



## **FUNDACIÓ RAMON TRIAS FARGAS**

Created to honour the memory of former CDC President Ramon Trias Fargas, the Foundation fosters activities associated with the study and development of political, social and cultural thought in Catalonia. Its goals include encouraging debate on nationalism and its significance on the local, national and international levels; and analysing and disseminating its own forms of democracy with the aim of helping to bring democracy up to date and enhance citizen participation.

The Foundation is a a laboratory of ideas for promoting research, debate and knowledge in political, economic and cultural spheres, in order to contribute to the advancement of the Catalan society towards greater political freedom, economic progress and social justice.

### **Objectives**

- Carry out political analysis, provide strategic orientation and make the values of political Catalanism widely known, applying an international dimension and perspectives of comparative politics.
- Promote debate forums to enrich knowledge and enhance dialogue with the people responsible in political, social, economic and cultural fields.
- Become a reference point for interaction between the world of ideas and that of politics, defining priority guidelines for research in the areas of public policy and social science.
- Extend the scope and impact of studies carried out in Catalonia, at both the national and international levels.
- Disseminate the political and economic thought of people who, like Ramon Trias Fargas, base their reasoning on ideals of freedom, democracy, national identity and social progress.

### **Activities**

- Lines of research, work proposals, strategic orientation and intellectual support in keeping with specific political requirements.
- Monitoring of international trends in terms of new public policies and emerging ideas.
- Knowledge and training on current trends and fundamental political issues.
- Studies, seminars, symposia, conferences, exhibitions, etc., with the collaboration of the social, political and academic sectors and the media in Catalonia.
- Promote discussions of ideas, with a view to preparing the political climate and introducing new political proposals.
- Collaborate with other organizations to set up a network of the Foundation's area representatives throughout Catalonia and internationally.

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**DEMOS**

# **BCN\_LDN 2020**

Edited by  
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With a foreword by Antoni Vives



“BCN\_LDN Work Party” was an international working group meeting in London in April 2006. Fundació Ramon Trias Fargas and Demos brought together a group of people with a passion for London and Barcelona from the arts, politics, architecture and academia to debate the future of both cities. Many of the ideas and themes explored in those conversations and in this book will resonate and be of direct importance to cities well beyond London and Barcelona.



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# FOREWORD

Barcelona and London are two of the most attractive cities in the world. In few human concentrations is there such a density of life lived and to be lived. If cities are density - and that's what we consider them to be - London and Barcelona present two of the highest density levels on earth. But mind you, I'm not talking about human density, although that is also a factor, particularly in the case of Barcelona. I'm talking about civic density - cultural, vital, historical density; about the density of many presents and many futures. It was from this perspective that Demos and the Fundació Ramon Trias Fargas decided that London and Barcelona had plenty to talk about.

Some may think we should have sought more similar morphologies, cultural environments that were more in line with each other; dimensions that were more alike. However, right from the start we, as inhabitants of London and Barcelona, believed that the fact that we feel so at home in each other's cities is greatly due to the spiritual stimulus to be found in both. London, the fractal city *par excellence*, is like a patchwork made up of so many parts, with each part containing concentrated quantities of power in terms of coexistence and identity that are unique in Europe. In each terraced house, each square metre of park and each yard of the river bank, there is a London for every one of us. But Barcelona is also a patchwork of parts. The *Eixample* network, for example - the product of an encounter between 19th-century revolutionary utopia and the vigour of the middle classes after that other revolution, the industrial revolution - has also bestowed Barcelona with a culture of incomparable fractality.

During the 20th century both cities, capitals of their respective nations and something more than purely political benchmark cities, went through moments of splendour, of war, joy and suffering. Now, at the beginning of the 21st century, they both have to confront the challenge of finding a new way of perceiving coexistence, re-imagining cities' roles as the very powerhouses of coexistence. Both think-tanks, Catalan and British, wanted to debate this after due reflection. London is still undergoing the tensions of its political and administrative redefinition, as well as the anticipation of the Olympic challenge. Barcelona, on the other hand, needs a certain 'stop-and-go' moment to fully digest what post-Olympism has meant for it and appreciate the degree to which the city's current model of policy-making is drifting without a set course. So, after a number of conversations, we conceived of the BCN\_LDN Work Party as a useful exercise for both our communities.

10 London and Barcelona can be seen to be complementary when taking an overview of cities in Europe. London, the great northern metropolis, is the capital of an empire that has disappeared but a city with an unquestionable capacity to reinvent itself as no other European capital can do. Barcelona, the most important city on the north-western shores of the Mediterranean, is a gateway to and from the south, a city with links to Carolingian Europe, capable of withstanding the forces that have for centuries tried to minimize its role. Barcelona and London, on the one hand, can be explained by the hinterland they serve, but, as few cities can do, they also explain that very hinterland. They are two poles united by a dynamism passing through them forming a European axis that is more than a simple geopolitical reference: London and Barcelona have been striving to regain and maintain their strength in the present, to avoid becoming victims of backward-looking, exhausted notions of themselves. This was why it was so important for us to meet and share experiences. We needed to take a turn through the fields of creativity, urban planning and social and cultural tensions; study the usage, by city government, of space and symbols; discuss great events, culture, identity and the legacies of different eras. And all of this, crucially, with the immediate goal of building better, more dignified, fairer and more democratic, human communities.

When all is said and done, in both cities we can find what we are all looking for in our lives: that secret love that only a street, a square or a porch can help us relive.

All that remains is for me to express my gratitude for the gentle intelligence of Melissa Mean and her team; for their ability to interpret us and for allowing themselves to be led astray by this outlandish group of Catalans who have been visiting them in London. And, as always, my thanks go to my collaborator, Joan-Anton Sánchez de Juan, the person who is really responsible for the success of this operation. Without him and the rest of the Fundació Ramon Trias Fargas team, London and Barcelona would only have met every now and then for a football match.

**Antoni Vives**  
*Director Fundació Ramon Trias Fargas*

# INTRODUCTION: B<sup>L</sup>C<sup>D</sup>N<sup>N</sup> 2020

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**Joost Beunderman and Melissa Mean**

We are told that the world our cities inhabit is a brutal Hobbesian one, where cities are locked in a zero-sum global battle for jobs, investment, tourists, and mega-events; a perpetual title-fight for a slim picking of crowns - 'best in show' at knowledge economy, conference-hosting and mini-breaks. London and Barcelona however seem to have side-stepped this cannibalistic game and instead over the years developed something of a special relationship. Having enough in common in terms of experience, values and resurgent ambition, but sufficiently different in terms of population, size and economic base, the two cities enjoy a relationship that to be framed more by mutual admiration and a desire to learn, than by competition and a desperation to copy.

This collection of essays fits within this tradition of exchange, but was prompted by a growing sense within each city that, beneath the surface glow of renaissance, their models of development are showing critical signs of stress and fatigue. What are the reasons behind this shared moment of self-doubt and what inspiration and imagination can the two cities draw from each other? Fundació Ramon Trias Fargas and Demos brought together a group of people with a passion for London and Barcelona from the arts, politics, architecture and academia - the BCN\_LDN Work Party - to find out. Many of the ideas and themes explored in those conversations and in this book will resonate and be of direct importance to cities well beyond London and Barcelona - not least because Barcelona has for so long been the pacer-

maker city for the urban renaissance. When Barcelona begins to question its future other cities would be wise to heed what might turn out to be the urban equivalent of the canary in the mine-shaft.

## **Common stories**

Over the last fifteen years London and Barcelona have epitomised the story of the 'resurgent city', having successfully rediscovered the social and economic opportunities and creative freedoms offered by cities. Both port cities have struggled with the legacy of an industrial past and underwent substantial restructuring, but seem to have reinvented themselves convincingly. Barcelona, a creative hub built on the foundations of a strong cultural identity, famous for its high quality public realm and jumping from nowhere to the top five prime business locations in Europe<sup>(1)</sup>; and London, a potent growth machine based not only on hosting the most productive square mile in Europe - the City - but on its strength and depth in an incredibly diverse set of economic and cultural sectors. Partly a consequence and partly a cause of this resurgence, both cities have become hot spots in the global flow of people - students, tourists, immigrants - seeking the thrill and the freedom of the city.

Both cities, also, are Olympic cities. Barcelona surged to the world stage with the 1992 Games; whatever Sydney might claim, these remain the Olympics to which other host cities try to match up. Integrated as part of a long term redevelopment, the Games helped to re-connect the city to the sea and rallied its inhabitants around the image of Barcelona as an outward looking, open and democratic European metropolis. London, on the other hand, has won the right to host the "greatest show on earth" in 2012 on the legacy pledge of urban transformation of one of the most disadvantaged areas of London, and on the promise to deliver UK-wide economic, social and sporting benefits.

The links between the two cities go further: the development models that have underpinned their recent regeneration efforts hold in common a number of fundamental ingredients. Indeed, Barcelona was in many ways a central reference point for the UK's urban renaissance agenda, articulated in the 1999 Urban Task Force Report and imbued in the thinking of the London government, the Greater London Authority (GLA), reinstated the following year. In return, prominent British architects served as advisers to the City of Barcelona. An emphasis on public space, increased density and a celebration of the design of public buildings have underwritten the governing strategy of both cities. In other words, they can be said to share the same normative vision of the 'good city'.

One further shared characteristic is the fact that they are in some significant ways the same *type* of city: both behaving like independent city-states, they claim cultural leadership and policy autonomy vis-à-vis their respective national governments. Barcelona, as the centre of the Catalan region, is the flagship of a community that proudly celebrates its autonomy

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(1) See [www.cushmanwakefield.com](http://www.cushmanwakefield.com), 'Barcelona Breaks Into The Top Five Cities In Europe To Locate A Business' 6 Oct, 2005. Accessed March 2007.

from Spain and has, for example, its own civil law and police force. While formally far less independent from the rest of the UK, London is radically different from what Danny Dorling has called its "provincial hinterland" in terms of demographic and economic profile and social values. Ken Livingstone as Mayor has been assertively pushing London's foreign policy, with 'embassies' in Shanghai and Beijing and plans to open two more in Delhi and Mumbai. The deal struck with Venezuela, to supply cheap oil to fund a 50% reduction in bus and tram fares for Londoners on income support, is Livingstone's most high profile foreign policy coup.

However, for all BCN and LDN's successes and assertiveness over the last fifteen years, recently both cities have also received a number of shocks to the system.

### **BCN - in search of new energy**

In the early 1990s the Catalan capital re-wrote the rule book for what it meant to stage a major event, how to use culture as a vehicle for social and economic transformation, and how a vibrant public life can contribute to the health and brand of a city. However, twenty years later, critics are starting to argue that the wheels have come off the wagon. They point to the detrimental impacts of budget mini-break tourism, the disorder and drink related violence in newly-created public places, and the alienation of the artistic and cultural communities on which the city originally built its reputation. There are also growing doubts about how open the city's culture is to immigrants.

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For many, the city's World Cultural Forum in 2004 was final proof that the city had run out of ideas. Poorly communicated to a global audience and badly managed for residents, the Forum failed to reinvigorate the post-Olympic image of the city or to generate a compelling or distinctive purpose for Barcelona. Some accuse the city government of an unhealthy "obsession with modernity and grand interventions," and point to the government's increasing remoteness from its citizens<sup>(2)</sup>.

A second shock to the system has come in the form of an outbreak of what the city calls "anti-civilised" behaviour in its streets and public spaces - a cocktail of noise, fighting, drunkenness and litter that will be familiar to any British city. Barcelona has responded with a 'civility ordinance' banning categories of public behaviour deemed to be encroaching on and endangering its proud tradition of shared civic space. That Barcelona now has to use penalty fines to underwrite the conviviality of its public life has prompted much soul-searching in the city.

### **LDN - pressure and scepticism**

In London, meanwhile, the sky seems the limit: the recent and projected boom in high-rise building is just one of many signs of growth. The city has re-found its identity and sense of purpose after decline, population loss, and political neutralisation wrought under Thatcher.

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(2) Horacio Capel, *El modelo Barcelona: un examen crítico*. Ediciones del Serbal, 2005.

The city's highly visible Mayor runs an ambitious public transport and public space investment programme to serve a rapidly growing population - London's population is predicted to swell by 700,000 by 2016. Recently emboldened with a set of trophy buildings, the city is looking forward to the Olympics as yet another grand moment reinforcing its status as a global city. In March 2007, the fashionable New York Magazine wrote that "...if Paris was the capital of the nineteenth century and New York of the twentieth, London is shaping up to be the capital of the 21st." Underlining the city's perceived autonomy vis-à-vis the rest of the UK, it added "It is not Britain and the United States that have a special relationship, it is London and New York," before cataloguing the city's physical, demographic and cultural zing<sup>(3)</sup>.

However, all is not well in the city of growth. Escalating City bonuses contrast darkly with a child poverty rate of 40% and point to London's wider struggle to push simultaneously for economic competitiveness and social inclusion<sup>(4)</sup>. Other pressure points range from the critical lack of affordable homes and high levels of mental illness and stress.

The 7/7 bombings, the shooting of Jean Charles de Menezes and police raids and arrests in the London suburb of Forest Gate have dealt a blow to the city's sense of freedom, safety and multiculturalism. Indeed Mayor Livingstone has been caught in a very public battle with the head of the Government's Commission for Racial Equality, Trevor Philips; the later declaring multiculturalism dead and the former claiming it's live and well in London.

Meanwhile, the initial Olympic enthusiasm is leaking away under the pressure of prospective cost overruns and growing doubts about the sincerity of the bid's promises of carbon-neutral development, innovative architecture and a genuinely participative process and programme. Even New York Magazine wonders what the city personified by "party-dressed Lily Allen" will gain from the Games.

## Alternative futures

"Can we make the cities we want?" asked the cultural geographer Susan Fainstein<sup>(5)</sup>. The day-to-day pragmatics of policy and politics, and perhaps more fundamentally our collective hangover after Modernism, have led to a distrust of totalising singular visions of urban progress. In the remaining slender space for mapping out what the good city might be, London and Barcelona -two of the strongest cities around- have played a lead role in articulating an urban narrative based on urban density and human intensity with an emphasis on the public realm and strong design. This story has now become mainstream and few serious alternatives are voiced. But is this story enough to live up to the demands of economic innovation, social justice, environmental value and citizen participation?

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(3) New York Magazine 'London (The Other New York)'. 26 March 2007.

(4) Cf. Ian Gordon, 'London: competitiveness, cohesion and the policy environment' (with Buck, Hall, Harloe et al) in M. Boddy and M. Parkinson (eds.) City Matters. Policy Press, 2004.

(5) Susan Fainstein, 'Can We Make the Cities We Want?' in Sophie Body-Gendrot and Robert Beauregard (eds) The Urban Moment. Sage, 1999, p.249-72.

Despite considerable achievements, both London and Barcelona are experiencing the limits of what their current policy models can achieve. As Richard Sennett has claimed, "something has gone wrong, radically wrong, in our conception of what a city itself should be. We need to imagine just what a clean, safe, efficient, dynamic, stimulating, just city would look like concretely - we need those images to confront critically our masters with what they should be doing - and just this critical imagination of the city is weak"<sup>(6)</sup>.

Not content to settle for what the economist Paul Krugman once called 'an age of diminished expectations,' Demos and the Ramon Trias Fargas Foundation created the BCN\_LDN Work Party to help reinvigorate our collective curiosity about our possible urban futures<sup>(7)</sup>.

## **Idea exchange**

As part of the BCN\_LDN Work Party we asked all participants about what each city would or should like to learn or borrow from the other. Such questions can be deceptively simple if taken as one-to-one 'best practice', but are revealing if used to uncover self-perceptions about weaknesses and strengths and bring to the fore our aspirations and desires stirred up by our urban peers.

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## **BCN to LDN**

The main areas in which London should be learning from Barcelona, according to the participants, centred on public culture, power, the Olympics, and an appreciation of the deeper structures shaping urban life. Specific learning points included:

- An open, populist culture that is on the streets and public spaces, not in stuffy galleries and institutions;
- Public spaces that are well thought out and really look at how the public might use them in many different ways;
- Family life and finding space and respect for all generations;
- Better recognition of the character of neighbourhoods and the land that lies beneath- the topography, geology and waterways that should shape planning regeneration and new public spaces; Formal city-centred political and financial power and independence;
- Understanding the role and possibilities of the office of the Mayor as an institution, not just based on the personality of the incumbent.
- How to plan for after the Olympics, not just for a good event;

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(6) Richard Sennett, 'The Open City' The Urban Age discussion paper, [www.urban-age.net/0\\_downloads/Berlin\\_Richard\\_Sennett\\_2006-The\\_Open\\_City.pdf](http://www.urban-age.net/0_downloads/Berlin_Richard_Sennett_2006-The_Open_City.pdf). Accessed March 2007.

(7) Both Demos and the Fundació Ramon Trias Fargas have recently undertaken extensive citizen engagement projects with the aim to create new settings for public debate and futures thinking about cities: see [www.glasgow2020.co.uk](http://www.glasgow2020.co.uk) and [www.imaginabcn.org](http://www.imaginabcn.org).



## LDN to BCN

The main areas in which Barcelona should be learning from London, on the other hand, relate to diversity - people and activities - and managing change. Specific learning point included:

- Openness to newcomers and lifestyles and acceptance of difference;
- Backing and engaging minority organisations- education and access as crucial to helping prevent second and third generation immigrants feeling isolated;
- How to adapt during a process of immense change but retain some form of integrity.

London's greatest asset was seen to be its independence from defending a defined set of cultural values and consequent openness, including openness to the projection of the individual or collective *oeuvre* of its inhabitants upon the city. The enrichment that newcomers bring - through retail, culture, food, religions - is admired, though there seems to be an unmet potential in terms this richness tangibly infusing the public realm. In sum, whereas Barcelona's typical public spaces are seen to be saturated with strong inherited cultural values, London's public realm is seen as ultimately indeterminate - an expression of freedom perhaps, but all too often defaulting into domination of large-scale commerce and chains over culture.

## Asset swapping

For good reasons learning between cities tends to focus on the strategic and generic-what can be transplanted from one place to another needs to be controlled for the specifics of time, place, culture and opportunity. But meaningful change is less likely to result from formulas. To help break away from generic learning and to encourage a spirit of experimentation, the BCN\_LDN Work Party participants were asked: if they could steal a place, event, building or object from one city and place it in the other, what would they steal? Again, the answers are revealing as to what they tell us about the qualities perceived to be lacking in the two cities, and what kinds of wider changes would be required in order for the desired transplants to thrive in their new surrounds.

*The entire gothic quarter of Barcelona would be nice in London. There are too few places in central London (except maybe Covent Garden) that are walker friendly and not accessible to cars. You can walk and shop and eat outside in squares and on the sidewalk with no fear of being run over by bikes and cars and lorries. - Birte Berlemann*

*[Take] Mies van der Rohe's Barcelona Pavilion and put it in Horse Guards Parade east end of St James Park. Being a pavilion it seems it would be equally at home in a city or parkland.... It would raise an awareness of what we have lost, or is increasingly missing in plans to regenerate London - a relationship with nature and the weather and climate made explic-*

*it through a building or public space. The question we face is how to reintroduce the concept of (pastoral) time to enable an awareness of our physiology.* - Simon Henley

*I would take London's parks to Barcelona. But that would also require people getting used to live them, to enjoy them and hanging around them. Instead, Barcelona people drive away from the city towards the coast or the Pyrenees to enjoy some fresh air... This is only the people that can afford to do so, the rest stay in a city that fails to offer enough.* - Rafael Hortalà

*I'd take some of the messy stuff from London, like Borough, and add a district that is more organic to Barcelona.* - Esther Kurland

*I would take the general ambience of Barcelona, with the joy of entire families hanging out in cafés at 11 in the evening and the relaxed enjoyment of people-watching, and inject it throughout London. The public spaces form a constellation of destinations and congregation points throughout the city, which London is beginning to develop, but needs to do more so.* - Claire McDonald

*I would take from Barcelona the "Festes de la Mercè", the Autumn festival, and set up something similar in London, as a fantastic city-wide event with a long tradition of street life, concerts, cultural events, etc., with a huge popular participation. From London, I would take any of the parks and place it in the centre of Barcelona, to give it some breathing space and quiet space.* - Roger Suàrez

*I would, of course, like to take Barcelona FC - but almost as much as that, would like Barcelona's Olympic swimming-pool, placed in as good a position in London as it is in Barcelona. Apart from being a wonderful construction and a superb pool in itself, it is so well-situated on Montjuïc with its views across the city, and it provides a real oasis in the city. Swimming is a very popular and democratic recreation for Londoners, and they deserve a really excellent accessible facility. Will the aquatic centre at Stratford by Zaha Hadid - cost over-runs, etc. notwithstanding - match this? Perhaps it will.* - Fran Tonkiss

## **Introducing the essays**

The essays in this volume, in different ways, all start from the same point - to question the constraints of the present, and imagine what could happen next.

*Antoni Vives* begins to outline four traps in which Barcelona urbanism seems to have fallen: the trap of hollow iconicity - "Come to the Forum, where everything is big"; the unquestioned myth of the '@' initiative and the post-material economy; the destructive cycle of rezoning land; and the dangers of perpetually chasing after the new.

*Joan-Anton Sánchez de Juan* interrogates the city as laboratory of collective creativity. The importance of urbanism for creativity is by now a platitude: cities need concentrations of humans to generate and disseminate ideas. But such creativity should in turn be allowed to add to the public value of the city. His account shows that urbanism and the production of space is best thought of as a cultural act.

*Chris Murray* brings a UK perspective to the same issues and provides a practice-informed deconstruction of the creativity hype that has become so dominant in urban policy-making. Noting and welcoming the positive outlook on cities which has followed on years of neglect and distrust, he asks whether we are as open and outward-looking in our policy process as we are in our ambitions. He calls for a truly cosmopolitan, collaborative outlook and which looks beyond the creative class to find and nourish everyday creativity - from citizens to council officers.

*Fran Tonkiss* analyses the first years of London's new administration - the Greater London Authority. In doing so, she investigates what it means to 'see like a city' at the level of metropolitan government: what can a city-region government, with limited powers vis-à-vis both national and local government, contribute? She argues that its capacity to act lies both in the strategic and the symbolic. In particular, the role and person of the Mayor show how restricted formal powers can still generate a high degree of leverage.

*Jaume Ciurana* explores a similar set of questions from the Barcelona perspective. Its governance system, he argues, presents strains that create an 'adolescent' city that fits uncomfortably in the constraints of its current shape: the city is both too small to achieve certain strategic tasks together with the suburban municipalities, and too big to connect meaningfully to citizens in its districts. As such it is caught in a moment of confusion and unease with respect to the tasks that lie ahead, which raises new questions about regionalism and neighbourhood governance.

Focusing on the level of everyday lived spaces, *Indy Johar* asks a series of incisive questions about the way we currently imagine urban public space. He argues that the current generation of urban renaissance-led public space projects might of high quality, but too narrow and too traditional to do justice to the radical diversity and fragmentation in urban lifestyles. His is an urgent call to think more freely about how new typologies of physical spaces could be conceived to interact with the dematerialised sphere of people's globalised lives.

If *Indy Johar's* essay is a warning against limited thinking, *Lise Autogena's* piece is an invitation to acknowledge what is already happening in our cities. It focuses on three examples of bottom-up city-making: Christiania in Copenhagen, a community moorings initiative on the Thames, and the Manor Gardens Allotments in London's Lower Lea Valley. She wonders why the interaction between such initiatives and the mainstream urban process is so often negative. Governments are increasingly asking citizens to take responsibility and ownership of spaces but

failing to recognise those communities who have long taken up that challenge. How can cities be more welcoming to such initiatives instead of rationalising them out of existence?

*Charlie Tims* focuses on the Olympic Games themselves. He argues that London should learn from Barcelona's understanding of how that city's Olympics fitted into the specific Zeitgeist of 1992, and that, with a changed global context, London needs to put on a radically different Olympics. He argues that London should seek a legitimate and innovative Olympics by adapting to the age of co-production, putting citizens in control rather than treating them as a passive audience.

*Joan Monràs* inquires about the opportunities that London and Barcelona present to young people. Both cities are undoubtedly among the most attractive destinations for those seeking educational or economic opportunity, as well as for those who leave their country out of necessity. How can both cities best benefit from this constant influx of young people and their ambitions, and what qualities should they strengthen to increase their appeal? A crucial dimension is the extent to which cities encourage the newcomers to inhabit their city fully, participate positively rather than merely consume it or be consumed by it.

*Anwar Akthar's* piece looks in more depth to the fate and prospects of one group of newcomers in Barcelona- Pakistani immigrants. As a son of Pakistani immigrants born in Manchester, he reflects on his encounters with the Pakistani flower sellers in Barcelona's Ramblas. Mirroring their experience with the 1960s first generation arriving to the UK, he wonders how Barcelona will make them feel at home and allow their active contribution to the city's economic and cultural life.

Lastly, whereas the larger hinterland of cities figures in a number of the essays, *Ivan Serrano* asks more explicit questions about the relationship between a city and its wider region, and its implications for urban policy making. In the context of globalization, he sees two cultural models for the insertion of cities on the world stage: as city-states autonomous from their surroundings, or as cultural flagships for their wider region. There are prizes and traps associated with both routes.

## **Eyes wide open**

The essays in this volume reveal a range of silences and cracks in the policy narratives that dominate the two cities, and point to the danger of complacency and routinised thinking in our conversations about the future of our cities more widely. When speaking about sustainability, do we simply aim to get our own city in order or can we think more holistically about our global relationships and impact? When thinking about urban space, do we accept the neo-traditionalist proposition that only the 'tried-and-tested' forms and shapes of historical streets and squares are worth investing in? When thinking about housing, are density and quantity

the only considerations? While both cities are growing in overall population, they have both developed something of a “burn and churn” metabolism, with thousands of people each year choosing to leave and settle in low density alternatives elsewhere. Could other approaches such as self-build and new forms of communal living respond to hitherto unmet needs such as intergenerational contact, long term use-value, and facing the risks of climate change? Without openly exploring these and other questions there is a danger than London and Barcelona's resurgence will prove cyclical rather than structural and sustained.

We hope this collection contributes to the on-going process of opening up both cities to exploring new urban possibilities and narratives. In the words of Marcel Proust: the real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in seeing with new eyes.

# BARCELONA, DIFFUSE FACTORY VS. MODEL 22@

Antoni Vives

Barcelona has a great advantage over other cities of its size: the possibility to view the entire city from above from any of its natural watchtowers. Any of its hills, the Tres Turons, Tibidabo, Sant Pere Màrtir, Montjuïc and Turó d'en Cros, are all good places for getting a bird's-eye view of the whole city. Barcelona has another advantage over other cities of its size: its density. If cities are density, Barcelona is the champion of Europe. I am not talking only about quantitative density here, measuring the number of inhabitants or dwellings per hectare. I am talking about other kinds of density: density of social services, of cultural activism, neighbourhood associations, social movements, educational centres, research centres, industrial centres, leisure areas, gardens, places simply for being with others, places for being alone. Density of life. If cities are density, Barcelona can aspire to stay at the top of the ranking.

Barcelona has reached the turn of the 21st century with a consolidated base for making a dense city. The urban explosion starting in the mid-19th century signified more than just knocking down the city walls by which the city had been subjected to Spanish oppression. Barcelona's Big Bang was the idea that, like a wave on the sand, the city should occupy the *beach* of the Barcelona plain between the rivers Llobregat and Besòs, up as far as the hills of Collserola. I repeat: the Big Bang for Catalonia was an *idea*, physically structured on the plain of Barcelona. Fundamentally, it was a collision between two conceptions of the city,

one that created tension and pressure, the other allowing it to burst free, which in the end went beyond the city walls and produced the Eixample<sup>(1)</sup>.

It is natural that this happened. From pictures we can find of the city at the beginning of the 19th century, and even throughout the rest of that century, we see an immensely compressed city, incredibly huddled together, with no real separation between residential areas and areas of primary, secondary and tertiary activities. This was the consequence of a certain way of obliging us not to grow, instituted by the Spanish State through its forceful maintaining of the medieval city walls as urban perimeter. The oppressors' mistake, however, was to forget that such a city could also act like an enormous Volta cell, like a battery, a great store of energy. And Barcelona became that great battery of creativity, communication and possibilities.

This is not the time or place to measure the impact that this way of interpreting the city had on the lives of its inhabitants. All of us who have had the luck to be natives of Barcelona, having had relatives in the city for several generations, have seen to what extent our great-great-grandparents lived crushed together, one on top of another, with the difficulties of coexistence that that created. But what is surprising at first sight is that in such a small space people were so conscious of their great city. Not only due to its glorious history, such as few can claim, but also resulting from people's awareness that a unique creative tension was accumulating in Barcelona. The explosion of this possibility was our Big Bang, and creating the Eixample was its catalyst.

This phenomenon, unique in Europe and so tangible in today's city, represented the Utopia of the Catalan Republicans personified in the figure of Ildefons Cerdà, the engineer who conceived of the Eixample, with the ambitious power of those who had become aware of their role as leaders of a middle class that saw in this expansion the possibility of investment on the widest possible sense: social capital, cultural capital and financial capital joined forces in a high-tension process, requiring the infusion of all three components. Between urban planning and the market, Barcelona built a truly *avant-la-lettre* nerve system. Because that's what the Eixample is: a combination of cells, a geography of fractals that make up one, as well as five-hundred cities; a space for transit and a city centre; a space to link the old Barcelona with the many new Barcelonas. That was the unique role of Cerdà's Utopia, together with the transformative power of a middle class committed to investing in something more than just itself.

The Barcelona model therefore became tangible when it converted the great accumulation of energy from the 18th and 19th centuries into a new operative system with the dimensions of a capital which, when it grew, became a useful model for generations to come, basing its possibilities of social, economic, cultural and political success on an open model of fractality.

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(1) Eixample, Catalan for 'expansion', is Barcelona's 19th Century urban grid, designed by the engineer Ildefons Cerdà, and made up of identically dimensioned urban blocks. It contains some Barcelona's most prestigious residential addresses and famous monuments such as Antoni Gaudí's Sagrada Família cathedral but also contains industrial districts.

Barcelona thus unfolded its own model: that of the "diffuse factory", where transitions are hardly perceptible because they are produced in a very confined space. Barcelona taught us how to combine our day-to-day life, family life, with economic, industrial and cultural life. That is why it is so important to realize that, even today, the city hardly occupies 99 km<sup>2</sup>!<sup>(2)</sup> This is important so as not to fall into the traps into which I see we have been falling in recent years.

The 22@ district, that recent attempt to convert one of Barcelona's industrial districts into the information technology hub of the city, is a prime example of this. Top-down conceived, by expert management and town planners, it imposes separation of activities and a loss of human density, imposing a surprisingly provincial and reductionist urban vision on a part of the city. In particular, the city's leadership has repeatedly fallen into four traps of urbanism.

### **The trap of empty symbolism (of nothingness)**

This may be the most solid creation of the last decades' City Councils of Barcelona. These have been years in which the lack of political ideas has resulted in an imposition of meaningless megalomania, translating into the generation of a type of city that is not Barcelona. This forms a difficult-to-bear, alien urban fabric within Barcelona, expressing no preconceived ideas other than grandeur for grandeur's sake. Take a walk down the Forum 2004 esplanade, overwhelmed by the gigantic silhouette of the photovoltaic cell, and ask yourself what the reason for all that was. Two years after the closure of that disaster of post-ideological and propagandistic *docu-drama*, the 2004 Forum of Cultures, there are still some half-torn posters hanging from the lampposts in the area that invite: "Come to the Forum, where everything is big". In fact, grandeur is the only thing justifying the public involvement in this operation, a grandeur that was also echoed in the 22@ district and the zoning and destruction of its past. There might have been a good idea underpinning this once, but it was squandered in the offices and drawing tables of the urban deities who forget that the city is first and foremost made by inhabitation.

### **The trap of the @ initiative**

This brings us to the heart of the problem in Barcelona today, as in so many cities, even though our city seemed to have escaped it for so long: Excessive specialization and separation of functions. The 22@, as a micro engineered digital technology-hub, was a renouncement of Barcelona as a "diffuse factory", where new activities spring up anywhere. This renouncement is exemplified in the pressure exerted by the City Council on large companies to move to the 22@ district. Very few have responded and moved to the 22@ islands. Some did move, but for their own reasons, and to streets nearby rather than to the designa-

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(2) Greater London, by comparison, covers an area of 1572 km<sup>2</sup>.



ted hub, even though propaganda has now included them in the technology district. Meanwhile, the problem is much bigger: as the City Architect, Josep Acebillo said at a Board meeting of 22@ S.A. (the municipal company in charge of handling the operation), in a moment of honesty and not realising that there were members of the oppositional parties present as well as those lazily subscribing to the city leaders' consensus (I quote literally), "The 22@ has not been able to resolve any of the problems that this part of the city needs to confront: the connection of this urban island within the triangle Glòries, Sagrera, Fòrum has not been ensured; nor, above all, have we been able to cater for the needs of public housing in the area!" He obviously defended the model of town planning implemented, given that he feels it is the only way of generating *public space* (meaning streets, squares and gardens); but he very severely criticized his colleagues on the City Council for not having been able to open the space up to the city or develop the original idea of the 22@.

### **The comprehensive regeneration trap (REER cycle)**

24 Comprehensive regeneration corresponds to criteria similar to the great action plans impelled by the Chinese Communist Party at Guangzhou. It is also the REER cycle implemented by Barcelona's Socialist City Council: Reclassification - Expulsion - Elevated prices - Reoccupation. Such regeneration policies facilitate action by allowing to work from scratch on an empty plot of land where everything has been razed to the ground. There is no identity to deal with. It is a space to be reprogrammed. The 22@ district and the policies connected to it have followed this work scheme: everything possible was done to relieve the planners of the tremendous bother of existing life in the area. The same work scheme was applied in the districts of Santa Caterina and the Raval Rambla. Now, more than ten years after the regeneration operations began, the municipal government is looking desperately for people who want to start occupying what only marginalized people are willing to occupy. They ought to have taken notice of what New York City did in the north of Manhattan and Brooklyn: growth through growing the existing life and, rather than dreaming of Great Leaps Forward. .

### **The iconoclastic trap (throw away what's old, the BCN chromosome)**

From a cultural standpoint, it seems that Barcelona has had to pay a price for its growing in fits and starts. Barcelona has a pathological taste for iconoclasy, for destroying, for getting rid of what seems old - not all the city, true, but certainly many of those who have administered the city in the past fifty or sixty years. Regardless of the political regime, it was the petty bourgeoisie that was in charge of the city. And all of them - from Francoist municipal governments to those run by the local Socialists after the arrival of democracy - subscribed to the same social and cultural belief: what is old disturbs and what is new seduces; identity is tiresome and modernness (not modernity) excites. And this is why, in such operations as those in the 22@ and old city's districts, there has been so much destruction, such a des-

ire to eliminate identity. The iconoclastic trap affects how we project our city's future. The destruction of the Plaça Espanya is a good example. The refusal to re-install the columns of Catalan identity on Montjuïc reinforces this thesis. Perpetually seeking to create shiny new images, this iconoclastic tendency negates identity.

These four traps illustrate a narrative that Barcelona must stop following; they are examples of bad management of the city's creative possibilities. The giant reservoir of energy that is Barcelona, that in fact makes all cities, cannot be destroyed by traumatic interventions that deny the fundamental value of the communities they serve: density of life, the possibility of concentrated coexistence across the urban territory, and the free expression of imagination. The traps into which Barcelona has fallen must be repaired immediately with less demagogic, less propagandistic action that is less remote the people, and instead works together with and for the men and women of Barcelona. I am speaking here about the idea of a city with more than 2000 years' history that simply cannot be annihilated. The obsessions of a small group of people are not the ideas of the whole city. And that is why it is so necessary for us all to learn once more to listen to each other, so that Barcelona can be restored into the hands of those who inhabit Barcelona.



# BARCELONA AND THE CREATIVE IMAGINATION

**Joan-Anton Sánchez de Juan**

Historically, cities have not only been the backdrop to technological, social and cultural innovations but also their very catalysts - politically speaking as well as economic and institutional. The evolution of cities themselves is characterised by brief, yet intense, periods of public imagination and innovation, in which the historical and cultural determinants of each new age are synthesised in and through the urban condition of the moment. Throughout history cities have been identified as a cultural cradle: the urban capacity to attract and develop creative and innovative activities enables their constant combination with the evolving dynamics of civilisation. It is worthwhile, even if only as examples, to recall the Athens of Pericles, the Florence of the Medici, the London of Shakespeare, the Vienna of Freud, the Paris of Picasso, or Berlin at the birth of mass culture. Both Barcelona and London have perfectly evoked the image of creative and dynamic cities, in which the energy and talent of their inhabitants has constantly been combined with a quality urban environment and the city's capacity for the international projection of its ambitions and opportunities.

Although the economic and cultural hegemony of cities has been a constant throughout history, the specific capacity of certain cities to lead the developments of their time on a worldwide scale appears to be a product of conscious urbanisation strategies. In the modern age, this was exemplified in the role of utilitarian thought in the organisation of the

most important growth stages of London's metropolis at the beginning of the 19th century; the initiative of the state in the programming of public works for the creation of modern urban planning in Paris during the prefecture of Haussmann; the management of cultural, economic and demographic contrasts in New York at the beginning of the 20th century; the urban structuring of Los Angeles based on the construction of freeways and the development of the automobile; the social-democratic doctrine characteristic of the life and urban services of Stockholm, following the end of the Second World War; or the neo-liberal model exemplified by London's urban policy under Thatcher, with the development of the Docklands<sup>(1)</sup>.

Thus, in each historical period, cities have provided specific institutional responses to the challenges they face, transforming external dynamics into the creation of a new urban order. At the present time, numerous cities such as London or Toronto have initiated the formulation and implementation of creative strategies in order to strengthen the bonds between municipal institutions and the creative energy emanating from the city as a whole, understood as a laboratory of ideas and communal living<sup>(2)</sup>. In such collaborative strategies, the central role of the creative industry sector in the urban economy is to marry the growing internationalisation and worldwide connectivity of these sectors to the attractiveness of the place where such activities are developed. In the present essay, my purpose is to stress the need for Barcelona to develop its own strategy with the above characteristics, taking to account the growing need of the contemporary city to become a laboratory of public imagination and innovation, whilst profiting from a creative class of international scope that interacts with other cities. Also I aim to instigate a review of current urban policies, such as the case of 22@ in Barcelona, for the implementation of this strategy.

## Barcelona imagined

But first, let us travel back in time and imagine that we are in Barcelona at the beginning of the 20th century. We find a prodigious city that, following many years of social, economic and cultural recuperation, has started to make a name for itself on an international level. Barcelona needed a great deal of imagination to reinvent itself. This led to the work of its geniuses: the engineer Ildefons Cerdà, the architect Antoni Gaudí, the poet Jacint Verdaguer, the painter Santiago Rusiñol, the writer Joan Maragall... But equally it produced a society that was forcefully striving to excel in every possible field (industrial, scientific, technological, artistic...), transforming an international order that, at a time when the great empires were fading, proposed a society of nations in which Catalonia was destined to play an important role, with Barcelona as its capital.

During the years of the First World War Barcelona became a refuge for many of the most important representatives of the European artistic *avant-garde*. The hardships and restrictions imposed on a Paris at war meant that artists and bohemians from across Europe cho-

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(1) Peter Hall, *Cities in Civilization*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1998.

(2) See CreativeLondon [www.creativelondon.org.uk](http://www.creativelondon.org.uk) and Imagine a Toronto... [www.imagineatoronto.ca](http://www.imagineatoronto.ca). Accessed March 2007.

se Barcelona as their place of inspiration. By this time, the city had already made a great leap forwards in terms of urbanisation, and had become consolidated as a first-rank European economic and cultural capital. This period of international political neutrality brought important benefits to a city that was otherwise characterised by bitter labour and class confrontations.

The meeting between some of the great names of the European *avant-garde* and local artists was a shot in the arm for Barcelona's wider society, which had benefited from significant economic growth and the intensification of its international projection as a city. Whenever a city opens up to the greater world, even during an exceptional period, it provides a new stimulus to urban development and the creation of opportunities for its citizens. It could be said that afterwards, Barcelona would not experience a similar period of international aperture until the Olympic Games in 1992, with the exception of a short lived *interlude* at the start of the Second republic in 1931.

Upon their arrival in Barcelona, its fringes and internal peripheral areas provoked instant fascination among the Parisian exiles. Among those artists the best remembered, due to his artistic fecundity in that period, was the French artist Francis Picabia. Francis Marie Martinez Picabia, the painter who gave the Mona Lisa a moustache, was one of the driving forces of the *avant-garde* and of Dadaism and Surrealism, the route later followed by Catalan artists of international renown such as Joan Miró or Salvador Dalí. The son of a Spanish father, Picabia was a kind of equivalent of contemporary Barcelona's Manu Chao. Both the interwar artist and the post-punk singer came to Barcelona in search of a cultural environment and a state of ferment that they were unable to find in their native France.

In Barcelona, the pre-Surrealistic *avant-gardes* found an environment that was receptive to new ideas and had an open spirit with a particularly international orientation. Barcelona was one of the hotbeds where modernity was being defined, whether through the tangos of Carlos Gardel, the art of Pablo Picasso or the art-as-a-way-of-life for the poet-boxer Arthur Cravan. The city's persistent social contradictions, its extraordinary economic development and permanent political tensions with the Spanish state made Barcelona the setting for the representation of various events that were to attract international attention. *Modernistas* and *noucentistes*, anarchists and regionalists, republicans and traditionalists all coexisted in the city's streets. Here, tensions accumulated and then exploded - both in the form of creative energy and on many occasions, unfortunately, with consequences that were excessively destructive for the city's day-to-day life.

## **Imagination, creativity and innovation**

At the start of the 21st century this imagined Barcelona has once more become a receptive focus of the creative energies from around the planet. Globalisation, immigration and the constant social and cultural lifestyle changes that we experience on a daily basis, again oblige Barcelona to attempt to reinterpret or imagine contemporary urban reality. For

this reason, a recent Fundació Ramon Trias Fargas project, called ImaginaBCN!, proposed a new model for re-imagining the city starting from the participation of its citizens in the municipal policies of the Catalan capital<sup>(3)</sup>.

In recent years, and despite efforts to demonstrate the contrary, Barcelona's urban policy has been characterised by the deployment of city projects which aim to earn the city a place in the international tourist market, but which are designed behind the backs of its citizenry. This forms a painful contrast to the attitude of Barcelona's residents, who undoubtedly rank among the most critically active and involved in the world. The energy of our Catalan identity and the creative combination of work and leisure in our streets and squares should be allowed to achieve more than just making Barcelona an attractive city for tourists and occasional or permanent visitors. To a large extent, it is up to the City Council to channel this creative energy into a future project for the city rather than merely having it consumed by the 'tourist gaze'.

Right now Barcelona needs to add new chapters to a history of successes that made it one of Europe's most dynamic cities, combining economic development with quality of life for its citizens. As becomes clear from Charlie Tims' piece in this collection, London is using Barcelona as a reference for the planning and organisation of the 2012 Olympic Games. If developed earnestly and with rigour, this model for creative regeneration will provide a mirror image to Barcelona. London is one of the world's great cities, vibrant and diverse, constantly welcoming new ideas and visions and fully aware that creativity and innovation have guided development throughout its history. Not only is London one of the planet's most important financial centres, but it has also become a synonym for quality film, advertising, music, fashion and design. Together, these fields now provide more jobs for Londoners than the financial services that have made the city an acknowledged world leader.

London's civic authorities, particularly since the restoration of strategic metropolitan governance with the Greater London Authority, have been aware of this reality and have offered the means to support, promote and attract creative capital for the development of new activities to the city. According to numerous theorists, these days the creative economy is the key force that is moving the world economy. Approximately one third of jobs in the world's advanced economies are based on 'creative sectors', a field ranging from art, music, culture and design to science and engineering, research and development or technology based industries - including journalism, literature, the press and other communications media, or knowledge professionals in sectors such as health, education, finances or justice<sup>(4)</sup>.

## **Public imagination**

Cities mobilise, concentrate and channel human creativity and are capable of conver-

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(3) ImaginaBCN! [www.imaginabcn.org](http://www.imaginabcn.org). Accessed March 2007.

(4) Richard Florida, *Cities and the Creative Class*. New York: Routledge, 2005.

ting this creative energy into artistic innovations, new business ideas and new industrial sectors. At the present time, this creative energy is reaching beyond the corporate centres of traditional businesses to other arenas and areas where new innovation is concentrated. This reinforces the identity and vitality of cities, while increasing the job quality and developmental expectations of many of their inhabitants. Creative cities are successful because creative people want to live in them - companies follow people with talent while, on the other hand, people with talent start up new companies. Creative cities offer an integral ecosystem in which the different forms of creativity, artistic and cultural, economic and technological, can all be developed.

Urban institutions, in this case the Barcelona City Council, have to raise their game in order to profit from these circumstances. There is no point in repeating the same old developmental patterns, over and over again, once the underlying structure has been fundamentally altered. Hence there is a need to promote alternative urban development strategies. As was the case at the outset of the 20th century, Barcelona needs to open up to the world and learn from it in order to become an international reference in terms of urban development and creativity. As we have seen, each new age of innovation and development requires that the city adapts itself to new structures and dynamics, physically, functionally, and organisationally.

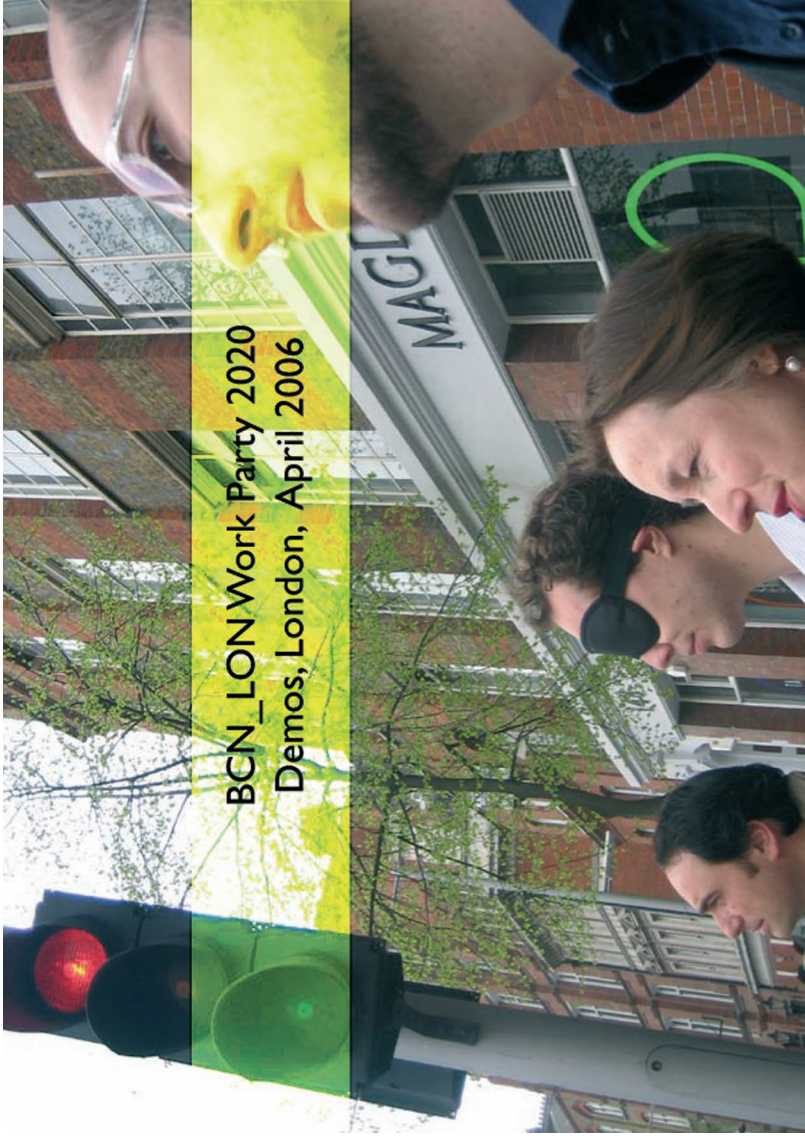
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Barcelona's current attempt to do this, the 22@ development strategy which aims to create from scratch a concentrated district for the city's '@' activities, does not achieve this. As an economic development strategy it has prioritised the physical components of development over human ones, i.e. over those elements comprising the creative capacity of the city's districts and their inhabitants. The eagerness to convert an area of traditional industrial activity into an area of new industrial activity, based on new technologies, has not taken into account the city's actual need for, and capacity to absorb, a blunt offer of top-down provided, state-of-the art infrastructure and an astronomical quantity of square metres of land. The lack of affordable housing is merely illustrative of this wider malaise: usable spaces and meaningful services are not being established and built at the same pace as luxury hotels and corporate office buildings.

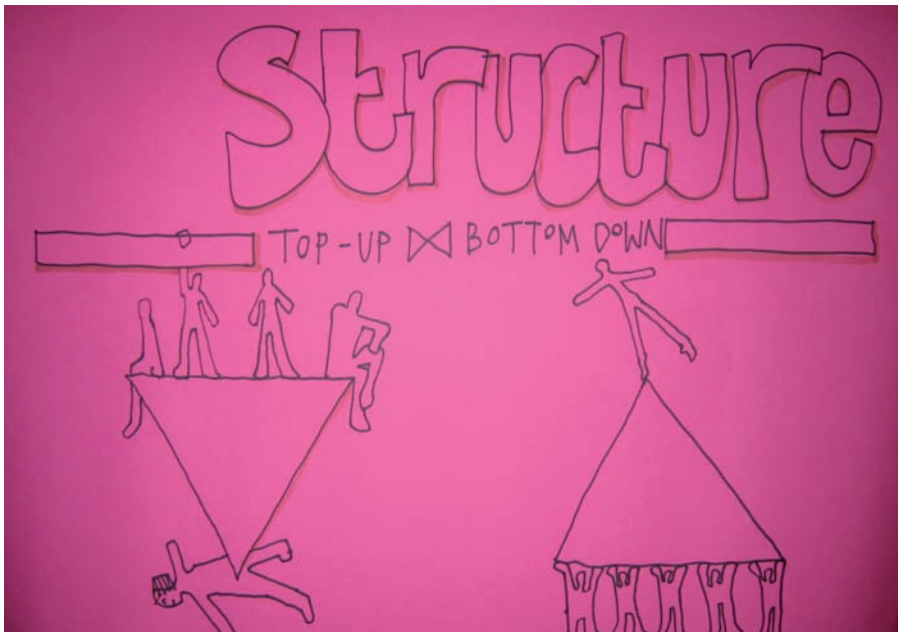
A city that truly believes in the vitality that creativity and innovation can offer to its future development needs to establish more flexible and collaborative structures for the creation and creation of the city. It listens to needs and demands before initiating irreversible processes of urban transformation. At the present time one of those elements considered of vital importance for the future of cities is the need to provide spaces for creation, as it is these same creative activities that will offer the main channels of innovation, from which the city itself will later be able to benefit. The recent expulsions of the creative communities of *Can Ricart* or *La Escocesa* in Poblenou unfortunately highlight the contradictions within this assumption. Without measuring the impact that Barcelona's music, art, film or design have on the economic life of the city, it will be hard for us to be able to evaluate the impact that creativity has on the thrust and projection of our city. And without leaving spa-

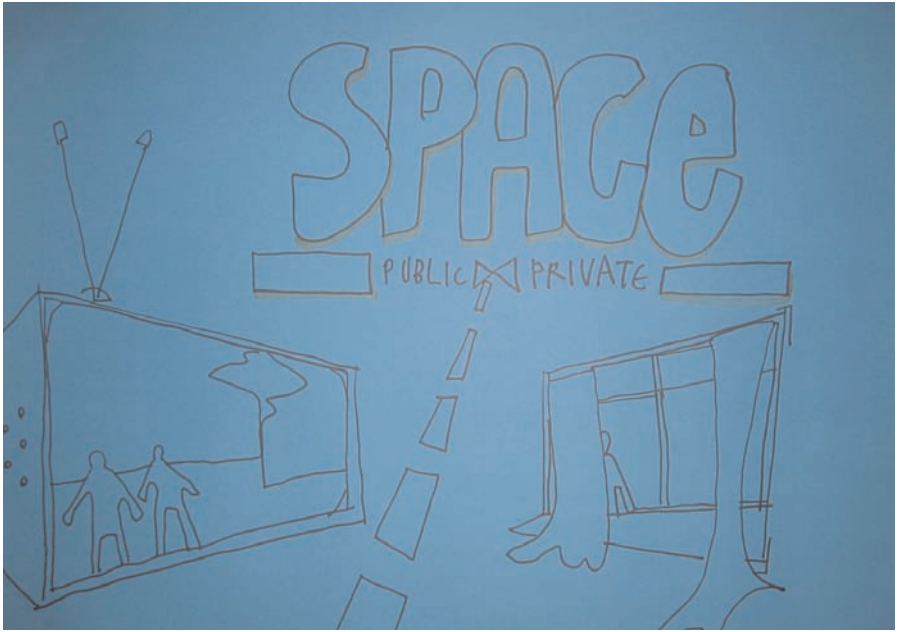


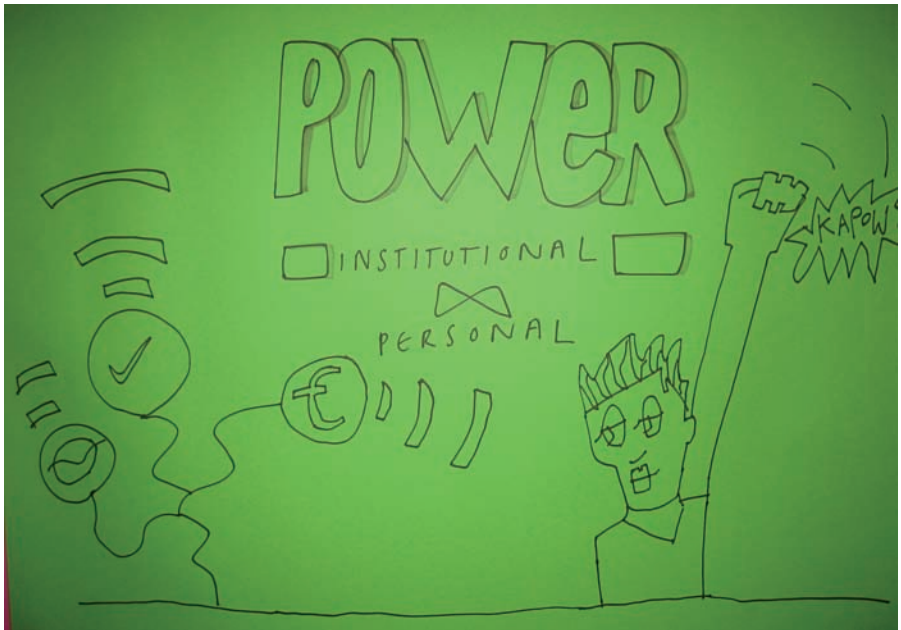
ce for public imagination, so that the joint capacity of its citizens, creators and the urban leadership can imagine a better future, it will be difficult to sustain our claims that we live in a creative and innovative city.



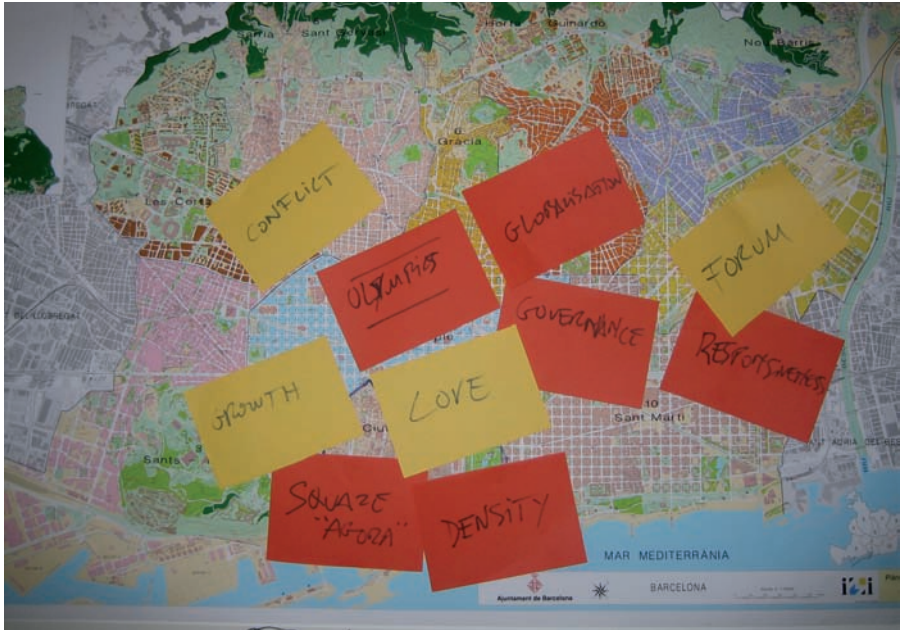
BCN\_LON Work Party 2020  
Demos, London, April 2006





















# URBAN CREATIVITY: MOVING BEYOND THE HYPE

Chris Murray

The link between cities, economies and creativity has always been indivisible. The conception of the city represents a massive demonstration of creative intelligence, and the evolution of the modern city is a creative feat without parallel. Working as Director of the Core Cities Group in England (a collaboration of 8 major cities to improve their economic performance nationally and internationally - Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham and Sheffield) I have the privilege of working with places that take the creative economy very seriously. These cities have all experienced profound deprivation at some point and are using creative approaches to urban recovery. As the business and urban cores of wider surrounding territories, and the economic drivers of their regions, their improved performance is vital to the national economy. This is slowly beginning to be recognised within England's urban policy narrative.

## **Cityphobes to cityphiles**

In much of Western Europe city centres have been continually inhabited for hundreds of years. Italy and Spain, for example, never turned their backs on their cities in the way England did in the last half of the 20th Century. A memory of the Roman concept of *Urbi* et

*Orbi* - the city (civilisation) and the world (barbarian) - lived on; safety inside the city walls and unknown horrors lurking outside. The benefits of cities, for their inhabitants and for the economy, were rarely fundamentally called into question. Meanwhile England struggled with an uncomfortable relationship with its cities, the nation's psyche preferring to locate its collective idyll in medieval villages or Georgian market towns. This persisting nostalgia may be a hangover from the sudden industrialisation of England that saw almost entire villages uprooted and relocated to cities, often in harsh conditions. Perhaps we retain an ancestral memory of rural life? It sometimes seems we have 'the minds of a village in the body of a city'. This tension has been played out in urban thinking in England over the last Century. England's cities were abandoned, both physically and symbolically, for suburbia and the new towns. Whilst some of these, like Milton Keynes, have been notable successes and influenced international urban thinking, others have not. And meanwhile, our cities suffered.

In order to get the best from 21st Century city-living, we need to shift our mindset. Fortunately, this is already happening. In a remarkably short time England has moved from seeing cities as nightmarish seats of social terror to places of opportunity for economic growth and inclusion. The cranes on the skyline of England's Core Cities have arguably never been busier. People are returning to regenerated, re-imagined centres, packed full of cultural vitality, job opportunities, better public services, exciting architecture, street festivals and vibrant night-time economies. Our cities are also the backdrop for the rich cultural mix which is essential to our economic and social future. About five years ago, Richard Florida told an eager UK audience that successful cities are tolerant, diverse, open and welcoming of difference. But what has the ensuing hype really brought to our cities, and how can we learn from it to shape our future?

## **Creativity, culture and renewal**

Even before Richard Florida's message, the earliest signs of renewal in England were visible in some of the most economically hard hit towns and cities. Two related factors were at work. Firstly, run down urban settings with cheap property were colonised by artists, designers and other creative entrepreneurs. These places were 'real', full of urban grit and bestowed a degree of credibility on their inhabitants. The story is familiar by now: people want to be near other creatives, share ideas, access bespoke services and enjoy a particular quality of life. Supported by forward thinking local authorities and business, places like Temple Bar in Dublin, Castlefield in Manchester, Rope Walks in Liverpool (the city will become European Capital of Culture 2008), and the Lace Market in Nottingham became exciting, innovative, trend setting places. They completely shifted the image of cities: physically, by regenerating them, and symbolically through the music, film, TV, design and other cultural products emerging from them. The second factor was a wave of consciously planned attempts to regenerate places through image-building and the encouragement of creative activity. Glasgow European City of Culture (1990) was a real turning point; others looked on, realising that if a city that had become a

byword for dereliction and deprivation could reinvent itself through culture, then there must be something of real importance here. Newcastle and Gateshead embody forward thinking in the creative industries; Bristol has produced some of Europe's most influential recent popular culture and music; Birmingham - beyond the Custard Factory and its creative milieu - is a growing and diverse cultural powerhouse; the Quarry Hill area and the Round Foundry Media Centre in Leeds retain and nurture creative graduates; and Creative Sheffield points toward a new future alignment between cultural, economic and physical development and place marketing.

Hence, investment in culture and creativity has become mainstreamed for England's leading cities, supported by a home-grown literature on creativity from recognised experts like Charles Landry; John Newbiggin and Franco Bianchini. We have reached a point where there is little scepticism among policymakers about the role of creativity in making and marketing places, their cultures and economies. In fact, the concept of 'place-shaping,' which is increasingly seen as the core duty of local policymakers, seems to be almost synonymous with it. Therefore we should reflect critically about the benefits and potential pitfalls of this established policy narrative.

## **Beyond the hype**

It is essential to distinguish between superficial creative hype and properly embedded creativity. Our cities reflect us, their creators and inhabitants, and our psyche. As cities evolve they develop their own character, their own collective sense of purpose and direction. The role of 'place shaper' is perhaps more to act as guardian to an evolutionary process than to impose radical solutions or a single, limited vision of the future. Our cities, despite the oft-repeated and important calls for 'leadership' and 'vision', need gardeners as well as surgeons. After all, people make places - that is, citizens should be in the driving seat. Consequently, we ought to define creativity generously, including nourishing a plurality of local voices in order to formulate locally owned and embraced policy solutions that empower rather than alienate. Cranes on the horizon are one thing. They might provide the 'wow-factor' once hailed as the key to all urban progress - but a sustained trajectory of change is found in people-centred approaches, dialogue and engagement. There is a real danger in seeing the future of cities as separate from their current inhabitants or from their past. Too often, cities are still seen mechanistically, as broken machines that need to be fixed or infused with an outside-sourced 'creative class' rather than organically as complex, adaptive, living cultural systems.

What's the difference between following the hype and properly embedding creativity? I think that, essentially, it is a commitment to the long term and a focus on process rather than quick-fix outcomes. An example can be found in architecture and urban design. City-centre living is back like never before in England and I have personal experience of residence in more than one new-build, high-rise high-density urban regeneration project in major city centres over the last two years. The concept seems brilliant: bringing people, life, money and vitality

back into the centre; producing more housing close to places of work; reducing road congestion and carbon emissions; creating an emotional engagement for people with their centres. On balance my experience has been positive, but I have concerns about the future.

Some developments are well designed, the result of creative entrepreneurs and designers searching for unique solutions to unique sites. Others however, are only the material expression of profiteering. They emanate a superficial conception of place and people, a reliance on the standardised aesthetic of the 'creative age', and a disregard for the future that feigns ignorance of the recent history of urban high rise. This is the difference between creative hype - which capitalises in the short term on whichever concept rules the day - and embedded creativity, which applies creative thinking as a commitment to the long term future and prosperity of a place.

Creative leadership is present in London, in Barcelona, in each of England's Core Cities and elsewhere. It is most easily recognised in '*grand projets*', iconic projects that stimulate or symbolise change - Barcelona's Olympian turn to the sea and its Forum 2004; London's regeneration of Kings Cross, the Tate Modern or London Eye. But I want to argue that creativity is more crucially part of the *processes* of urban development. Genuinely iconic projects should be the product of a city's embedded creativity, rather than the odd 'creative spike' or 'wow moment' on an otherwise level graph of urban monotony.

## **Collaborating to compete**

At the international level our cities and their creative industries face another challenge, that of globalisation and the emergence of highly competitive economies and cities across the EU and in countries like Brazil, Russia, India and China. This has been a priority issue within the recent Creative Economy Programme which I worked on, commissioned by the UK Government's Department for Culture Media and Sport. Our discussions emphasised the clear need to invest in people - but investing in cities *has* to come a close second. In a global age where creative and knowledge workers are highly mobile it is our places, and the way they interact with citizens, that will give us the edge.

In addition, the DCMS working group recognised that towns and cities that network and collaborate with others are more successful - a departure from the idea that place competition and economic development are a zero sum game. This gave rise to the concept of the 'Creative Grid', a virtual and real policy connection between the most important creative centres in the UK, including London. The Grid would be supported by an intelligence unit, capable of analysing markets and providing better access to markets for industry, turning this smart-network structure into a substantial international brokerage system. Thus, businesses plugging into the Grid will know that their ideas can gain value through interacting with several major urban areas and their creative assets simultaneously.

The importance of policy innovation has been underlined by recent research. *The State of the English Cities* (ODPM 2006) compared the economic and social performance of a large number of European cities and concluded that English cities are not performing as well as their counterparts - for two main reasons. Firstly, the most successful places have organised themselves at a spatial level wider than the city - the city-region - and have aligned relevant policy and strategy at that level. Secondly, successful European cities enjoy greater levels of devolved freedoms and resources than English cities, leading to a greater ability to control their own destinies and build on their unique assets. Independence in turn encourages increased collaboration.

England's eight Core Cities have long recognised that collaboration creates a more powerful set of benefits for local economies and people than could ever be achieved in isolation. Realising their common cause, the Core Cities have made creative strides forward by working as one to position the cities agenda at the centre of public policy in England.

The real significance of all this is that it requires an entirely different approach to the development and delivery of policy and practice - one of committed collaboration, where partners are willing to pool knowledge, resources and even powers to achieve long term gains. One of the myths of creativity is that it is the preserve of mysteriously clever individuals working in splendid isolation. There is another kind of creativity, one that is rooted in the daily grit and reality of cities, the inventive, imaginative collaboration that relies on quick witted and experienced elected members and local officers working together with the public, transcending political and administrative boundaries; creative cities in action.

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Perhaps it is time to learn from the creativity of these partnerships and to utilise it in the development of national policy. The traditional approach to developing urban policy on the national level has been something of a game of ping pong. Government and the various urban lobbies lovingly craft their policies and then consult with and lobby each other on subsequent drafts. These are batted backward and forth until either something of a consensus is reached or a unilateral decision is taken - leading either to compromises that avoid clear choices, or to disconnected policy and practice, nationally and locally. Conversely, developing an 'in the same room' methodology could lead to better informed policies that are shared by local and national policymakers alike. This sounds simple but it is not. It would require a degree of trust and a loosening of the reins of power on both sides. There is much to be gained: sharing expertise, saving resources, speeding up the policy process and developing much more imaginative, workable solutions for the delivery of national urban policy at the local level.

## **Conclusion**

City making isn't rocket science; it's much more complicated than that. Now, a decade after England's persistently anti-urban policy narrative was finally abandoned, we are still

learning. The hype around creativity and cities has brought benefits, but has also led to uninspired, generic policies which visibly manifest themselves in disappointingly placeless buildings. Contrary to such imposed, disconnected short-termism, locally owned solutions will be better able to profit from and reinvigorate our cities' inhabitants, their unique identity, culture and place-specific values.

Building on such strong roots, the ultimate success of English cities depends not so much on their ability to compete with each other but on their appetite and skills to collaborate - with their immediate hinterland, adjacent towns, cities and in specialist networks across the globe. Such complex degrees of practical and political partnership require creative pragmatism and the capacity to think beyond short-term gain. We should stop obsessing about the relative number of 'creatives' within our cities, instead broaden our definition and focus on our ability to generate new, innovative policy practices.

It has to be kept in mind that creativity is not the preserve of any one sector. It is as present in local politics as it is anywhere else. Some of the creative solutions that are emerging from city-region partnerships have important implications at the national level. Our cities are organising themselves beyond traditional boundaries, but need an increased ability to self-determine and the support and recognition of government to help them achieve their goals. In defining policy and putting this into action, we can choose to follow the traditional route - the game of table tennis - or we can look to the creative collaborations emerging around us and choose a different approach, taking the risk and stepping into unfamiliar but undoubtedly more fruitful territory. I prefer the latter.

# SEEING LIKE A CITY: GOVERNANCE IN LONDON

Fran Tonkiss

'Seeing like a state', it has been said, involves viewing people and places as problems for social engineering and rational planning<sup>(1)</sup>. But what does it mean to 'see like a city'? In the case of London's new urban government, seeing like a city mixes elements of urban boosterism with traces of municipal socialism, promotes private development but stresses public planning, views the city as a growth machine but also as a social and environmental fabric. As older structures of government are replaced by networks of 'governance' and distinctions between state and market are blurred by notions of partnership<sup>(2)</sup>, the creation of the Greater London Authority and election of the capital's Mayor in 2000 can be seen as the latest in a fitful series of reforms of London's government structures, but also as signalling a new model of urban governance for the capital. The prospects for the city government's first twenty years will be determined by the powers that were given to it at the outset, and how cleverly it can use them; its interaction with other levels of government; and the kind of engagement it encourages from London's citizens.

The current architecture of London governance is a mix of the well-established and the freshly minted. There is the entrenched framework of the 33 local borough governments

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(1) Scott, J.C. (1998) *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

(2) Frug, G. E. (2005) 'Delivering urban governance in London', *Urban Age Bulletin* 3, London, November 2005, [www.urban-age.net/0\\_downloads/archive/Gerald\\_Frug\\_2005-Delivering\\_Urban\\_Governance\\_In\\_London-Bulletin3.pdf](http://www.urban-age.net/0_downloads/archive/Gerald_Frug_2005-Delivering_Urban_Governance_In_London-Bulletin3.pdf). Accessed February 2007.



within London (settled in their current form since the mid-1960s); and there is the new metropolitan city government composed by the elected Mayor and London Assembly with the bureaucracy of the Greater London Authority - this latter arrangement is not yet ten years old. Behind both of these is a national government that presides over one of Europe's more centralised systems, with real impact on the capital. In this patchwork of political authority, the prospects for innovation lie mainly with the new metropolitan body. The boroughs saw radical reforms in the 1980s, disciplining their financial powers, contracting out much of their service provision, and limiting their autonomy. Central government's aim to make itself - or at least its bureaucracy - smaller and cheaper does not go with any desire to make lower levels of government larger. At the same time, the centre retains a significant degree of control over the Greater London Authority and the Mayor via the tight statutory terms on which the new government was established. What scope does this allow for city-making in the future?

### **The limits of power**

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It is important to point to the constraints: this is a city government that doesn't really govern. The GLA is a 'strategic authority' rather than a service provider, and its regulatory powers are limited. Quite standard elements of urban governance in other cities internationally lie outside its remit, with services in health, housing, education, sanitation and public amenities the domain of either central or local governments. Still London's Mayor and his networks of governance have a major role to play in engineering the city.

To take two key examples: the Mayor's strategic brief include two crucial areas - transport and spatial planning. Transport, in any city, is as much a political as it is a technical matter. It is certainly the case in London, and the city's first mayor Ken Livingstone has given transport symbolic as well as practical centrality. Transport for London (TfL) is tightly knitted into the new machinery of London governance: the Mayor chairs it, sets its budget and appoints its board members. Through these mechanisms he retains leverage over the wider transport network- and the integration and improvement of the transport network has come to stand for the business of integrating the city.

The GLA has very limited powers to raise revenues and no independent tax-raising powers, but a chief way in which the Mayor has sought to generate income is via the congestion charge paid by motorists to drive into central London, then channelled into public transport budgets. This practical device has political resonance in making private users directly subsidise public uses, privileging public over private transit - and the Mayor himself famously rides the underground to work.

The other key aspect of the Mayor's strategic authority is over physical planning. The planning impulse is a central feature of 'seeing like a state', and the GLA's London

Plan of 2004 sets the agenda not only for London's spatial development but also for its development as a social and economic environment. It incorporates strategies for transport and economic growth, but also for housing, the environment, design and public space, culture and tourism, and social inclusion. The London Plan is a critical example of the way that 'strategic' authority can aim to have real regulatory teeth, setting out the framework for land use and new building developments throughout the city. It gives the Mayor oversight in relation to major planning applications, including veto powers over local planning decisions that do not meet GLA guidelines. Interestingly, this is also where the Mayor's capacity to act and intervene looks set to be expanded, according to the review of GLA powers recently conducted by the Government. Seemingly reflecting the successful functioning of the GLA, the review gave the Mayor new lead roles on housing and a further strengthened role over planning in the capital; and additional strategic powers in a wide range of policy areas including waste, culture and sport, health, climate change and adult skills training in London.

More broadly, the London Plan sets the city's spatial development in its regional context (emphasising development in the Thames Gateway and the Cambridge corridor, while ruling out new building in the city's surrounding Green Belt), its European context (highlighting East London's potential as the 'gateway' to Europe, London's status as 'Europe's financial capital', and improved transport links to the continent), and its global context (positioning London as a world city for business and tourism, as well as stressing its cosmopolitan population mix). If structures of governance are being broadly 're-scaled', city governance extends its reach across these other scales.

## **Symbolic politics**

Given the broader constraints on its powers, one of the features of the early years of mayoral politics is the way that 'thinking like a city' has come to be defined, for London, in precisely the terms available: how the city moves, and the relation between its physical and social environments. This underlines a further key function of London's government in general, and the Mayor in particular: the symbolic task of representing London to itself, to central government, and to the world. The Mayor is styled as 'London's spokesman', or the 'executive of the strategic authority for London'. This particularly suits the charismatic brand of leadership embraced by Mayor Livingstone, but the symbolic quality of government is also evident in the distinctive branding of the GLA, its advertising campaigns, and the range of public events that it sponsors. For example, "Faster through the mighty metropolis" was the slogan from a 2003 poster campaign signalling improvements in TfL bus services as well as contributing to a more general urban image-building. Similarly, the Mayor has appointed a special programmer to stage events on Trafalgar Square, such as the 'Eid in the Square' or the screening of the classic socialist film, Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin*. London's city government may not provide bread, but it does stage circuses.

One question for the future will be the weight Londoners are willing to give their city government - their confidence in it as an effective power, and their trust in it as a symbolic centre. This places critical emphasis on the Mayor, and Livingstone's character as a personality politician has reinforced this status. He won in 2000 as an independent after the Labour Party failed to select him as its candidate, and again in 2004, with a slightly reduced share of the vote, after returning to the Labour ticket. Turn-out in both elections was poor, on a par with the miserable average turn-outs for local council and European Parliament elections, and lower than even the worst turn-outs at national polls. The Mayor might claim that he has the mandate of a constituency of 7 million, but he won the votes of only 685,541 of them. However, approval ratings for the Mayor are consistently high, and notably higher than for national politicians<sup>(3)</sup>.

An explicit part of the GLA's work has been to promote democratic engagement with London's government itself. The Mayor occupies a complicated position in this context. The new model of government gives real strategic and symbolic prominence to the Mayor, and this individual is an obvious point of identification and engagement for voters. However a more robust form of government depends on embedding the *institutional* structure in London's social and political landscape. A different tactic for promoting engagement with urban government is therefore to identify the political institution with the city itself.

This kind of symbolism has been most evident in London's project for the 2012 Olympics. The Olympic project brings together in high profile the key governmental roles touched on so far: transport, physical and symbolic strategies are all crucial to the plan for 2012. The Mayor has been closely associated with the Games throughout the bidding process and after; it is mooted that he will seek not only a third but a fourth 4-year term so as to remain in office up to and beyond 2012. The Olympic project will re-make large parts of East London, and re-engineer London's transport infrastructure. It exemplifies the coming together of symbolic and physical strategies for city-making - a linkage that is also clear in the Mayor's interest in shaping the London skyline through an architecture of tall buildings.

The Olympic project is especially notable as a means of leveraging further revenue - largely from central government - into the city government's strategy for London. The massive building and infrastructural development that will take place in East London represents a major intervention in urban planning and development - the most significant re-shaping of the urban fabric, in the period up to 2012 and after. It is one that London's Mayor and his government will steer with massive financial input from central government, from semi-public funds such as the National Lottery, and from local tax-payers: this from a city government that is not empowered to raise taxes on its own account. The development budget for the Olympics had already blown out by 2006, and the complexity of its financing is indicative of a wider confusion over who is to be seen as responsible for the project - central or city government.

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(3) For example a March 2006 poll, 47 percent of Londoners were "satisfied with the way the Mayor is doing his job", compared to 35 percent who are dissatisfied. This plus 12-point approval rating compares to a 9-point net approval rating in October 2005; the same figures for Tony Blair showed that 31 percent of UK citizens were satisfied with the way he was doing his job in March 2006, compared to 62 percent who were dissatisfied. This 31-point net disapproval rating had grown from a minus 18-point disapproval rating in October 2005.

## Entrenching the model

These disputes over who is to take the credit or the blame for the Olympic initiative point to the broader threat facing London's new city government as it seeks to embed itself in the political landscape. A 'nested' model that overlays local, metropolitan and national governments produces a fragmentation of authority, public confusion over roles, and competitions over interest. The problem for the Greater London Authority is that it is the least entrenched of the three actors involved: it is the invention of a central government that tightly delimited the terms of its existence, keeps its activities under review, and retains the power to abolish it; and it is financed via the local borough governments that actually provide services in the city.

London's city government is therefore subject to pressures from above and below. A hostile national government could render London's government toothless, and the networked model of governance on which the authority is based - through public-private partnerships, semi-public bodies and arm's-length influence - may be easier to dismantle than the more conventional structure of the Greater London Council, the previous metropolitan government scrapped in the mid-1980s. On the other side, the boroughs collect basic funding for the GLA through local council taxes - this financial leverage, and their collective weight, gives them the power to make life difficult for the city government if the current accommodation becomes strained.

In spite of these threats, and the limits of its power, London's city authority must be the key governmental player in shaping the city to 2020. Much will turn around the critical middle-point in 2012, but also on the way that the Olympic developments are integrated into London's fabric once the Games are over - and how the bill will be managed. One positive sign in this respect is the manner in which 'seeing like a city' necessarily means learning from other cities: taking the view from Barcelona, from Sydney, and from Beijing. After all (and as Berlin's Mayor Klaus Wowereit has put it) there is no copyright protection on cities. Beyond the Olympic experiment, or adventure, or gamble, London's new city government so far provides a lesson in how a form of governance set up to be largely strategic or symbolic can have a real effect on the process of city-making. It is hard to claim that the Mayor and his crew actually *govern* London, but they can represent it, and they are shaping it.



# BARCELONA, THE ADOLESCENT CITY

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Jaume Ciurana

For several years now - too many, in fact - Barcelona has remained an adolescent city, a city that is permanently dissatisfied with the relationship between its body (territory) and its head (government). Sometimes the territory feels too ridiculously tight and narrow to accommodate the ambitions and needs of its politics; other times, the local government is not capable of looking beyond itself, of *thinking* big; and at still others, rigid structures imposed from above make it impossible to go ahead and connect to all elements contained within the self.

Like an adolescent city that is still looking for its true personality, its role in the world, Barcelona is often tempted to misinterpret its relationship with the country of which it is the capital, and consequently also with its closest hinterland. It would seem to have a twofold problem of scale: it is too small for its ambitions as a city and too big to provide truly local services. And, true to adolescent form, Barcelona also normally blames others for its lack of definition.

Two initial points should be made here:

First of all, periods of democratic calm during the 20th century were in Barcelona the exception rather than the rule. At least, up until the last quarter of a century. Historically, there were few and short-lived periods when democratic local governments worked under nor-

mal conditions. The current system stems from the local elections held in 1979, after the fall of the dictatorship and the restoration of parliamentary democracy. But moving from a dictatorial system to democratic structures without shattering the legitimacy of Francoism involved the continuation of certain habits, attitudes and inertias that would not be found in societies with a more solid democratic tradition.

Secondly, many of the city's structures and ambitions would probably be difficult to understand without acknowledging that Barcelona's society has often required the city to assume a double role, whereby it not only fulfilled the role of *the capital city* of Catalonia but also that of *government* of Catalonia. Barcelona City Council has for years been assuming functions that, in a situation of institutional rationality and normality, would correspond to higher administrative levels than local government. And it has played a much more extensive role of symbolic and emotional representation than would normally correspond to a city of its dimensions. In fact, the suppression of the autonomous government of Catalonia during the Franco dictatorship meant that the most important institution in Catalonia was its capital's City Council.

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The current limits to Barcelona's municipal area remain unchanged since the 1920s, which saw the culmination of processes to integrate - some would say annex - the nearest municipalities. This process started at the end of the 19th century. After developing from the original Roman and Medieval city down by the sea, the city began to conquer new territories by surpassing - and knocking down - a number of walled perimeters that hindered its growth. And as a result, it now has an extension of 99 km<sup>2</sup> and 1.6 million inhabitants. Hemmed in as it is by the sea on one side and a range of hills on the other, Barcelona - as is the case in many Mediterranean cities - could only grow by becoming denser, through compact urban planning. Such an approach, crucially, resulted from the needs of each moment in history rather than from any specific decision. And this is no insignificant factor because the human and physical geography of the city conditions the way its local government is organised.

From the 1960s onwards, when immigration from other parts of Spain considerably increased the population, a metropolitan context appeared as a physical reality. This changed Barcelona's territorial, relational and emotional structures from top to bottom. The administrative city was overcome by the real city. Barcelona as a city was running out of space and a series of small towns on the city's outskirts suddenly became suburbs of the big city, in the midst of a poorly connected territory that was equipped with few public facilities and was highly deficient in terms of urban and architectural quality. After the first democratic elections, the towns surrounding Barcelona underwent a process of re-identification: they retrieved their historic centres, enhanced their neighbourhoods, and civic pride was re-connected within the locality. The step from suburb to service-providing municipality, taken, as occurred in many towns on the outskirts of Barcelona, will substantially condition the future institutional organisation of the metropolitan area.

## **A close-up**

Barcelona City Council divides the city into ten municipal districts, some of which have more than 300,000 inhabitants. This is not a question of political decentralization, but purely and simply of administrative deconcentration. The districts are thus management units, spearheaded by a councillor who is appointed by the mayor and hence usually of his political colour. Since they do not have the capacity to generate their own income and are totally dependent on transfers received from the City Council, the districts do not enjoy sufficient financial independence to develop their own specific policies; neither do they have sufficient institutional leeway to apply any such policies.

The decentralisation of Barcelona is a myth not a reality. The coincidence in political colour between the party governing the City Council and the majorities on the District Councils (appointed according to the results of City Council elections) has concealed the facts, but nowadays no one doubts that the façade and decentralising discourse hides no more than just another example of municipal dependence. This was plain to see when majorities on the District Councils changed hands and came in the hands of the urban opposition parties.

Until a comprehensive process of political decentralization takes place, the districts will continue to be no more than administrative branches of the City Council. In fact, municipal districts' lack of flexibility and regulatory independence means that they are often unable to cater to the population's most immediate needs and priorities. If we add to that the insufficient human resources available, the conclusion is clear: the districts of Barcelona need to be reinvented.

The reinvention of the districts should encompass both political change (direct election of district councillors) and administrative reform (transfers of resources, financial autonomy and greater decision-making powers on the political front). Otherwise, if the districts' current functions are not modified, the honest alternative would be to modify their limits and names, and transfer these functions to smaller-scale city neighbourhoods, which at present do not enjoy any type of institutional recognition. If the districts are to be no more than administrative units and local interfaces with the City Council, they are too big as they are today to be efficient.

## **Focus on the city**

The city's excessively corporate and management-focused approach and the ongoing reduction of municipal staff precisely at a time of urban expansion have led to disorder in a number of areas and negative repercussions on Barcelona's day-to-day management. The shortage of construction-work inspectors, shop inspectors, police officers, home-care staff, street educators and many others means that Barcelona is currently a much more attractive



city on the macro level than on the micro level. I am not talking here about political leanings that may also have had an influence on these shortages, but plainly and simply about the organisational responsibilities assumed by the municipal government.

As we have seen, Barcelona's municipal organisation is extraordinarily thrifty when it comes to transferring resources and competencies to the districts, but it is extremely generous when it comes to transferring management spheres to municipal corporations. With the excuse of improving 'management', what actually happens is that public action loses its democratic quality. The political opposition has no means of democratically monitoring action taken by the corporations and does not learn the details of operations until several months after they have taken place. Neither does such action go through the processes of citizen participation. This system of centrifuging municipal management out to corporations became more frequent after the 1992 Olympic Games. The successful management of the Games dazzled the people on the City Council to such an extent that they understood this tool to be capable of speeding up cumbersome administrative procedures. As is practically always the case, however, abuse of the procedure ended up distorting its virtues. Under the 2007 municipal budget, 16.1% of the budgeted total will be handled by municipal joint stock companies (49.9% if we include autonomous agencies and public business organizations) and only 12.4% by the districts.

So we need to embark upon a process of devolution to the districts (the heirs to the former municipalities on the outskirts of Barcelona that were added to the city at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century) and also a process of reinforced democratic legitimacy in decision-making procedures by limiting the power of the corporations and demanding they provide the same guarantees of democratic transparency as the public administrations. Administrative complexity and the necessary efficiency of public management cannot be given as excuses and moral justifications for distancing the decision-making process from the democratic sphere.

## **The panorama**

During the dictatorship, Franco's government created the *Corporació Metropolitana de Barcelona* (Barcelona Metropolitan Corporation). After the transition to democracy the autonomous government of Catalonia presided over by Jordi Pujol decided in 1987 to dismantle this corporation and create three separate metropolitan services (community of municipalities, transport and the environment). The Socialist Party of Catalonia (PSC) strongly objected to this because it would end the PSC's domination over an institution that was being used to counter the weight of the recently re-established autonomous government of Catalonia. However, this feeling was not shared by some socialist mayors of metropolitan areas. For them, rather than a body that provided coordination and administrative cooperation, the Barcelona Metropolitan Corporation was a threat to local autonomy and yet another tool at

the service of Barcelona's expansion and its controversial siting of facilities that the big city found somewhat "inconvenient" (prisons, wastewater treatment plants, rubbish dumps, cemeteries, etc.). Regional integration on such terms has caused many municipalities in the metropolitan area to feel a certain distrust, given that they have lost decision-making capacity over their own territories in order to meet the strategic needs of Barcelona.

Now, twenty years after the Metropolitan Corporation was done away with, and while the metropolitan city has grown in terms of population, urban quality and social cohesion, new challenges are cropping up such as housing, immigration and mobility. The scale and magnitude of these new issues suggest that it is time to think once more of a vehicle for coordinating the territory on a regional level. But what sort of vehicle and on what scale?

In the first place, it must be capable of substituting - or at least integrating - other levels of existing administration. Nowadays, citizens of Barcelona already endure several levels of local administration: district councils, the City Council, regional councils, metropolitan bodies and the *Diputació de Barcelona* (Barcelona County Council). From the mere principles of administrative simplification and budgetary efficiency, it is clear that we cannot add on a further level of public administration.

In the second place, as I mentioned at the beginning of this article, we must *think big*. We must think up a new framework that does not become outgrown in just a few years. My advice is therefore to forget the strictly metropolitan framework and approach the issue from a regional perspective by merging the different viewpoints currently existing into a single political assembly. This course of action would probably involve reconverting Barcelona County Council, the regional councils and the metropolitan bodies into a single local institution of a regional nature.

In the third place, it should not consist of a process of administrative or political recentralization and must always respect local independence. Basically, it should be a tool of management and not political confrontation, with the objective of creating a local version of *Bundestreue*, the German term for institutional loyalty between different layers of Government in a federal state. There is no denying that the institutionalisation of a territory with 4.9 million inhabitants - 70% of the population of Catalonia - could be looked upon by the autonomous government as political and administrative counterpower.

And in the fourth place, the management areas in which action should be taken would be supra-municipal: urban planning, housing, mobility, water and waste management and municipal cooperation. The other areas would remain in the hands of each local municipality.

Barcelona's years of adolescence may quite possibly be coming to an end. The city may well be discovering the right dimensions and ambitions to enable its body and head to live in harmony, without conflict. It might at last find a better system for its relations with its

parents as well as its younger brothers and sisters. It would be able to exercise its rights, whilst also assuming its obligations. Finally, this would allow the city to combine its youth and maturity with vitality, energy and, confidence in the possibilities that the future holds.

# PUBLIC SPACE IS DEAD; LONG LIVE PUBLIC SPACE

Indy Johar

The present-day debate about public space in our cities is a narrative of loss. As Steven Johnson observes, “There are few ideas more widely received these days than the premise that traditional urban environments - the kind with bustling footpaths, public squares distinctive local flavour, elaborate street culture, and a diverse intermingling of people - have become an endangered species”<sup>(1)</sup>. In many ways it is a loss of an ideal: ‘res publica’ (the public affair) as embodied and expressed within physical space and epitomised by the Greek agora. This is held up as the perfect intersection of social space, political space and the theatrical setting of the community in public. As such it is inseparably connected to the notion of the polis, the polity within the city.

The reasons for the loss of public space are almost as numerous as the academics who have written about it. The favoured culprits include individualism, consumerism, car culture, corporate franchising ('clonetowning'), and the fragmentation resulting from increased social diversity.

Whilst the diagnosis may vary, the subsequent prescriptions are remarkably similar: the re-establishment of the ancient Athens-style agora has been seen as the universal panacea for our social ills including addressing the democratic deficit, boosting city competitive-

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(1) Steven Johnson, "Theme-Parking the American City (Welcome to the Pleasure Dome)" Village Voice (in section Voice Literary Supplement, February-March 1999), February 16, 1999, p. 81.

ness in the knowledge economy, and promoting social and community cohesion. This has resulted in something of an idolisation of public space, by both urbanists and policymakers around the world. However, as is the way sometimes with idols, the fascination has tended to be skin deep, with an emphasis on the surface aesthetics of public space - as exemplified by initiatives such as London's recent 100 public squares programme; heavy on design but weak on the social structures that underpin them.

This aesthetic notion of 'public space' often seeks to imitate 'the historic qualities of public life' - clusters of people engaged in conversation, others crossing the square, some observing activity, children running about and playing, people drinking coffee, vendors and hawkers along the edges, the space filled with energy and a palpable sense of the enjoyment to be derived from spending time in such a lively setting. This is the *de rigueur* look for any architect's model or photo-shop mock-up.

60 But the contemporary reality is different: even in spaces where the setting and the exchanges look the same (the café terrace, the political demonstration, the market stall), the scale, language, culture and economic networks underpinning the scene have utterly changed. This new reality is made manifest in London, a city of 8 million people. Classical Athens, at the time that made the Agora famous, had 300,000; London, as a city of over 300 languages, a city of over 50 non-indigenous communities of over 10,000 people, a city where more than 30% of the population was born outside the UK, forms a city of multiple networked cultures.

London, as much as any other place partaking in the global urban condition, is a global city where personal and community networks are increasingly delocalised, either through day-to-day mobility or through migration. This is a city in which the majority of people live, work and play in dispersed neighbourhoods. This is city which can support its increasingly globalised inhabitants with cheap, diverse international supply chains - connecting and providing them with Zee TV, skype or lychees. This is a city whose ecological, economic, consumption and cultural footprint is significantly larger than its geography of governance - and indeed, whose footprint has become larger than the geographical imagination of the Londoner.

As such London is being transformed and reconstituted for the specific/particular rather than the many/collective, accentuating the 'space' between people of differing culture and lifestyle. This provides the framework for an invisibly segregated city, where increasingly divergent cultures and ideologies are brought together to co-exist yet with limited opportunities to intersect and engage. Does this model lead to any space, opportunity or desire for an integrated sense of the public or public space?

Yet despite being embedded within the structural logic of the globalised city, it seems as if we are still aspiring to the aesthetic notion of the agora, the public space ideal based on the integration of the social, political and theatrical space and the idea of the unified public of the small town polis. The physical and social reality, meanwhile, is trying to tell us some-

thing else is going on in our cities, where there are lots of different publics bubbling away, forming, reforming and clustering in unpredictable ways. What is intriguing is that London, and cities like it, have the capacity to support such a multitude of publics, in coexistence, competing and with each presenting a particular and perhaps even contradicting worldview. But not all these publics are created equally, and can be placed on a scale with commodity publics at one end and self-built publics at the other.

## **Commodity publics**

Whether it be a Chinatown, a Banglatown, the Trocadero or the Docklands these spaces are 'designed' to attract and repel certain audiences through the projection of particular worldviews, be they explicit or more subliminal. These are spaces we select from a menu, as opposed to vote for or actively participate in their making. They are highly serviced, programmed, mediated environments that look and behave like consumer products.

For those gifted with sufficient resources for choice and mobility, these environs create popular, liberating, niche spaces catering for a diversity of nomadic interlopers while protecting and honouring their anonymity and autonomy. These publics are commodities of choice- branded, bite-sized, and ready to be consumed and discarded at will. This commodification of public space is illustrated by the example of the copyrighting of the enhancements in Millennium Park Chicago by the artist who created them. As such, anyone who reproduces the works must get the permission of the artist - the first copyrighted public space.

For the remaining minority of people, who are to various degrees immobile or disadvantaged, these spaces can trigger alienation, disempowerment and identity conflicts. This is where their lacking in real neighbourhood democratic governance or management, other than through the act of consumption, has acutely negative results.

In parallel to this commodification of public space, British cities are systematically policed and surveyed - it is estimated there are 4.2m CCTV cameras in Britain - about one for every 14 people. Rather than seeing such developments as lamentable and unconnected incidents in an otherwise healthy public sphere, we should acknowledge them as structural by-products of commodity publics. The squares and streets of London have been reduced to a place where the collective rules and laws of the land are enforced rather than where they collectively emerge.

## **Self build publics**

At the other end of the scale, a different category of settings illustrate the present-day confluence of that which is traditionally perceived to be public space - the integration of the social, political and the theatrical. They can be seen manifested in the increasingly popu-

lar community asset vehicles, Community Interest Companies and development trusts, with assets devolved from the 'public' to the community. Similarly, such truly communal spaces can be found in self-build 'community spaces' such as the Community Living rooms which Zero Zero is helping develop in Brierley Hill or the £17m Gurudwara in Southall, London, which was constructed entirely using community donations, governed, managed and operated by a community dispersed throughout the UK and internationally. These self-build publics do not depend on a fixed physical neighbourhood or village, but instead can be much more mobile and dispersed.

It must be recognised that the investment in these spaces, whether as Gurudwaras, clubs or neighbourhood centres, creates new spaces for the propulsion and expression of 'distinction'. As the built manifestation of difference they could risk being exclusive. However, they work to galvanise inclusivity through practical exchanges and the sense of building a common project.

### **The danger of disconnected publics**

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But why does this all matter? There are three reasons. Firstly, the frictions exemplified by the CCTV camera show how the romanticized image of public space is failing in its own terms: friction and conflict continue while at the same time we are told it will be neutralised by smart design and surveillance, so product dissatisfaction is spreading. Secondly, it most certainly affects the capacity of public space to function as a policy tool and solve our social ills: there is a mismatch between what policy-makers expect public space to do and what it can do in reality. But most crucially, it matters because there is an opportunity cost here: while the energy and attention of urban policy makers, designers and architects remains focused on realising and improving the aesthetic dream of 'public space,' we are failing to identify, investigate and harness the alternative imperatives and opportunities posed by the new kinds of publics that are emerging.

### **Welcome to the post public city**

The existence of shared public life is a prerequisite to the development of truly shared public space. Public space has historically been the stage upon which the drama of communal life unfolds. But as this essay has sought to expose, it is the values that support public

life that are missing. The bemoaned demise of public life and consequently of public space, is the symptom of a wider shift in values and lifestyle patterns.

Without being romantic about this notion, we must be clear that the demise of public space/life is the price London has paid for autonomy, personalisation and a globally connected community. We have reaped significant economic rewards but the price we have to pay comes with real risks in terms of social fragmentation, social residualisation and an inability to collectively address the issues of climate change. Equally, these risks manifested their reality in the form of 7/7 and 9/11 by fundamentally repositioning the basis of cohesive well-being in our cities, putting them in the context of the international landscape.

The issues of community cohesion will no longer be solved at the level of the public square - the square in the neighbourhood or the city will not magically enable social, generational or cultural mixing, whilst to an extent still desirable as a good in itself: their emerging role is instead to support a landscape of tolerance & neutrality where people feel confident and safe to lead networked autonomous lifestyles.

In this context, focusing entirely on rebuilding historic notions of public spaces is at the cost of failing to investigate and redefine the value sets and consciousness that could underpin 21st Century London living: the expansion of our geographical imagination to perceive London's impact on the world economy and ecology; complementing autonomy with interconnectedness, personalisation with shared values. The spaces to intervene and invest in these new ways of living may prove to be virtual as well as physical; ephemeral as well as permanent, dispersed as well as centralised; and as local as they are global.

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It is increasingly clear to us that the romantic scenery of 'public space' provides only one framework for a sustainable 21st Century city. Clearly London has found other ways - be it deliberately short-lived transformations of marginal places, campaigning websites such as Avaaz, gurudwaras, or the growth in private member clubs. It should be noted the emphasis here is upon the continuous support for the emergence of new communities - not just the reinforcing of established communities.

This alternative path has historic precedence but not necessarily in the western tradition. It brings with it a new wave of risks, opportunities, strengths and threats, which need careful examination, monitoring and innovation. But in order to move down this path we have to accept the demise of the unified public space, stop trying to forcibly recreate the small-town agora and consciously embrace these alternative models and some of their implications. Consequently, the key focus should be to support the creation of new publics - 21st Century equivalents of The Reform Clubs and Public Houses, such as locally managed neighbourhood spaces, community living rooms, and temporary experiments in digital or physical space. This does not run counter to the conscious provision of commodified publics, where the joy of witnessing diversity and the curious is supported and enabled through a shared worldview. It



should however be seen as a necessary complement that equally deserves our curiosity and attention within urban policy and our stated concerns about public spaces. This is the 21st century project for London - the conscious & convincing move away from the totemic shadow of the historical 'public space'.

# COLLECTIVE DREAMING AND THE PRACTICE OF CREATIVE DISRUPTION

Lise Autogena

The Olympic Games provide a unique opportunity for cities to dream about the future. This was the case for Barcelona up to the 1992 Olympics - and likewise, the 2012 Olympics now seem to provide a particularly opportune moment for London.

At a time when Londoners are getting to grips with the serious implications of climate change, and when UK government policy has brought global conflicts too close to home, there is a need for long term thinking and for the London Olympics to become an open, inclusive and shared human project. For a prosperous, growing and increasingly diverse London, about to expand dramatically in size with the Thames Gateway project, there could be no better and more important time to involve the very plurality of Londoners in an ongoing and open debate about the future.

But top-down, risk-averse mainstream policymaking continues to disconnect Londoners from the profound changes affecting their city. And worryingly, despite the rhetoric and some genuine ambitions, London's growth seems increasingly synonymous with low aspirations and increased homogenisation of the processes that produce its built environment. It therefore seems urgent to re-view the relationship between people and the current

practices of urban development, and to learn from alternative models: from those organisational structures, community networks and grass root initiatives that have succeeded in generating the very engagement and social integration that we so need on a much larger scale.

Many city spaces have been conceived by the articulation of human desire and ambition on an individual or community basis, rather than by the abstract generalisations of the market, which reframes space as a commodity subject merely to demand and supply. I would argue that it is those quirky, creative and lived-in city spaces that we tend to love the most. However, the real value and dedication generated by such self-made spaces are often not fully understood. Instead, they are seen as disruptive, and placed in opposition to, rather than in an evolving relationship with monetised city structures. This division contrasts with the excitement and love with which large groups of city dwellers embrace such self-made places. We continue to disregard the importance of creative disturbance in our visions of the future. In this essay, I intend to debate three examples of "disruptive" interventions by city dwellers, and their relationship to the wider city.

### **Christiania Free Town: independence within the city**

Christiania in Copenhagen is such a place. In 1970, an article in a local newspaper encouraged a new 'free society' to be created, causing a massive immigration of people from all sections of Danish society to a large Ministry of Defence site in central Copenhagen. Christiania was granted political status as a temporary "social experiment" by the Danish Parliament, but a change of government led to the decision to close Christiania in 1976. This decision was postponed when 10,000 people turned up to protect the free town from closure. In 1989, it was decided to continue the experiment within a legal framework. Christiania's subsequent legal history is complex, but despite changing government's attempts to close it down, it has remained a self-governed, independent entity. Today, it covers an area of 34 hectares in central Copenhagen and is home to around 1000 inhabitants.

Over the years, Christiania has fulfilled a unique social function as a shelter for outsiders in Danish society. Whilst at various times it has struggled with drugs, crime and mental health issues, it has successfully managed to sustain an open and inclusive society, built on the idea of consensus democracy and maximum freedom for the individual. It is a self-built city in the true sense of the word - from systems for water, sewage, roads, electricity, landscaping and telecommunications to institutions for health, children and social support. Many successful ecological projects have started here, and a no-car policy has resulted in experimental bicycle designs becoming a major export. Most importantly, there is no property market, and income is therefore no determining factor in how people are able to live. Houses are designed and inhabited on the basis of need and personal aesthetics rather than sale-ability and purchasing power. The resulting creativity, cultural expression and sense of belonging have had an enormous effect on long

term community engagement and cultural life. It is striking how many of the UK Government's current objectives for civic renewal, double devolution and neighbourhood regeneration - 'active citizenship, 'sense of ownership' - are daily practice in this supposedly 'alternative' community.

Christiania is today one of Denmark's most popular tourist attractions, and a major leisure area and cultural venue in Copenhagen. As such it has had a considerable impact on Denmark's recent cultural history. In the light of the Danish identity crisis following the Mohammed cartoon drawings, a report commissioned by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs recommended the re-branding of Denmark as an innovative, green and socially responsible country with a tradition for dialogue, experimentation and debate - replacing the Little Mermaid and the Danish Royal family with Lars von Trier, windmills and Christiania. Christiania has become an increasingly important asset in the branding of Denmark abroad as a tolerant and inclusive country.

As such it has become valuable for Danish society. This contrast with that very society's general lack of knowledge about Christiania, which is still mostly known for its controversial hash market and fights with the police. No real in-depth study of the social experiment Christiania has ever been commissioned. However, in recent years, rising house prices and the homogenization of Copenhagen have created a sudden surge of interest in Christiania's model of personalised, self-build and recycled architecture and shared ownership, which provides high quality affordable housing and a high degree of influence over one's life. As a unique contemporary example of extra-ordinary city space in the Western world, Christiania has therefore become increasingly relevant in urban theory.

The landowner, the Danish Government, has nevertheless decided to privatise all homes and buildings in Christiania. In forcing individual citizens to claim private ownership, such a measure would in effect kill Christiania as a community built on belonging and ownership through shared use, not formal property rights. Christiania has responded by filing more than 700 individual court cases against the Government, claiming collective as well as individual rights of use to the area. Meanwhile, Realdania, a major foundation supporting the built environment in Denmark, has offered to work with Christiania to finance the development of the area as a social and urban experiment in sustainable housing and architecture.

Although controversial and complex in execution, this is a unique recognition of Christiania as an experiment that could impact more widely in Danish society and beyond. It provides inspiration and hope to other cities that privatisation, homogenisation and the logic of the market are not always a given. As such it may demonstrate that alternative models can co-exist within the larger structure of our cities, and indeed influence wider urban policy thought. It now remains to be seen whether Denmark can retain one of its most interesting pieces of modern history,

## **London Community Moorings: rights to the river**

In London, Hermitage Community Moorings is another attempt to safeguard community living in the face of cultural homogenisation and property speculation. Located near Tower Bridge in central London, it is one of London's oldest moorings in an area with strong historic links to the river Thames. Hermitage Community Moorings evolved from a group of boat owners' year-long fight for the right to live aboard their vessels on the Thames, whilst residents of new riverside apartments claimed the right to an uninterrupted view of the river. Following much press and public debate about historic rights to the river, the case was eventually won by the community in a landmark ruling.

In 2004, a section of the original group acquired the right to the commercial operation of another mooring at Hermitage Wharf, with the view to set up a new kind of secure, not-for-profit residential mooring on the Thames. Residents in riverside apartments once again campaigned against the plans, insisting on their 'ownership' of an uninterrupted view of Tower Bridge. It took another three years of exhaustive campaigning until planning permission was granted. The plans for the mooring had won widespread acclaim and local support, but had not won the full backing from local politicians, fearful of any controversy in the upcoming re-election battle.

Hermitage Community Moorings is now in the process of becoming a cooperatively owned residential mooring that will provide much needed affordable mooring space for historic vessels in central London. The moorings will also incorporate a charitable arm, fed by revenue from commercial guest berths, that will enable new educational, environmental, cultural and international initiatives on the river. This initiative sets an example for community development and thinking far beyond the river, and seems to exemplify everything that London's Thames Gateway development currently is not.

It could not have been achieved without the energy and persistence of a particularly strong and resourceful group of individuals, but not all community initiatives command such human resources and social capital. In the face of fierce and well-resourced opposition from Not-In-My-View apartment dwellers, the mooring residents had to orchestrate a lengthy PR campaign and wage a costly legal battle - leading to bizarre situations, such as having to 'prove' that shipping has always been part of the Thames river landscape. What is evident is the need to develop stronger mechanisms for supporting and encouraging such initiatives, and a much deeper understanding of how community initiatives are allowed to have impact on a wider scale.

## **The Park vs. a park**

The plans for London's 500-acre Olympic Park site involve transforming one of the most under-developed areas in London into an Olympic Legacy Park, with restored natural

ecology and a new infrastructure to provide the setting for sustainable communities. But in the way of London's green Olympic Legacy Park is a thriving oasis of community allotments.

The Manor Garden Allotments in Hackney Wick go back to 1900 when a philanthropic landowner established the allotments for the local poor. Today there are eighty plots, providing food for over 150 families of Turks, Cypriots, Greeks, Jamaicans, Africans and Brits. Many of the gardeners have worked on their plots for decades - some since the 1920s when they had them handed down from their parents. This is a functioning and productive community, which has gardened through two world wars. It is now struggling to understand the Olympic planners' intention to flatten their gardens in order to pave a footpath needed for the duration of the four-week Olympic event.

The irony is clear: in the midst of an area in need of regeneration, this is a sustainable land use which could feed into growing, learning and sharing food and culture, and which contributes to education, mental health, and sustainable land management. It is difficult to see the reasoning in removing it now that it's very existence seems so entirely consistent with the philosophies of a green Olympic Legacy Park, which itself aims to deliver on environment, biodiversity and sustainable communities.

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To me this seems to represent an important milestone - an unmissable opportunity to incorporate a little piece of an *already existing* dream into the grand Olympic plans. If Olympics are about collective dreaming, about imagining the future, then surely a small ecosystem of flowers, plants, rare species, birds, insects and butterflies, an *oeuvre* lovingly nurtured by generations of local families over a hundred years, has an important emblematic role to play as a centre-piece in an Olympic Legacy Park. It is an opportunity to build the Olympics from a human scale vision, enabling the everyday creative gestures, ideas and initiatives to take on an enormous symbolic meaning - and embrace the sense of achievement and real human engagement that mainstream policy is finding so hard to achieve.

'We don't want imagining for us. We don't want it over-imagined. We want to imagine it for ourselves.'

Ian Sinclair  
Writer (on the Olympic Park)

Homepage: [www.autogena.org](http://www.autogena.org)

[www.lifeisland.org](http://www.lifeisland.org)

[www.hc Moorings.org](http://www.hc Moorings.org)

[www.savethemoorings.org](http://www.savethemoorings.org)

[www.christiania.org](http://www.christiania.org)

[www.crir.net](http://www.crir.net)



# THE POST-EXOTIC OLYMPICS

## Why Barcelona's no model for London

**Charlie Tims**

*"For thousands and thousands of people in the world it will probably be the first time they hear or see our country the capital of which is Barcelona"<sup>(1)</sup>.*

**Joan Guitart i Agell**

Conseller de Cultura, Generalitat de Catalunya 1991

*"The Barcelona Games were in a class of their own... Our task now is to take the best of Barcelona and build upon it"<sup>(2)</sup>.*

**Sebastian Coe, Chairman**

London Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (LOCOG), 2006

When the Olympic flame is passed to London at the end of the Beijing Games, it will represent more than just the end of another Olympics. It will close a 20-year period of 'exotic' host cities. Prior to the Games, many of us knew little about these cities - they hosted the Olympics to announce themselves, or their newly modernised selves, to the world: the blazing

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(1) Closing Lecture: Joan Guitart i Agell, Conseller de Cultura, Generalitat de Catalunya in Olympic Games: Media and Cultural Exchanges: The Experience of the last four Summer Games, 1992, Barcelona, Centre d'Estudis Olímpics i de l'Esport, University of Barcelona, p.213.

(2) DCMS (2006) Barcelona's Regeneration a Beacon for London and Britain, Jowell and Coe [www.culture.gov.uk/Reference\\_library/Press\\_notices/archive\\_2006/DCMS145\\_06.htm](http://www.culture.gov.uk/Reference_library/Press_notices/archive_2006/DCMS145_06.htm). Accessed March 2007.



Olympic rings on the Sydney harbour bridge, Muhammad Ali lighting the flame in Atlanta, the Parthenon glowing over Athens. The most successful exotic cities combined the effective staging of the Games with televised images of the city's culture to present a two week civic commercial for mass-global consumption. But as we move on to the second decade of the new century, this model has begun to break down. Widening access to the production and consumption of media, increasing concerns around security and the sheer scale of the Games point to a new model of host city. The end of the exotic city changes the reasons for a city to host the Games, and changes how cities should approach them: If London's Olympics are to be a success, both their *how* and *why* will need to be different from previous cities. As the concerns over the cost of the Games escalate, answering these questions is essential to the London Games' future legitimacy.

Barcelona, more than any other city, wrote the rulebook for exotic Olympic cities. The Games were a trigger for the physical transformation of the city. But what was especially unique and pioneering about Barcelona was the effective communication of its transformation. Prior to the Games, it was widely perceived to be struggling to come to terms with industrial decline and only slowly lifting the cloak of the Franco dictatorship. After the Games, the world hailed Barcelona's cultural traditions celebrated in their "global coming out party"<sup>(3)</sup>. How did Barcelona achieve this?

Firstly, international affairs created a receptive audience for Barcelona. Before the Games, Pasqual Maragall, Mayor of Barcelona and president of Barcelona Organising Committee of the Olympic Games 1992 hailed "the universal Games, with no exclusion"<sup>(4)</sup>. Somewhat fortuitously the years of Barcelona's Olympiad had seen the end of apartheid and the Cold War; it was a period of comparative international peace. For the first time in the modern era no nation boycotted the Games. Crucially their focus was not on the projection of national arguments onto the sporting field, but the relationship between Barcelona itself and the wider world.

Secondly, the organisers were able stage-manage the communication of Barcelona. By 1992 the global audience for the games had reached 4 billion people who experienced them almost exclusively through broadcast and print journalism. This was the heyday of "one to many" communication - what was communicated on television or through journalists was how people discovered the Olympic host city. COOB'92 were acutely aware of this, providing the first special facilities for unaccredited media representatives. Furthermore, it was its spell-binding communication of visual iconography and cultural activity that defined Barcelona's Olympics. As Pasqual Maragall commented before the Games, "The 100m sprint is the same in Seoul as in Barcelona...the big difference we can offer in comparison...is our opening ceremony"<sup>(5)</sup>. So significant was the opening ceremony that one of the organisers later commented, that "when it was completed, many of us within the organisation believed half the work was done"<sup>(6)</sup>. The

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(3) Moragas, de M; Rivenburgh, N; Garcia, N: Television and the Construction of Identity, Centre d'Estudis Olímpics (CEO-UAB) p.3.

(4) Olympic Games: Media and Cultural Exchanges: The Experience of the Last four Summer Games, 1992, Barcelona, Centre d'Estudis Olímpics i de l'Esport, University of Barcelona. p.16.

(5) Payne, M. (2005), Olympic Turn Around, Londres p.170.

(6) Botella, M (1995) The keys to Success of the Barcelona Games, Centre d'Estudis Olímpics (CEO-UAB) p.19.

architecture of Gaudí, the singing of Carreras, the art of Tapiès and Miro; the archer lighting the flame with a burning arrow during the opening ceremony and the well choreographed shots over the city at the Montjuic Olympic swimming pool projected a harmony of Catalan, Spanish, Mediterranean culture that came to define Barcelona as a city.

Thirdly, Barcelona was comparatively unknown. It's easy to forget now, but during the 1980s Barcelona was not a major tourist destination. Those communicating Barcelona had comparatively few preconceptions of the city to counter. This effectively created the formula for 'exotic' Olympic cities: a receptive global audience, rigid control of the media and a comparatively unknown city. The key legacy of the Barcelona model was to show that urban change, culture and communication were inseparable, launching the term "cultural regeneration" into the popular lexicon. The integration of the Games with the city's wider development trajectory boosted tourism and made it a fashionable place to live and do business.

Hundreds of cities around the world sought to emulate the lessons of Barcelona, courting major events and mega-architects in the quest for place definition and distinctiveness. Bilbao built a Guggenheim in derelict docks, Dubai erected Burj Al Arab Hotel on a man-made island and Portsmouth opened the Spinnaker Tower. The winning of World Cups, Commonwealth Games, Capitals of Culture and Expos is celebrated as opportunities to reinvent cities.

Barcelona is still the definitive reference point for host cities who hope to make the most of such events. The leaders of LOCOG's Olympic team visited Barcelona, and Tessa Jowell, Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport, expressed her desire to repeat its "tremendous achievements"<sup>(7)</sup>. But the model provided by Barcelona may not be directly transferable to London.

Put simply, Barcelona provided an opportunity for two things: urban redevelopment and a cultural celebration changed global perceptions of the city. In London, the wheels of the former are already in motion, but the plans for the latter are still in the process of being formulated. The brand for the London Games, the format for the Cultural and Education Programmes, and the concept for the legacy trust are still undecided. For this cultural celebration, Barcelona's 'exotic' model doesn't appear to fit London's frame.

*Firstly, London is not an unknown city.* The size and cost of staging the Olympics have grown so significantly that there are only a few cities big and sophisticated enough to take them on. Between 1980 and 2000 the Games gained 7 new sports and 80 new events<sup>(8)</sup>. The experience of Athens, where the Olympic infrastructure was barely completed in time, showed how great a burden the Games have become for smaller cities. But big cities like London are also well-known cities. They have associations with figureheads, symbols and buildings throughout the world, as well as manifold personal links due to sheer size and cul-

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(7) DCMS (2006) Barcelona's Regeneration a Beacon for London and Britain, Jowell i Coe [www.culture.gov.uk/Reference\\_library/Press\\_notices/archive\\_2006/DCMS145\\_06.htm](http://www.culture.gov.uk/Reference_library/Press_notices/archive_2006/DCMS145_06.htm). Accessed March 2007.

(8) Cashmen, R, Impact of the Games on Olympic Host Cities, Centre d'Estudis Olímpics (CEO-UAB), p.8.

tural diversity. Those communicating London to the world will not be painting its image onto a blank canvass.

*Secondly, the culture of London may not enjoy a receptive global audience.* The backdrop of comparative global harmony that surrounded the Barcelona Games is unlikely to be repeated in London. So great were security concerns in Athens that many news agencies dispatched their war correspondents to the opening ceremony. Concerns about whether London can guarantee the safety of the Games are likely to reduce room for the communication of London's culture during its Olympiad. The clashing of the Games with Ramadan is also potentially inflammatory.

*Thirdly, the communication of London to the world will be a collective activity.* Since the turn of the millennium we have seen a democratisation of the media. So embedded in the popular consciousness is this transition that Time Magazine's 2006 person of the year was awarded to "You". Youtube is rapidly on the way to becoming the world's biggest TV station, Wikipedia its most comprehensive encyclopedia, Flickr its biggest photo archive while online diaries mushroom exponentially. If these don't provide an alternative to mainstream media, they provide a significant supplement. None of the new media can be controlled by press release or camera angle. The communication of London during the Olympic Games in 6 years time will be a collective, dispersed activity.

In short, the audience for London and the post-exotic city will be harder to reach and what will be communicated will be harder to control. Furthermore, London's already established status as a global city calls into question not just *how* London will stage the Games, but *what* staging them in London is *actually* for. The implication of this is that the 'post-exotic' London Games demand the positive, active involvement of large groups of people. There are three crucial reasons for this.

*Necessity:* Controlling the commercial use of the Olympic brand is clearly of crucial importance to the financial viability of the Olympic movement, but control of the 'London' or 'UK' brand can no longer be centrally staged. People increasingly look to media not as a source of authority, but as a place where they can participate in collective deliberation. The communication of the Games will be a mass activity - if it isn't already, by 2012 London will be a collaborative brand. Finding different ways for people to participate in and have a relationship to the Games will make it more likely that the army of communicators will relay a positive experience of the Games and London.

*Legitimacy:* The rows in London about the escalating Olympic cost will not be settled when a fall guy is named. The Games face a crisis of legitimacy, not of cost. People will not accept the costs until they can see the value, and how the Games relate to them. The reasons for staging past Olympics have always amounted to "physical transformation + X". The X for the exotic cities was about those cities "coming out" on a global stage. Before that, the "X" was a

way of healing states tarnished by world war (London 48, Tokyo 60, Munich 72), generating worldwide attention for the achievements of countries (Finland 52, Australia 56, Mexico 68 and Canada 76) or simple geo-political power play (Moscow 80, Los Angeles 84)<sup>(9)</sup>. As London lacks a clear X-factor, there is an urgent need to make sure that the Games relate to people on their own terms, rather than just as a TV spectacle.

*Integrity:* There are indications that participation in the Games is taken seriously by the LOCOG. The organizers of the Games have called for participation in the Games and people have responded by saying they want to. 100,000 people have expressed an interest in volunteering. Across the country community groups, charities and city councils are at the ready. This energy and enthusiasm could rapidly turn into disillusionment without routes for this energy to be channelled. Finally, given that rising costs could mean that public contributions outweigh those of commercial sponsors, this starts to appear profoundly undemocratic. If people are paying for the Games they should be able to associate with them.

So, if the model for the post-exotic city is to shift from the epic cultural statements of Barcelona and base its Olympics around the power and participation of people, what should the principles for Olympic Programming be?

## Opening up the olympic brand

In January, The Culture, Media and Sport select committee concluded that “an ability to associate with the 2012 Games on a non-commercial basis is essential if community involvement and legacy is to be realized to its full potential.” However, LOCOG's commands to non-profit organisations are completely incompatible with the spirit of ownership needed for people to participate in the Games. They stipulate to “*think of creative ways to capture the philosophy and values of the Games but without creating an association with them*”<sup>(10)</sup>, secondly not to “put on events or produce publications which focus on the Games without speaking to LOCOG first”<sup>(11)</sup> and finally to “*get involved in Official London 2012 programmes, once these are established*”<sup>(12)</sup> (italics added). If community organisations, local authorities and sports clubs cannot relate to the Games on their own terms, they are unlikely to want to participate in them. Such tight control of the brand for non-commercial use will almost certainly alienate further public support for the Games.

At Demos we have developed a model for distributing the value of the Olympics back to communities through the Street Games. This would enable people and community organisations to run street-based competitions on their own terms during the cultural Olympiad, for their own reasons, relying less on central planning and control<sup>(13)</sup>.

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(9) A New Phase in the competition for the Olympic Gold: The London and New York bids for the 2012 Games, Noam Shoval, 2002.

(10) LOCOG London 2012 Brand Protection What you need to know - information for non-commercial organisations, p.16.

(11) LOCOG London 2012 Brand Protection What you need to know - information for non-commercial organisations, p.20.

(12) LOCOG London 2012 Brand Protection What you need to know - information for non-commercial organisations, p.20.

(13) More information about The Street Games can be found at [www.demos.co.uk/projects/demosandtheolympics/overview](http://www.demos.co.uk/projects/demosandtheolympics/overview). Accessed March 2007.

Enabling associations with the brand for non-commercial reasons is pre-requisite of different forms of participation in the Games. Indeed, as Michael Payne, the IOC's first Marketing Director and architect of the existing Olympic Brand wrote in his book *The Olympic Turnaround*.

"The Olympic brand is one of the most powerful brands in the world. To remain so, its future stewards will have to be vigilant in defending its honour, and yet also have the courage to grasp new opportunities as they present themselves. It is only by constantly reinventing itself (...) that the Olympic Movement can remain relevant and vital in a changing world"<sup>(14)</sup>.

## **A broader understanding of participation**

The Select Committee report also concluded that, despite clear aspirations to increase sporting participation, "no host country has yet been able to demonstrate a direct benefit from the Olympic Games in the form of a lasting increase in participation"<sup>(15)</sup>. If the sole indicator of success for participation is more people playing more sport, then we may have set ourselves up for failure already.

Instead, we need to find as many different ways as possible to participate and learn through sport. For example, young people in schools could document athletes training for the Olympics in their own area in different ways - on film, in audio, in pictures. This information could be coordinated in a low-barrier, digital resource, accessible to people around the world. During the Olympics this would be a place for people to find out the background stories behind Olympians who will have shot to stardom during the Games.

## **Institutional story telling**

If participation in the Olympics is going to increase, it will rely on education and cultural programmes that grant considerable flexibility to people, enabling them to take part in different activities. Organising Committees tend to be conscious of the need to present coherent Cultural Programmes that tell a clear story about the Olympics, the host city and the nation. But rather than seeing the only way of controlling the image of the Games as centrally "ratifying" all activity connected to them, Organising Committees will need to find ways of communicating their messages by opening up to activities that are already happening.

"In 2012 the eyes of the world will be on London" - it's a well-worn phrase. But in a world where our fortunes are increasingly intertwined with one another, the significance of such a moment cannot be lost. The current furore around the cost of the Games partly relates to the inability to articulate the value of this moment or the role that people can play in it. Olympics

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(14) Michael Payne (2005), *Olympic Turn Around*, London, p.286.

(15) House of Commons, Culture, Media and Sport Committee, London 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games: funding and legacy, Second report of Session 2006-07 Volume 1 Report, together with formal minutes Ordered by The House of Commons to be printed 17th January 2007. p.37.

will always be about regeneration and the physical transformation of a place, but they have always been about more than that. Seoul, Barcelona, Sydney, Athens and Beijing all aspired to mark indelible statements on the world's consciousness. None were more successful than Barcelona. Though London does not need to puncture the global consciousness in the same way, the sense of some kind of opportunity remains.

If the goal of the exotic city was to show distinctiveness from the rest of the world, the challenge for the post-exotic city is to emphasise its real connections to the world. The 21st century will not just be led by economically powerful cities and distinctive places, but also by places that can inspire the confidence of people throughout the world. This is not just a pragmatic approach necessitated by the impossibility of centralised media control. It is the right long-term approach for the post-exotic Olympics, and the right approach for the most culturally diverse city to ever host the game. The prize for the city that can achieve this is a greater one than merely tourists and new business. It is the cultural authority to lead and inspire the world as it turns to face the immense challenges of the 21st Century. The only model for such a city is a collective one.



# YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES: TWO PERSPECTIVES

**Joan Monràs**

There is no denying that both Barcelona and London are cities of opportunity. The many people, particularly the young, who flock to live in either place (though sometimes only temporarily) must believe it. So it is natural to compare the opportunities offered by these two European capitals, to see what each one has to offer and find out why they attract a certain type of person or another; to discover in what aspects Barcelona prevails over London (besides the often-proclaimed 'quality of life') and where London can teach Barcelona a thing or two.

When talking about opportunities, we must differentiate between personal development and, more generally, growth opportunities. The "BCN\_LDN Work Party" was divided up into morning sessions on community spirit and public culture, and an afternoon devoted to creativity and public imagination. In fact, the two kinds of opportunities that I want to address here are deeply connected with both sessions. In the first place, personal development opportunities are inseparably connected to the question that so often occupies policymakers: what does a city have to offer that make it attractive to live in. This goes beyond the 'live, work and play' cliché, nor am I just talking about the weather. Public culture, the community's fundamental desire and capacity to make individuals feel they want to live in a specific city and develop themselves, is essential for young people. On the other hand, a European city that



does not also aim to develop a permanent culture of creativity and integration within the globalised world will not manage to retain young people. The open city that successfully combines both is the city that allows people to create and grow their own projects within the framework of urban life.

This differentiation of opportunities is applicable to anyone. It is equally urgent to a young unqualified immigrant who is looking for opportunities to establish a new livelihood, as it is applicable to a highly qualified immigrant who is looking for companies and projects attractive enough to enable him or her to develop and grow; and likewise to a native of the city, whose retention can never be taken for granted even in the most prosperous cities. In this essay, I will compare the opportunities offered by Barcelona and London, whilst attempting not to lose sight of the very diversity of the young people who go to live in cities of that size.

## **Growth opportunities**

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Clearly, a first difference between London and Barcelona is the status of their universities. London has such universities as the London School of Economics, the Imperial College and King's College London. All three are ranked among the 100 best universities in the world; in fact, the LSE and the Imperial College are included in the top 20<sup>(1)</sup>. In contrast, the Universitat de Barcelona is celebrating this year having entered the top 200, thereby becoming the second Spanish university to do so. It is true that, to make an in-depth analysis of the level of the different universities, we would have to discuss different departments, include business schools and particularly innovative projects that happen under the surface of any institution and which are not taken into consideration in the official data. In any event, despite the remarkable efforts made by some Catalan universities, these data illustrate how the dimensions of London and Barcelona differ from each other at university level.

Top-quality universities are indispensable for creating new opportunities for young people. They are a source of attraction for top-level students, regardless of their origin. If they can connect to the city where they study, projecting their ideas and creativity upon it, some of them will stay on to live there, setting up their own businesses or developing new projects wherever they are employed. In brief, quality universities are one of the key catalysts that help to grow job opportunities. Looking at the question from the perspective of Barcelona, once we succeed in having a truly globalised university, we will find that many top-notch students will come to live here. Given its high standard of living and the cultural, business and creative infrastructure in Barcelona, it is highly probable that these new students will want to stay and develop new projects. It is thus a question of attracting people who can create new projects that will favourably affect the city's development and generate opportunities not only for themselves, but also for and with the public at large.

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(1) Times Higher Education Supplement. World University Rankings 2006.

There is little doubt that the university atmosphere in London is much more international. People from all over the world, not just Erasmus students who have seen the film *L'auberge espagnol* (the film that is to student exchanges what *Easy Rider* and *Bonnie and Clyde* were to the road movie, and which typically is set in Barcelona), go to get a degree or do postgraduate studies in London. From China (no doubt the emerging market for universities) to Mexico, students from around the world find London an attractive city in which to finish their studies. London's reach and atmosphere is global, whereas in Barcelona it is European at most. I think this should be emphasised because I am not sure we are fully aware of this fact in Barcelona. We feel we live in a really global city, but London shows us that this is not true.

Neither can we compare the level of internationalisation of companies in Catalonia with those in London. Strolling through Canary Wharf, Soho or Southall you can see how fully global London business is in the most diverse sense of the word. At the top of the scale, young graduates from everywhere try to get a job in banks like Citibank or consulting firms such as McKenzie, whose markets are spread out across the world. This is just one of the opportunities for young people to develop their professional lives. No doubt, aspiring young professionals from across the globe flock to London to get a Master's degree and then start work in these multinationals, in Soho's creative sector or in high-tech. Equally important, London's cleverness is evident in how it allowed street markets to be a source of integration for those without formal qualifications. They are one of the mechanisms that give immigrants a starting point from which to participate in the economy, from selling second-hand bikes in Brick Lane to niche products in the sophisticated Portobello Road. This is not just an example of how to connect and integrate immigrants with the shared life of Londoners but also a stepping stone towards further social mobility. I think London's experience is of great value not only to Barcelona but also to other cities that receive large numbers of immigrants. In this respect, London is the ultimate open city, the benchmark that illustrates how to give a large diversity of people the opportunity they need.

Barcelona is by no means as big as London. However, we must not overlook a fact that I consider to be favourable for young people's enterprising spirit, which might well be a crucial advantage. The Catalan business community is fundamentally made up of small and medium-sized enterprises, normally much more dynamic (though more vulnerable) than large companies. This seems to leave more scope for the creation of companies and more innovative projects, bridging between the street market and the multinationals and allowing small scale initiatives from newcomers and long-time residents alike to scale up more easily and contribute their creativity to the city.

The dynamism, openness and creativity of business, whether big or small, are just as effective a tool for attracting young people as the halls of academia. They constitute another indispensable element in the virtuous circle for attracting people to generate opportunities for all.

## Personal development within a city project

Although Barcelona has much to learn from London in terms of openness, global excellence and the creation of opportunity, the opposite might be the case with respect to the necessary creation of an atmosphere and collective projects where people can take advantage of and co-create these opportunities. Many anecdotes have shown us how young people from elsewhere come to Barcelona at the slightest excuse - just to 'be there'. We have heard people say "People live so well in Barcelona" so often that we can see Barcelona will have the opportunities it offers snapped up immediately.

This is a good thing, and fundamental for any city: it must offer the necessary conditions to allow people to *live* fully the opportunities on offer. It is difficult to put into words just what it is that, from my point of view, gives Barcelona that power to translate growth, the economic factor, into sustained everyday life and the development of the person. I don't know if it is the cultural opportunities, the sheer experience of the streets and cafés, or the sunny weather - but the truth that is I feel a greater collective concern in Barcelona to ensure it continues to be a city to *live* in rather than just work. However, this present asset, the value of which we can hardly overstate, must be made to last.

The experience of the 1992 Olympic Games is a good illustration of this point. Barcelona made a tremendous effort, demonstrating that through a collective project it was possible to show its potential quality as a city. More recently there have been less successful efforts to re-create such collective projects as driving force for change and renewal. However I believe Barcelona's inhabitants are much more deeply concerned with the future of their city as a project of public imagination than their London counterparts, partly because a sense of shared permanence contrasts with London's intense population turnover. I feel entitled to assert that this endows Barcelona with a series of opportunities less present in London.

Barcelona, however, needs to find the right balance between modernising the city and maintaining a spirit of neighbourhood, with its small local cafés and free theatre that London sometimes seems to have lost. From the political viewpoint, a greater realism and pragmatism in the policy-making process would seem to point the way towards modernising Barcelona and creating more opportunities. I call to mind the recently renowned municipal ordinances. When such ordinances are drafted, there is a great difference between the immediate projection of the city's problems and solutions as they respond to the politics of the day, and their actual impact on urban life. It is worthwhile remembering this, lest we end up editing out either the quality of life generated by greater modernisation, or the quality of life as derived from appropriately preserving the traditional.

## **Beyond the city**

At the “BCN\_LDN Work Party”, a participant from Sabadell (outside the City of Barcelona) observed quite rightly that, when compared to London, Barcelona's image of itself fails to include the whole metropolitan. In terms of the number of inhabitants, transport network and way of life, London should always be compared with Barcelona's entire metropolitan area. Cities such as Sabadell, Terrassa, l'Hospitalet de Llobregat and Sant Cugat del Vallès are closely bound to Barcelona, but are often forgotten. This is as though we forgot that Wimbledon, Hammersmith, the East End or Canary Wharf formed part of London.

Acknowledging the Greater Barcelona will help us realise the challenge of coordinating policies across the metropolitan area. It is fundamentally important to realise that whatever Barcelona achieves, so will Sabadell, and vice versa. Opportunity knows no narrow boundaries and will be created, shared and multiplied across the metropolitan area. Growing the quality of education and business beyond the administrative City is a great future challenge. As a first step, we need to reinforce political collaboration among all metropolitan municipalities, starting from the logic and experience of the user, not the provider. With escalating housing prices forcing more and more young people to settle in the surrounding cities, their mobility problems become a political task of prime importance.

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I would add that what is outside the city itself is also important in terms of the city's development opportunities. I refer here to the wider region and to the possibility we have in Barcelona of expanding our creative imagination to the towns on the coast and to the mountains of Montserrat, Montseny and the Pyrenees. There are not many cities in the world that can claim to have beach and mountain resorts at less than an hour's distance, and I think that this quality should not be underestimated. The opportunity of developing one's life beyond the context of the actual city might well become one of the differentiating traits of large cities that will ensure their liveability. Taking care of Catalonia, both culturally and ecologically speaking is implied in taking care of Barcelona.

## **Conclusions**

One of our “BCN\_LDN Work Party” activities was to build physical models of imaginary cities. We were divided up into four groups, with the task of collaboratively conjuring up different models of desirable cities. I would like to mention two of the model cities that were improvised.

One of the models built considered the city as a whole, as finished project. It was balanced in that it had everything the designers considered to be necessary to make the city attractive to live in. A second model showed a city in constant motion, with districts that were built up and knocked down, universities that were successful and others abandoned, with

new institutions and facilities to replace obsolete ones, with environmental disaster and the simultaneous undoing of its toxic causes.

These two models implicitly referred to a third model: a combination of the two. A third model where the quality of life represented in the first model was in harmony with the second one's opportunities for development, growth and transformation. Such a city would be a magnet for talented people, generating wealth and well-being in a virtuous cycle combining both London's and Barcelona's unique strengths. In brief, a city of opportunities to inhabit, live and create - for young people, and for the not-so-young, too.

# THE FLOWER SELLERS

Anwar Akhtar

I have been visiting Barcelona frequently since 1997, when I first fell for the city of Gaudí and Orwell, the city where modernity and tradition appear to have found a happy accommodation in world class design, architecture and culture; a place that puts into practice the principles that people and culture should be at the heart of civic and city planning rather than the car, the housing estate and the retail park.

Barcelona has culture in abundance in all its forms: from Barcelona FC, Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA) and Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona (CCCB), which is possibly my favourite arts space anywhere, to some of the finest bars, dance floors, cafés and restaurants in Europe, from the most wonderfully simple to the grand, and a beach as well. What's not to like? I have always thought of Barcelona as the thinking man's Ibiza and I have an ongoing love affair with the city that is not likely to abate in the near future.

It would be a mistake to place the credit for the mainly successful dynamic regeneration that Barcelona undertook through the 1980s and 1990s, and is still experiencing today, totally on the impact of the 1992 Olympics. Equally it would be wrong to deny that the Games did have had a significant impact. Easy comparisons between Barcelona and London regarding planning and delivery of the Games should also be avoided. Without going into detail, the cultural circumstances (for the glory of Catalonia), or the governance and management

arrangements could not be more different: Barcelona never had the five London Borough partnership and various agencies feeding into the Mayor's office and Central Government via the two main delivery bodies of LOCOG and ODA. This is not to say London's approach is wrong, just the reality in terms of delivery and democratic accountability more complex. The same could be said for London as a city of course.

### **“Tu Pakistani heh?”**

Barcelona also reminds me of several encounters with the flower sellers there, who from my experience are mainly Pakistani. Anyone who spends more than ten minutes in central Barcelona will come across them. My encounters usually take place around Café Del Opera on the Ramblas, the nearby Plaça Reial or Parc Guell. As I politely refuse the offer of purchasing a rose, they give me a double look that means “hey Asian guy, where are you from”, and then I have the choice of responding to the question that maybe one in three or four asks, “tu Pakistani heh?” I always respond with “gee maa Pakistani heh” - although a Pakistani in a very different place from where they are: me, second generation Manchester-born, sat outside one of the most wonderful grand cafés in Europe with my girlfriend, having coffee before heading off to knock back the best cocktails Barcelona has to offer (Salsitas and Fonfone if your interested), before going onto to the dance floors of Danzatoria or Otto Zutz until dawn. Rashid's night however - we had exchanged names by then - would consist of wandering the bars, cafés and restaurants of Barcelona with a plastic vase full of red roses offering them up for five euros a go. Rashid came from Multan, in central Pakistan, to Barcelona and is living in a flat with his uncle and four other guys who had come over two years earlier. He was hoping to get a job on a building site soon. That was pretty much all I got to know about Rashid before he was on his way. I like to think that the five minutes he spent sat down over a cigarette provided a bit of a break from the sheer tedium and hostility that must make up the bulk of his working day, struggling to make a living on one the lowest rungs of the immigrant's work ladder.

I have lots of questions related to the world of the Pakistani flower sellers of Barcelona.

For example, why do they do the flowers, whilst African immigrants seem to do the imitation Louis Vutton and Prada bags? The Pakistanis also get to do the imitation sunglasses - has there been some trade deal, an underground version of the World Trade Organisation, splitting up the street trade in black market goods by sectors and communities? You can reach your own conclusion as to which version may be more just and equitable.

### **The flower sellers' community**

Over the last ten years I have seen the Pakistani community in Barcelona grow and change from my exchanges with some of the many flower sellers (there are also Indian flo-

wer sellers but the majority are Pakistani). I have observed as the inevitable followed: the barber shops, cafés and grocers starting to appear, initially down back alleys in ramshackle buildings and then ever more visible, along and around the areas of Carrer Hospital and all throughout the Raval, just off the Ramblas. Then followed film and music stores and that unmistakable sign of economic globalisation and the movement of people and world cultures: the discount call centre.

I assume the world of the flower sellers was initially very male, immigrants nearly always travel male first. The world of the flower sellers in Barcelona is not that different from the world where my father and uncles arrived, in Rusholme, Manchester in the mid-60s. Their stories are of sleeping with four or five to a room, sharing beds as there were always at least two working night shifts - eighteen hour working days involving two jobs, until the moment of delivery: the deposit paid on a house and the plane tickets purchased for wives and sisters to join them. My father and his peers were doing the jobs that white people did not want or fancy at the time, combined with the Asian aptitude for trade and work ethics which later led to a remodelling and updating of the tradition of England as a nation of shop keepers.

As I have observed the Pakistani community grow in Barcelona, some of it has been a pleasure: the arrival of outdoor cricket games in the Plaça dels Angels in front of MACBA; gangs of school children that will grow up with all the joys and value of being bilingual and bicultural, Spanish-Urdu or to be exact Catalan-Urdu. The amazing feeling of being able to place your soul in two places at opposite ends of the globe at the same time: Barcelona and Multan, Manchester and the Punjab, if it was good enough for Kipling...

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The explosion of small retail businesses in the Ravel gives the flower sellers and their children the opportunity to climb the economic ladder, progressing and continuing to contribute to the city. Perhaps to counter outfits such as Migration Watch and their claim that “the economic benefits of immigration amount to just four pence per week to each native Briton”, as a son of an immigrant (do I qualify as native to Migration Watch?), I reckon as a rough calculation that throughout my working life in this country as a club promoter and DJ, to developing music venues and cultural centres, I have contributed over £30 million to the UK GDP and created scores if not hundreds of jobs, something I like to underline to Daily Mail readers whenever they cross my path and also to the recently announced English National Ballet’s dancing Nazi if she ever does<sup>(1)</sup>. I pay her wages.

Other questions occur as I see the Pakistani community grow in Barcelona. The school parties of young children: will they be able to grow and succeed in their places of birth, or will they be forced to look elsewhere, alienated by either hostility or overt racism in Barcelona and a religious and political leadership (the two are usually connected) of self appointed community leaders as we have had in the UK, often whose only qualification for their posts seems

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(1) It was revealed in December 2006 that Simone Clarke, dancer at the English National Ballet, is secretly a member of the extreme-right British National Party.



to be a combination of ignorance, fear of changes, fear of the other and a huge dose of misogyny. To replace the emphasis the Pakistani community in the UK places on education and academic success with the levels of educational failure now seen in the UK by young Pakistanis is in significant part the achievement of the community leadership practiced by these people.

Is the Pakistani community growing up in Barcelona experiencing the same level of hostility and endless bigotry as practiced by some voices in the UK media, especially post 9/11? Are there Catalan versions of Melanie Philips<sup>(2)</sup>, Rod Little<sup>(3)</sup> and Richard Littlejohn<sup>(4)</sup> at work, churning out similar levels of hate? My faith in the UK as a place of tolerance where cultures and people just get on with each other, feels vindicated by the fact that thankfully we do not live in a country where Philips', Littlejohn et al.'s visions of doom, cynicism, failure of the human spirit and inevitable conflict are shared by the majority.

Will the young Pakistanis in Barcelona take to Barça FC with as much fervour as I took to Manchester City Football Club, granted that Barça FC is probably a more alluring sell than MCFC? Will a writer emerge working in Catalan with the same ability to tell stories and weave magic with words as Hanif Kureishi does with English? Will a boxer emerge to represent Spain in 2012 the way Amir Khan represented Britain in 2004? Will the shopping and restaurant areas around Raval grow to the same level of exuberance and life as those around Southall and Green Street in London, or Rusholme in Manchester? Will they be allowed to do so? Will the Barcelona authorities allow the soul of Catalonia to be fully shared and its future to be shaped by its newly emerging communities? One-way that question may be answered will be if we see the Boqueria market, that most famous of food temples in Barcelona, house some stalls selling pickles, lassis, ladoos and samosas.

What will the leadership be in the community that Rashid and his compatriots are building in Barcelona? In fact, what will be the community? This in large part depends on all communities, new or old, that currently live in Barcelona. However, I would make one suggestion to those that wield political and civic power and economic patronage: to look beyond those inevitably middle aged male elders who say they are the community leaders, and find other voices - especially female ones, second generation ones, and those working in the cultural sectors, and empower them as the flower sellers and their families find their way in Barcelona.

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(2) Melanie Philips, Daily Mail columnist and author of the book 'Londonistan' which according to her website "pieces together the story of how Londonistan developed as a result of the collapse of British self-confidence and national identity and its resulting paralysis by multiculturalism and appeasement".

(3) Rod Little, commentator in the Sunday Times and other media, known for his anti immigrant views.

(4) Richard Littlejohn, Daily Mail columnist and allegedly BNP leader Nick Griffith's favourite journalist.

# CITY-STATE OR FLAGSHIP-CITY?

Ivan Serrano

Cities have intensified their roles in the world as independent actors. We could even say they are currently one of the main intermediaries between globalisation processes and individuals. Urban strategies to take part in transnational economic and cultural flows inevitably presuppose certain models of citizenship and participation. In the present context, it seems a given, furthermore, that cities take up competitive positions on a global market, almost as though they were products. The fundamental challenge they face is therefore to define the model they adopt to stake out their global position whilst connecting it to local citizen participation. In my opinion, there are essentially two models for cities of the future: the city-state and the flagship-city. Each of these models implies a particular community model, understood as the framework within which individuals define their identity and exercise their status as citizens.

## **Identity and citizenship**

The origins of citizenship as we understand it today can be traced back to classical Athens. Athens' conception of a citizen was innovative in that it ceased to consider ethnic identity as the basic criterion for membership and substituted it with a political criterion: what marked an Athenian's capacity as a member of the community was his ability to participate

in the affairs of the *polis*. The political system was objectified to a large degree by its territorialisation; borders and cities were basic elements in the process. If we now take a leap forward in time, we will find that the status of belonging to a community was similarly objectified with the emergence of the modern state which took root in the Peace of Westphalia. Here, the foundations were laid for the idea of citizenship to be linked to the idea of the nation-state from the 18th century onwards. This evolved further during the democratising processes of the 19th and 20th centuries, with the gradual development of civil, political and social rights.

Besides a series of established rights and duties, citizenship constitutes a dimension of individuals' identity. Identity can be understood as the conception individuals have of themselves, expressed dialogically in relation to 'significant others'. In this process, the community is the framework within which individuals socialise and shape their identities. In my view, cities significantly mediate the relationship between the community and the individual. The city is a vehicle linking the formal status of citizenship with its exercising in practice, insofar as it articulates the individual's pertaining to a community. Thus the identity of the individual as a citizen is not restricted to an institutionalised conception of a set of rights and duties; citizenship is also a set of shared values and practices.

The city has historically been a source of social, economic and cultural innovation and this role has been strengthened even further in recent years. Intensified globalisation, technological change and migratory movements have their effect on cities. This requires cities to be aware of how they mediate between the individual, the community and these global processes. What should be the cities' role in the playing out of identities in a globalised world? Will they tend to become independent economic and cultural spaces, where social relations will solely be articulated on the worldwide level of the 'global city'? Will this model tend to make cities more like each other and generate a sort of harmonising cosmopolitanism? Or will cities become hubs from which a community's culture can be projected, while maintaining roots in its own territory? In brief, will cities participate in the globalising processes from the standpoint of what makes them different or what they have in common?

### **City-state or flagship-city?**

Cities are the stage where current-day society acts out its problems, challenges, opportunities and debates. In fact, reflections on the nature of cities are part of what makes them a source of innovation and social change. Precisely this makes it necessary to reflect consciously on the scenarios we imagine for our cities, and according to which model we approach their development; not only from the physical and legal aspects, but also from the standpoint of a community project, only too often pushed back out of the limelight as a result of excessive emphasis placed on the physicality of planning. Cities are the stage where models of belonging are put into practice, the framework within which individuals' identity -

understood as a set of values and practices - is configured, where they can act as citizens in the broadest sense of the word. Exercising citizenship reflects a vision of society over and above a mere set of formal rights and obligations. From the role of cities as intermediaries between local and global flows follows the necessity to be aware of the idea of the city as promoted by governments, organised society and economic networks.

I believe that the challenge for cities is to position themselves with respect to the two strategic options mentioned above. On the one hand, city-states seek a place on the international market by exploiting the resources and strategic opportunities that present themselves. These are major conurbations such as Los Angeles and Shanghai, or specialised cities - we could almost call them *single-issue* cities - like Las Vegas and Venice. On the other hand, we have the flagship-cities of national or regional communities which promote participation in the globalisation processes from the standpoint of their self-interpretation as cultural communities.

This two-fold option that I raise does not claim to be universally valid, but to be locally useful. Alternative models can be thought up. Cities in states like Germany and the United States often play a hyperspecialised role in a network of cities: Frankfurt, Hamburg, Munich, Boston, Seattle and Houston are cities that may have a lesser impact on the world market-stage but they participate in a special way; for example, through a high level of sectoral specialisation. In the case of Germany, some of these cities even maintain their autonomous political status as a city-state. However, the important thing is that cities and their citizens articulate the models they prefer, and on which they will orient their course of action. This is not so much a singular strategic plan as a situation whereby all urban policies contain a strategic component.

In my view, it would be mistake for Barcelona to choose the city-state option. At the moment it cannot compete with the hyperspecialised, high-value-added cities mentioned here, among other things because it is not a worldwide or European leader in any specific sector. Equally, a single-minded opting for low-value-added *single-issue* industries such as tourism would generate an unsustainable city model. In the arena of flagship-cities, Barcelona is also on a secondary plane: London, Paris and Madrid are clearly on a different level. In many cases, cities in this category are state capitals, so we could expect state-wide institutions to play an important role. However, this group also includes cities like Milan, Sidney and New York, which are not capitals. Nevertheless, it is necessary to debate openly the articulation and projection of a city's future narratives, and to implement the resulting political approach both internally and externally. This ought to happen from the realisation that a city is - along with other dimensions - a moral community that will have values and practices worthy of fostering.

The two options I put forward have diverging moral evaluations. I think the flagship-city is preferable to the city-state model. And not just from the standpoint of identity formation, but also for *material* reasons such ecological sustainability and the urban effects on the surrounding territory. So will we see cities eating up their hinterlands like phagocytes, exploiting their natural and human resources? Or cities that are integrated into their area of influen-

ce as a kind of *soft* capital, where their specificity is the basis that will enable them to situate themselves satisfactorily in terms of social, economical and cultural globalisation?

In my view, the flagship-city can act like a hub for its reference territory and assumes the role of a capital city in a broad sense: political, cultural and economic. Thus, the city can be a source of desirable identities by contributing positive values for the definition of the individual. In comparison, a city-state would probably mean a city without a distinct personality, closer to the worldwide network of cities to which it is connected than to its own territory. In this case, the city structure itself is fragile: unless it makes the effort to participate in the globalisation processes from the perspective of its differentiating factors, it may end up at the mercy of flows by means of which, in the long term, it will lose all capacity for independent status or agency.

### **London-Barcelona**

Each in their own way, London and Barcelona need to establish models of positioning themselves towards the future. London is a leading city that has successfully played a central role in the world arena, but its very success may also sow the seeds of failure as mediator between global processes and individuals. Unless the city is able to sustain a culturally and socially cohesive society, the possibility of its ending up as a 'generic' global city without local identity is not rhetoric. A great city like London could become exclusive and fragment further - not only territorially but also socially - if large numbers of its inhabitants do not recognise themselves in the urban project and cannot participate in co-formulating it. Besides failing to take advantage of its human potential, succumbing to such a situation could lead to an interpretative vacuum in terms of its definition as a city and as a community, thereby turning it into what we could call an 'anomic' city. An anomic city is incapable of formulating a shared and cohesive model through which to project itself internally and externally. Such a city runs the risk of having to resort to adopting a reactive action model, both when confronting newly emerging problems - including those resulting from its very anomie - and when taking advantage of the opportunities that arise in the global context to which it can respond through merely tactical, exclusively economic or other short-termist means.

In the case of Barcelona, the problem plays on a different level. Anomie in this case involves letting the symbolic and interpretative 'locus of control' slip away from the city to purely outside perceptions, generating contradictions that are difficult to handle (at one moment a city of squatters, at another a city of cruise ships and at yet another a city of congresses). Without a meaningful model of citizenship and community, the city is unable to take advantage of trends that it should be able to interpret pro-actively and convert into opportunities, even if it does not fully control them. Furthermore, basing its development on what are a priori perceived to be 'uncontrollable' factors will, in the long term, generate a city image over which it has no political influence. A city that fails to investigate and formulate alterna-

tive narratives together with its residents, letting them participate as citizens, will perpetually be faced with *non-options*. Using the analogy of a river current, we could say that Barcelona still has to make itself some oars that are sufficiently sturdy to control the boat against the currents of the global/local relationship. Allowing itself to be carried away by the current means that some pretty unpleasant bumps would await closer to waterfalls.

## Conclusions

It is important for cities to create conscious interpretations of themselves and debate narratives that are rooted in the distinguishing features of their identity. Citizenship is exercised in cities as long as members of an urban community can meaningfully associate themselves with it and partake in its constant reformulation. The city project must therefore be permeable. It must allow its citizens to co-create the urban society. This process ought to take place in dialogue with the globalised context - from international institutions to newly-arrived immigrants - so as not to end up with a would-be autarchic identity project. However, the articulation of the global/local relation should be mediated based on a cultural self-awareness, ensuring that the interpretations of the dynamic global context is firmly rooted in its own identity.

*The State of the World's Cities 2004/2005* report, drawn up by the UN-Habitat Globalisation and World Cities Study Group, pointed out that globalisation can lead to increased cultural standardisation. Interaction between cultures as a result of migration can only generate cultural innovation when the local culture plays a central mediating role, acting as the environment where such interaction takes place. But no meaningful interaction is possible if the local culture is not able to recognize itself as an active and valuable actor, participating of globalisation processes with its particular voice. What would emerge then is a juxtaposition of incomunicated cultures, a sort of theme park that can leave the cities exhausted and fragmented. Without a vision of difference and identity, the city's role as a community space not only loses quality but also destroys any possibility of a meeting space. Cultural dialogue and innovation must be rooted in the local culture, a merging process generating social cohesion and shared values. In my view, a broad concept of citizenship - understood not only as a set of rights and duties, but also as shared values and practices- cannot emerge without such process. Otherwise the formal citizenship of legal rights and obligations becomes an empty shell.

In the public sphere, this cultural imperative needs to be translated in terms of politics and policy. Politically, the citizenship values sustained by the city must be rooted in liberal democratic principles. These principles are dynamic in the long term. As societies evolve in the context of globalisation and transnational migration, the identity projects of nations and cities will be continually redrafted. In policy terms, the flagship-city model faces significant challenges and involves taking decisions that entail certain risks. Democratically debating, prioritising and promoting a series of values as the basis for public action entails that what

may be perfectly valid for one city might become less relevant to another. Culturally and politically reflexive practice generates policy creativity and local differentiation, strengthening the city as a community of citizens. Beyond the allocation of public resources, a city project implies a strong dimension of strategical thinking and leadership. I consider that Barcelona must debate and reformulate a flagship-city model with its citizens in order to develop a morally desirable community.

London has a conceptually more responsible role to fulfil: it has all the necessary ingredients to become successful as city-state or city-flagship. But if it tends towards a model that merely allows for cultural and spatial fragmentation, if it becomes an anomic city that excludes those citizens whose role does not fit the purely functional and competitive narrative of the city-state world, we will have lost an essential mirror for the future of our cities.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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## **ABOUT DEMOS**

### **Who we are**

Demos is the think tank for everyday democracy. We believe everyone should be able to make personal choices in their daily lives that contribute to the common good. Our aim is to put this democratic idea into practice by working with organisations in ways that make them more effective and legitimate.

### **What we work on**

We focus on seven areas: public services; science and technology; cities and public space; people and communities; arts and culture; families and care; and global security.

### **Who we work with**

Our partners include policy-makers, companies, public service providers and social entrepreneurs. Demos is not linked to any party but we work with politicians across political divides. Our international network - which extends across eastern Europe, Scandinavia, Australia, Brazil, India and China - provides a global perspective and enables us to work across borders.

### **How we work**

Demos knows the importance of learning from experience. We test and improve our ideas in practice by working with people who can make change happen. Our collaborative approach means that our partners share in the creation and ownership of new ideas.

### **What we offer**

We analyse social and political change, which we connect to innovation and learning in organisations. We help our partners show thought leadership and respond to emerging policy challenges.

### **How we communicate**

As an independent voice, we can create debates that lead to real change. We use the media, public events, workshops and publications to communicate our ideas. All our books can be downloaded free from the Demos website.

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