlier than the Olympic games of 1992. At the end of the 1970's with the arrival of heroin the petty criminality suddenly became much more threatening, upsetting the area's old and affecting the tourist trade in particular. The government said that they were 'changing the people to change the area'. Their swift actions meant that since 1988 most of the areas cheapest hostels have been closed, and whole blocks associated with drug dealers or prostitution have been demolished to make way for new squares. Whole blocks were removed to make space for a contemporary art museum, student accommodation and a new police station and areas of open space. New hotels, universities and pneumatic waste disposal units are being installed. The regeneration schemes were first initiated in the northern periphery of El Raval rather than the centre, as this area is closer to the wealthy city centre. The centre of El Raval was seen as 'too far gone' to do anything directly. The 'espongament' (mopping up) of El Raval has led to changing land use in El Raval.

Since the government urban renewal schemes were directed at 'changing the people to change the area', I think that it is important to see how the land use has changed, and from this information I can draw conclusions of how the area has changed. My studies could help people to predict changes in the working population, the demand for housing, and the provision of services for the young and the elderly. It also allows us to make comparisons between areas in the same settlement, different settlements within the country and in other countries. This would be useful to know for the government to make future plans. It is also valuable information if you want to know where the best place to set up your business, or if you are interested in the property business. By studying the changing land use, we can also see how successful the renewal schemes of the Generalitat have been. We can learn from their mistakes and try and not repeat the same mistakes again by making improvements to things that went wrong. Overall the information I obtain will help us not to make the same mistakes again and to plan for the future, avoiding the cycle of poverty and encouraging the cycle of affluence.

# Location of El Raval

El Raval is situated in the region of Catalonia in Spain, which is part of Europe. It is located in the medieval city quarter of Barcelona, the capital of Catalonia in the inner city. It borders the Mediterranean Sea.

*A simplified globe with Barcelona highlighted:*



*A simplified map of Europe with Spain circled:*



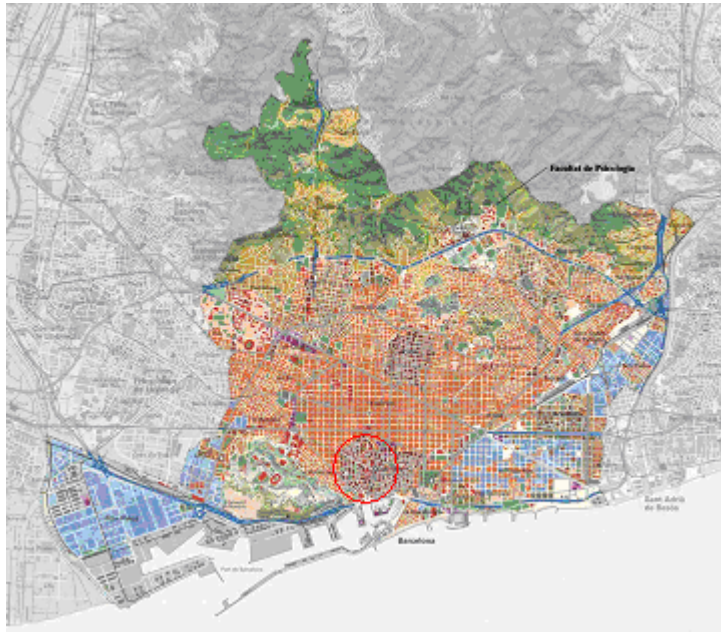
*An enlarged map of Spain with Catalonia circled:*



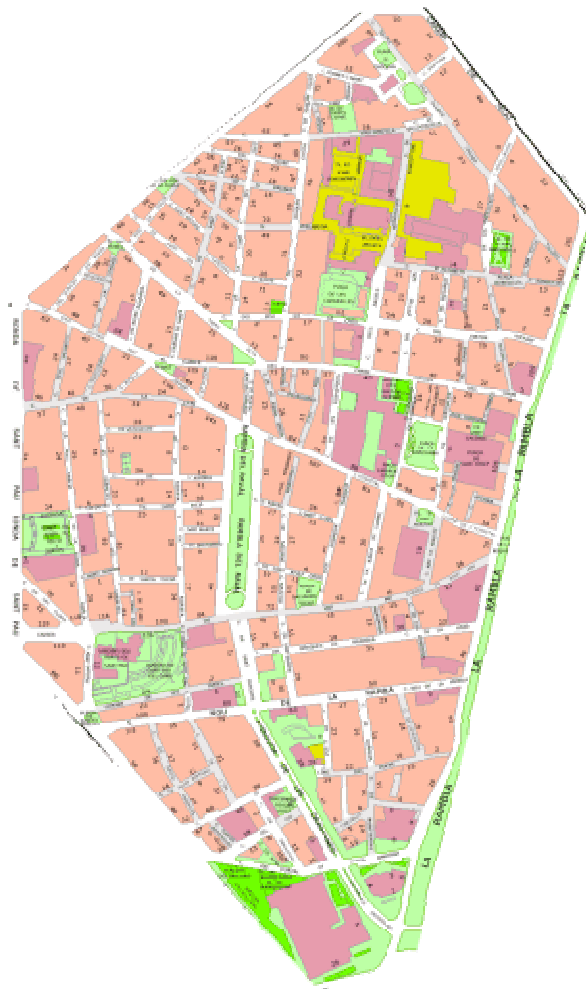
*An enlarged map of Catalonia with Barcelona circled:*



*An enlarged map of Barcelona with El Raval circled:*



*An enlarged map of El Raval:*



# Aims of the Study

The main aim of this study is to identify the changes in the land use in the distinctive areas of El Raval and to analyse the differences. Primary and secondary information will be used, and the primary information will be collected by sampling. To identify the economic, social and environmental changes and differences in certain areas I plan to undertake samples rather than use a census, partly because I only have a limited amount of time and samples would be easier and faster to obtain but also as I feel a census is a very subjective way of studying a topic. Although social geography is partially subjective, I feel more objective studies are more accurate and I find it easier to draw conclusions from them. A census would require a large number of different people to do the same census to obtain an accurate result. I will take random samples to avoid bias.

First I will do a pilot study of the area I wish to study and investigate, and identify four representative areas of roughly the same size. Having identified the representative areas I will collect environmental and residential quality information and complete a perception survey. I will also complete some land use maps. After I have compared the data with historical records and researched the topic in order to identify land use changes, I will be able to conclude with overview whether or not the inner city decline in El Raval is being managed successfully and evaluate my study. I will be able to suggest reasons for the land use change within the context of urban geography theory and the recent Barcelona urban reforms and to relate the differences between areas to contrasts in quality of life.

*A flow chart to illustrate the sequence I plan to follow*

