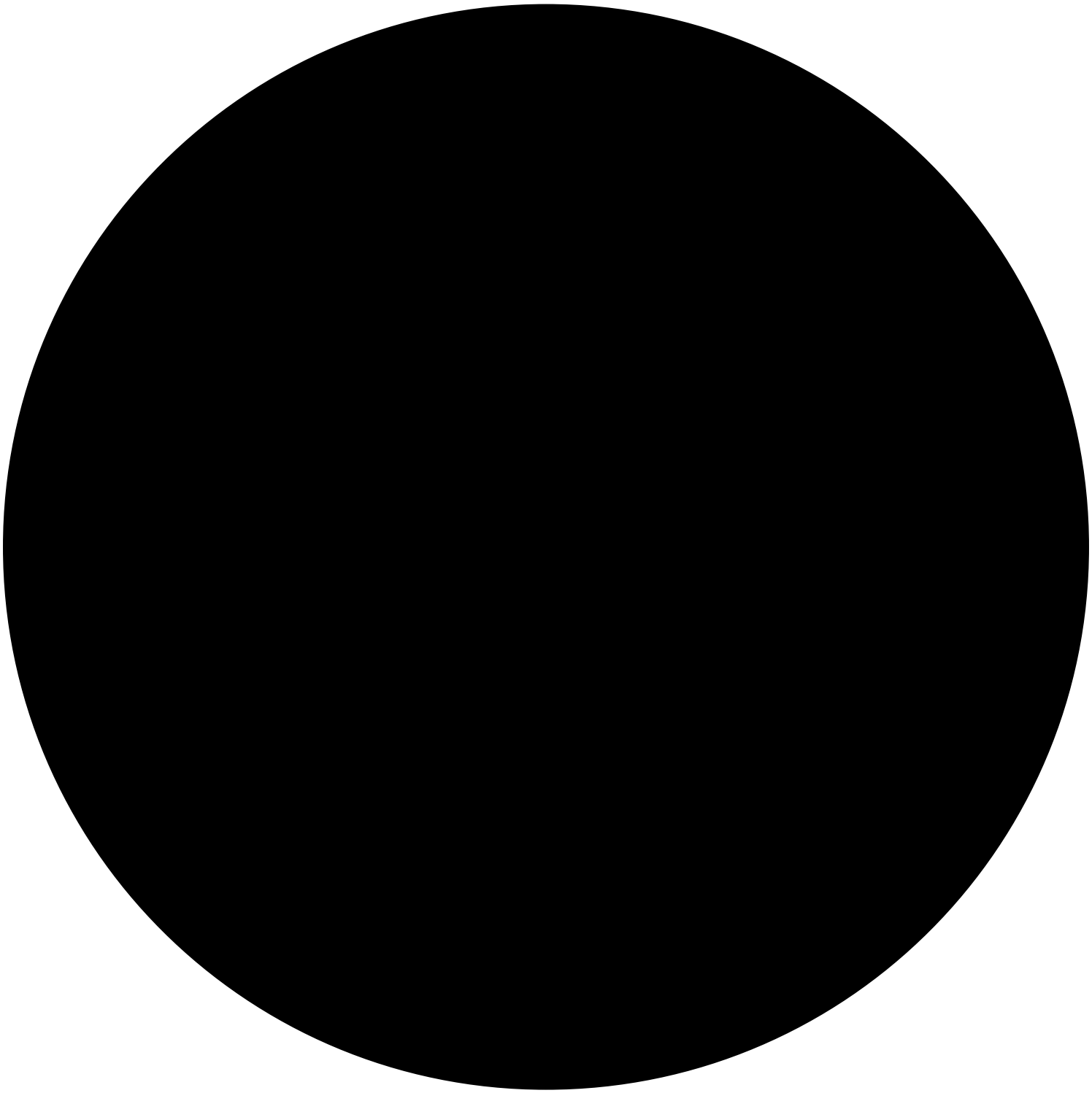
X-RAY OF THE PLAZA EASO IN DONOSTIA

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Almost all the people of San Sebastian have felt Plaza Easo as if it were their living room. A large shared living room in a huge house that would be the neighborhood of Amara Zaharra (Old Amara). A place of recreation, recreation and fun. Since we were children we ran around carefree in one of the few squares away from the motorized vehicles that dominated all corners of the city. Except in Easo square. This square has always been dominated by people. And so it is transmitted from one generation to another. Like other Easo, it has its strengths and weaknesses, its limitations and potential, which also make it a space for debate and urban transformation in a constant process of struggle for the right to the city that is surely exercised unconsciously and incessant.

Easo square is the center of the city (it is not for nothing that it receives its name from the adjective Easonense). It is the identity of Donostia. The one that doesn't change, even if it does. The one that maintains the essence of a public space conquered from the first moment. It is the shelter of the neighbors when they return from work, of the monthly concerts of any party for any reason, of popular foods and traditional markets, of second-hand markets, a platform and loudspeaker for claims of all kinds. It is the social representation of the Donostiarras.

None of the other squares in the neighborhood contain what Easo Square does: complexity. As I

was saying, the Easo square immediately appropriated the approval of the citizens. It is perceived that this public space has lived a lot. It is the civic values and certain material conditions, not the social and cultural functions themselves, that have forged the almost tangible personality of this place. One of the civic values that exudes is tolerance, respect for the diversity of groups among whom the space and activities are shared. The concept of Auzolana or community work/for the community takes place in the square as a social response to shared problems. A mature neighborhood.

The square is also characterized by the small shops that continue to establish themselves over time and generate this feeling of "no change" that Easo transmits. The neighbors buy in the grocery stores, mini-markets (for the super-market), bars, bakeries and pastry shops of a lifetime, traditionalized by the passage of time. Purchases are made naturally, valuing close treatment and the importance of seeing the neighborhood endure and prosper as an exercise shared by all, who care for and support each other. And that the temptations of large supermarkets, centers and shopping districts near the square have sprouted like an epidemic throughout the city. Epidemic from which Easo still defends itself, as the last local bastion defended daily by its inhabitants.

Social relationships are created, hardened and consolidated with prolonged social interaction over time. This fact constitutes "a daily event made of encounters and setbacks, of affections, of multiplicity and, above all, of possibilities" (Estevez Villarino, 2012). Large public spaces, such as boulevards, avenues, shopping centers or large squares are not conducive to weaving social relationships that are preserved over time. In these spaces, casual encounters are generated that fade after a few days. Easo Square is a neighborhood square, a city square due to its diversity and openness, it is where neighbors meet, families share schools, bars and worries, generations come and go, before the gaze of the physical space that is maintained.

“People, at all times and everywhere, adjust their behaviors in public in a reciprocal way to others. These daily pacts are implicit, and moreover they are not fixed, but dynamic, they are always being renegotiated between people and social groups with different and changing interests, values and identities. No normative or administrative regulation can replace these negotiations; otherwise, the public space would lose all vitality» (Aramburu, 2008, p. 146).

The amount of population that has passed through and enjoyed it at some point in its history is incalculable, beyond the daily residents. It has always acted as a point of gravity to choose to travel through it rather than through parallel streets. In addition, it is located in a key place in terms of citizen traffic: on the one hand, the residents of the Amara Berri neighborhood, the most populous in the city, must go through one of the few streets in this first section of the Center to go to the beach or to the Old Town as both the river and the mountain narrow the city at this point, which becomes a natural funnel. Most of us go for Easo. Of course because it is friendlier, more open, with more light and liveliness, and also because you get to Playa de la Concha and the Alderdi Eder promenade faster. It also receives many visits from the residents of Aiete (in the upper part of the city), who can quickly go to the center of the city by going directly down to Easo square. The children from the Marianistas, San Bartolomé, and Amara Viejo schools also saw the plaza daily, some to cut short on their way to school opting to cross the plaza, and others as an extracurricular school playground. The Iglesia de las Carmelitas is another of the meeting points that the square offers and that regularly attracts the parishioners of the city.

All these qualities were born from a strategic planning that succeeded in the configuration and location of the square. But it has been the citizens who have endowed it with content and promoted its growth and maturity. One of the elements of the square is the emblematic Kiosk that functions as a stage, a dance floor, a soccer field for the little ones and a shelter on rainy days, among many other spontaneous functions.

Easo is also known to other municipalities and tourists as it is the first image for visitors who arrive in Donostia with the Euskadi commuter train (Euskotren). This train connects with the surrounding

towns and with the Francia station in Hendaye. Upon arrival, the people leaving the station are a few meters above ground level, which allows them to observe the whole of the square, with its trees and flower boxes that display the image of the square, offering a friendly smile with a friendly welcome. To promote intermodality, municipal electric bikes can be found at the station entrance that invite citizens to pedal along the bidegorri (bike path) that runs through Easo to any point in the city.

The residents of Easo and the old Amara neighborhood now share the uncertainty of the new urban projects that could alter the dynamics of the neighborhood, since the square is going to undergo structural changes. The burying of Euskotren and its conversion into the Donostia metro will have its greatest impact in this precise enclave. The banners hung from almost every balcony facing the square convey that shared feeling that Easo faces an uncertain future. The urban planning offices of the city of Donostia have recently moved to the square, partly because other large-scale urban interventions are being carried out along with the metro works. Buildings, gables and entire streets in the immediate vicinity have already been replaced, but the most severe transformation is yet to come. There is a latent fear to see the development of a square worked from the society, based on the uses and customs. This feeling is shared in other urban spheres of the city that do not want to lose what Easo square means, due to its example of conviviality*.

**In this case, not referring to the interpersonal, but to the fact of feeling part of something common when we are in the urban public space in which multiplicity is experienced. From the tranquility that a park can make us feel, to the pleasure of watching passers-by from a bench in a square, to accessing knowledge from a library or bumping into someone we didn't expect to find."*

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There are no comments yet.