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22@bcn Plan: bringing Barcelona forward in the information era

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ABSTRACT

Barcelona has been internationally recognized for its exemplary urban regeneration policy since the Olympic Games of 1992. By that time, the so-called “Barcelona Model” was not only about urban planning and new economic strategies, but about urban culture and social participation as well. After a period of stagnation, the new orientation of the municipal policy points to a more entrepreneurial logic. The growing role of private initiatives and the inclusion of ICT in local policies are questions that affect the definition and shape of the new city, as well as the theory and practice of its governance. The “22@bcn Plan” is one of the highlights of Barcelona’s change into a “city of knowledge”. This paper asks whether and how this specific Plan challenges the Barcelona Model.

KEYWORDS

Barcelona, knowledge based urban development, urban planning, social movements, governance

INTRODUCTION

Between 1986 and 1992 Barcelona experienced one of its greatest periods of urban transformation. The urban policy implemented during that time was a successful combination of urban planning initiatives and the spread of a discourse based on local and global promotion of a new urban image for the city. Led by the public administration and with almost unconditional popular support, this process became internationally known as the “Barcelona Model” of urban transformation. After some years of apparent deprivation, a second wave of urban policy came to the city. It was, again, a combination of urban physical changes and an appropriate discourse based on the general principles of what has become known as the “city of knowledge”.

At the end of the 1990s Barcelona opened its doors to the new global model of knowledge-based urban development. This time, the challenge consisted of promoting “new economy” and cultural industries (Gdaniec, 2001; Selfa, 2005). The city’s new economic activities (categorized as *@ activities*) included cultural and ICT industries, digital services, and knowledge centers (Clos, 2004; Partal, 2001). (See Table 1)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · services to firms · services to citizens · tourism - Real estate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · estate agencies · construction - @ activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · digital services · ICT industries · cultural industries · research (R+D) - Finance
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Table 1: Barcelona’s new economy: emerging economic sectors

Barcelona, like other former industrial cities in Europe, started to adapt its urban structure to the changing productive requirements of late capitalism (Olivella, 2000; Clua, 2005). The spatial emplacement for such urban transformation was the city’s former industrial neighborhood (once called the “Catalan Manchester”): Poble Nou.

Poble Nou’s regeneration strategy was called “22@bcn Plan”. The development of the Plan has involved the strengthening of economic actors (mainly private agents) with a growing role in the city’s redefinition. Today, the city is noticeably reoriented towards a major emphasis on the innovative spirit of urban entrepreneurial leadership, rather than on the inclusion of public participation in the regeneration process. In fact, the “entrepreneurial turn” is clearly questioning “public-oriented” urban policy, as representatives of the private sector have already discussed with local authorities the possible end of the Barcelona Model (Capel, 2006).

In relation to entrepreneurial logic taking over the City Council's function as a state agent, Boixader (2004) has stated:

“We have been talking about the public initiative in the promotion of [Barcelona's] transformation. But this initiative is moving on a much reduced field of alternatives, which could be interpreted as proof of the public power's alignment with market forces. (...) If land re-qualification has had such an important dimension it is because industry and the working class population reduce the value of real state operations”
[Authors' translation].

The content of this chapter is structured in four parts. The next section includes the background concepts which are central to the analysis of Barcelona's new urban model. Following this section, the Barcelona Model will be briefly presented. The definition of this urban model is highly relevant, in that it allows a better understanding of the further evolution of public-private partnerships in Barcelona. Then, the 22@bcn Plan will be introduced, by first locating the Poblenou district in its historical context. Attention will be focused on the gap between the economic success that the plan aims for, and the social responses that the plan has received. The chapter concludes with final remarks and some reflections on future trends.

This chapter has three main objectives. The first one is to shed light on the changing role of public and private initiatives as far as Barcelona's knowledge-based urban development is concerned. Secondly, the paper aims to introduce the question of social participation in the urban planning process. The chapter's last objective is to contribute to critical reflection on possible controversies surrounding knowledge-based cities. Through a closer look into Barcelona's case, we would like to introduce the idea that current challenges for urban policies/politics include not only the economic question, but also (and importantly) the social and the cultural.

BACKGROUND: CONTEXT AND CONCEPTS

The contents of this paper are the result of the work carried out by the authors in many different research projects, both theoretical (on ICT, knowledge society, urban social and planning changes and governance), and on the specific case of Barcelona (urban planning, citizens' participation, ICT policies and the transformation of the public sphere). The authors have reviewed all literature available on Barcelona's recent urban experiences, and have benefited from the wide range of interviews with experts, technical staff, municipal authorities and citizens, which have been key information sources in their respective investigations. They have also been involved in institutional as well as civic advisory groups.

What makes Barcelona interesting is not only its privileged situation as a city where global and local processes of urban regeneration meet. More importantly, the city offers the opportunity to acknowledge the different urban models that result from Barcelona's charismatic combination of social-historical conditions and innovative transformation.

The starting point of the analysis here is that urban changes are never exempt from conflict.

Following this core idea, the paper remits to previous works developed from a critical perspective. Thus, the concepts that structure the argumentation are taken from recent theoretical debates on what does "knowledge based urban development" apply to, and "whose" city is being defined through this discourse.

Urban development and the "entrepreneurial turn"

Nowadays, more and more local governments are adopting the global trend of entrepreneurialism as the "natural" and "unavoidable" evolution towards a post-industrial era and a competitive future. Cities governed by left wing parties, such as Barcelona, follow this direction as well (McNeill, 2003). Some authors (Leitner & Sheppard, 2002; Mole, 1996; Quilley, 2002; Tewdwr-Jones & McNeill, 2000) have already made firm criticisms of this linear way of looking at the city's transformation.

The so-called "post-carbon economy" has become the new discourse on urban renaissance closely linked to the principles of the entrepreneurial turn and the rise of a "creative class" (Landry, 2000; Florida, 2002). However, according to other authors, this perspective leads to a very simplistic understanding of urban evolution, as it affirms that ICT-based economic activities are the necessary result of the existence of a "knowledge elite" in the city (Markusen, 2006; Markusen & Schroch, 2006). Thus, the question of not detaching economic policies from social policies appears to be crucial. According to Jessop (1997, 2002) the emphasis on entrepreneurial and innovative spirit often misses the important role that redistribution and social cohesion play in urban regeneration strategies.

Entrepreneurial logic is, thus, not only a hegemonic global trend (Hall, 1988; Harvey, 1989) but a practice that is prevailing over other possible ways of understanding the urban "revolution" (Holden, 1999; Peck & Ward, 2002). The entrepreneurial turn has much more to do with the blossoming of a new technocratic elite than with a real transformation of the city's social and structural conditions. This has had harmful consequences for the recognition of urban culture and knowledge not only as an economic capital (O'Connor & Wynne, 1996), but as a social capital as well (Zukin, 1995). As a result, the non-skilled labor force (now increasingly made up of immigrants of African, Asian, and Latin American origin), as well as many social networking

practices, are relegated to hardly visible spaces in European cities in general, and Barcelona in particular.

THE BARCELONA MODEL

After the first local democratic elections in 1979, the search for new engines of economic growth became the dominant note in new urban policy. Having managed to reach a maximum degree of co-operation with both other public administrations and the private sector, municipal policy in these years fell halfway between liberalism and interventionism (Trullén, 1988).

The unfurling of this new urban policy was essentially carried out through two aspects which are so closely related that they are frequently indistinguishable: the design and implementation of a “new urban planning” which brought with it a major physical transformation of the city, and an explicit discourse of producing images of the city (Benach, 2000; Benach & Albet, 2005). Both aspects were combined in an exceptional way in a special event: the organization of the 1992 Olympic Games.

The transformation of the city

Thus, the 1992 Olympic Games became the strategy chosen to tackle the lack of investment coming from private initiatives. Above all, urban policies focused on the improvement of public facilities and infrastructure. That led to the consolidation of a basic transportation network, as well as to the construction of ring roads, enlargement of the port, re-organization of the airport terminal, the spread of telecommunications, etc. (Marshall, 2004). The Olympics were also the new pretext for raising the city’s international profile, as well as an effective tool for strengthening social cohesion and the sense of belonging to the city. In this way, an athletic event such as the Olympic Games became the platform for achieving the major objectives for Barcelona (Forn, 1992). The features that characterized the city’s urban transformation project in the period 1986-1992, constitute what has come to be known as the “Barcelona model” of urban policy. (See Table 2)

- Basic role of public spaces (streets, squares, services, infrastructure, facilities, etc.) as characteristic elements qualifying urban changes. These spaces were used to encourage changes in private spaces, and generate identity and social and cultural integration.
- Full leadership of the local public initiative (municipal administration) for the design and management of urban transformation projects, even in those investments that were mainly of private origin.
- Strict compliance with the existing Urban Master Plan and with pre-established town planning regulations; an effort was made in order to maintain coherence, credibility and legitimacy of the transformations, based on designs and previous agreements and not on proposals that could appear temporary or opportunistic.
- Keeping a global vision of the city despite the exceptional aspect of some of the projects and events (such as the Olympic Games).
- Introduction of a complexity of functions in land uses in the newly built areas, in order to avoid marginal social zones or others with social functional specialization.
- Urban renewal and rehabilitation avoiding gentrification and aiming to maintain social coherence in affected neighborhoods.
- Dignifying the peripheral areas.
- Citizens' implication in the project of urban transformation. "Volunteer" as an important role.
- Positioning of Barcelona within the world's context and, especially, among large cities, thanks to strategic urban marketing promotion based on creating and encouraging city lobbies.

Table 2: Building a model: the "Barcelona experience" in nine points (Garcia-Ramon & Albet, 2000)

Thanks to the Barcelona Model, the city assumed the challenge of becoming the showcase of the world (Benach, 2000; Zabalbeascoa, 2000). Thereby, urban planners from all over the world look at Barcelona for inspiration about what a "vibrant city" looks like. One of the high moments of this international recognition came in 2000, when the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) awarded the city with the Royal Golden Medal, being the first time that RIBA chose to reward a whole town-planning strategy (Cobb, 1990). The transformation of the city was certainly "spectacular" (Benach & Albet, 2005). The "model" also had clear political guidelines, such as giving priority to both public initiative and public space. This strategy was conceived as an attempt to achieve the challenge of combining architectural renewal with due respect for the city's historical landscape and, above all, social involvement.

THE 22@BCN PLAN

The 22@bcn Plan is an innovative, complex and dynamic project that goes beyond the limits drawn on the map, and that so far has been sufficiently flexible to secure its own survival. This has been possible through the convinced role of several professionals and councilors who defended the need to promote productive activities related to the ICT sector. The incentive of a greater built up surface capability has opened the door to the participation of land owners and promoters in the Plan. Finally, local social movements (through their critical insights) complete the list of involved agents. The process shows, on the one hand, the importance of public initiative. It also demonstrates that the lack of political leadership and popular participation can hamper the adequate development of the Plan.

Poblenou: a changing district

The first settlements for economic activities in the Poblenou district (where 22@ area is now located) date from the beginning of the 19th century, when several textile factories were placed in this area. The availability of underground water supplies and the huge extension of land made possible rapid growth of both factories and worker population: Poblenou became well known as the “Catalan Manchester” due to its industrial concentration and its factories integrating the whole productive process. Living conditions in Poblenou were even harder than working conditions. This situation led to a very active social and political life (civic centers, cooperatives, etc) with strong worker’s associations. The beginning of the fascist dictatorship in 1939 interrupted this social, political and cultural vitality. It was not until the 1960s that some recovery took place through the clandestine worker’s union Comissions Obreres (AHP, 2001).

The 1953 Barcelona Regional Plan established the limits of the industrial expansion of the city, clearly differentiating between housing and industry. It also allowed huge new housing estates that quickly became “vertical shanty towns” near Poblenou (Besòs, la Catalana, Maresme), deeply increasing deficits in basic facilities (schools, hospitals, sewage, public transportation, etc.). Besides this situation, as of the late 1960s, and due to a general industrial crisis, many companies closed down or migrated to other cities: hundreds of workers became unemployed and some parts of the district became derelict. Significant neighborhood claims were raised at that time, jointly with the activism of some planners, professional associations and anti-fascist political groups.

With the arrival of democracy in local Spanish governments in 1979, Barcelona’s municipality assumed some of the popular vindications, but the bulk of urban changes took place after 1986, when Barcelona was nominated for the 1992 Olympics: the Olympic Village was placed in the most convenient zone of the Poblenou district, creating a new waterfront that included new gardens, beaches and part of the ring-road. In late 1990s, new basic facilities were placed in the district: the Catalan National Theatre, the Music Auditorium, commercial malls and the opening of the final part of the Diagonal Avenue to the seafront, allowing great private estate investments in old derelict areas and, as a result, completely changing the social and physical appearance of the district. During this process new activities arrived: old factories were occupied by artists because of space availability and comparatively low prices (Palo Alto, Hangar); some research and university centers also begin to settle in old factories and still others were converted into lofts or fashion bars and discos.

Towards the pl@n

After the Olympic Village, the ring road and the new beaches were built, it became evident to real estate promoters that the area had huge investment potential, considering it as the last opportunity for a major land provision in downtown Barcelona. Besides this view, neighborhood associations maintain the need for a global renewal of Poblenou upon consideration of the problems of derelict industrial uses and municipal abandonment.

In 1995 and 1998 two official drafts (Gabinet d'Estudis Urbanístics, 1995; Departament d'Urbanisme, 1998) drew the main lines for future urban planning actions: some degree of continuity with the pre-existent street grid; maintenance of economic activities but changing them mainly to high tech industries, "productive services", and art and design applications; attraction of research centers and university faculties; localization of new cultural facilities and activities. Morphologically, the proposal suggests "complex blocks" mixing industry, residence and services. The main intervention criteria proposes to take advantage of the new locational strategy of ICT related industries; to fight against increasing polarization and imbalance in the metropolitan workforce market; to solve the illegal status of pre-existing housing and to provide new housing.

In the meantime, a "digital lobby" appeared on the scene having as its main goal to transform Poblenou into a major site of technological revolution. The lobby was promoted by the Institut Català de Tecnologia (a private institution devoted to professional promotion of engineering and engineers, that was a pioneer in the rehabilitation of old factories for new service uses) together with economists, urban planners and other businessmen related to Internet (as "Localred", a consortium of Catalan local administrations devoted to develop network communications and new technologies, and "Pacte Industrial de la Regió Metropolitana de Barcelona", an association of municipalities, trade unions, private corporations and other institutions related to economic development) (see Pacte Industrial de la Regió Metropolitana de Barcelona, 2001; Martí, 2005).

Thanks to good political connections, people related to this lobby soon became part of the technical and political staff of the Barcelona Municipality: in just a few months (June 1998 to December 1999, a surprising record) a very general idea became part of Barcelona's Master Plan and, was then assumed and approved by the municipality. In order to develop what was approved as part of the Partial Master Plan for the Poblenou area ("22@bcn Plan"; see Departament d'Urbanisme, 2000), a private-municipal corporation was created (called "22@bcn SA") to promote and manage all aspects related to this Plan and what was then called the "22@District" (see the seminal text of Oliva, 2003). Then, "BCN", the Barcelona airport code, besides being a very popular abbreviation of the city's name, also became linked to aspects of innovation and high technology.

- **Territory:** 198.26 hectares (2.0 % of Barcelona's municipality total area)
- **New gross floor space:** 4,000,000 sq m
 - (productive activities: 3,200,000 sq m)
 - (housing, facilities and services: 800,000 sq m)
- **Increase in green spaces:** 114,000 sq m
- **Increase in facilities:** 145,000 sq m
- **Investment in infrastructures:** 180 million €
- **Increase in new jobs:** 130,000
- **Clusters developed:** Media, ICT, Energy, Bio
- **@ activities allowed:** "Those using individual talent as main productive resource, regardless of the economic sector they belong to: they may be related to research, design, publishing, culture, database management or multimedia activities, and they are featured by making intensive use of ICTs and they do not generate nuisance nor pollution. Coexisting with traditional neighborhood activities, these @ activities create a rich productive and diverse fabric, that facilitates the competitiveness of the business overall."

Table 3: 22@bcn dimensions: the scale of the project [source: <http://www.22barcelona.com/>]

22@bcn

The 22@bcn Plan is the largest urban transformation in Barcelona in recent times: more than 200 hectares in an excellent central location in downtown Barcelona considered to be the strategic engine for Metropolitan Barcelona's "new economy" (see <http://www.bcn.cat/22@bcn/>). The transformation of Poblenou is taking place basically through urban planning instruments and private investment (except public investment in basic infrastructures). Private initiative consists of land owners, real state promoters, and banks, all of whom are trying to increase benefits from land and buildings formerly devoted to industrial uses. The goal is a profound redevelopment of the Poblenou area, attracting new activities: this shows an obvious scorn for all that used to exist in Poblenou, considering it as "old", "obsolete" and "with no future". 22@bcn has become an issue due to the transformation of a district that maintains an important sense of identity based on its industrial past and heritage.

Following a compact, diverse and sustainable urban model, the Plan presents the opportunity to change old industrial areas (having "22a" as a code in the 1976 Master Plan) into new uses not exclusively industrial (having "22@" as a new code). This means some amount of continuity with the existing situation but also a great deal of innovation and multiplicity of land uses (housing, non-polluting industries, offices, commercial areas, hotels, etc.). The main goal is to attract "@ activities": industries and business related to ICT as well as those related to research, design, multimedia, data base management, etc. The 22@bcn Plan allows a greater amount of built-up surface but also requires higher standards for green areas, and "@ facilities": opening new streets, planning underground facilities and service galleries, renewal of gas, electricity and water supplies, digital cable, etc., allowing easy development of research centers, private corporations, and universities. The 22@bcn Plan includes 4,000 new housing units and the possibility to transform factories into lofts.



Figure 1. Changing landscape: from “22a” to “22@”

The 22@bcn Plan establishes a flexible path for promoting both public and private projects. The municipality proposed six “Partial Master Plans” (PMP, *PERI*, in Catalan) to be the starting tool (representing 46% of the total area) to implement the general planning proposals: they should also mark the main lines for future urban transformation and the localization of activities, and serve as guidelines for private promoters in order to create the desired strategic dynamics in the area (García-Bragado, n.d.).

From the conception of the original project to its approval by the municipality, participation was restricted to municipal urban planners and proposals made by professionals from the “digital lobby”. During this period, other actors (political parties, land owners, land promoters, neighborhood associations, etc.) took part only through allegations and some limited informative meetings.

Although initially, land owners and promoters distrusted the 22@bcn Plan (as they wanted a free reconversion from industrial to residential land use), soon they realized the potential of the ICT and service sectors. In the beginning, neighborhood associations accepted the 22@bcn Plan because it helped to maintain economic activity in the district, legalized almost 5,000 illegal housing units, and promoted social housing mainly for residents.

A debated plan

The first PMP were peripheral to the district and did not cause deep conflict, but neighborhood associations began to criticize secrecy and a non-collaborative attitude on the part of the municipality. The huge skyscrapers proposed in the Llacuna PMP (December 2001) were seen as an aggression and again the low level of participation led to popular demonstrations (almost 4,000 people). Two citizen's associations were created at that time, both against the 22@bcn Plan: the "Associació d'afectats del 22@" (neighbors negatively affected by the Plan) and "Coordinadora contra el 22@" (young anti-capitalist citizens fighting against the speculative nature of the Plan, job destruction, and the links between high-tech industries and arms corporations) (see Etcetera, 2004; Maldo, 2004; Sitesize, 2004) (see Figure 3)



Figure 2. "Poblenou is not for sale": Graffiti by the *Coordinadora contra el 22@*

The conflict moved toward the municipality's acceptance of lower skyscrapers, a vague commitment to increase social housing, some general respect to historical industrial heritage and better communication between the municipality and its citizens. However, recent events in Poblenou (such as the citizens' vindication of the total preservation of a 19th century factory called Can Ricart) have challenged the real applicability of these measures. The civic Platform *Salvem Can Ricart* (see <http://www.salvemcanricart.org/>) has had an important role in the inclusion of urban issues in Barcelona's public sphere. Some members of the Platform (neighbors, architects, and academics, all working hand in hand voluntarily) have produced rigorous reports on Can Ricart (Tatjer 2005; Grup de Patrimoni Industrial del Fòrum de la Ribera del Besòs, 2006). This has been crucial for opening a high quality public debate on the urban regeneration model.

It is important to point out that the Platform has never defined itself as anti-22@. On the contrary, this social movement vindicates the 22@bcn as it was originally conceived: a

plan that looked forward to the redevelopment of Poblenou without denying the district's trajectory, while taking care of its inhabitants' future. According to the Platform, the conflict generated around Can Ricart should not be defined as social opposition to urban transformation, but as a civic vindication of social participation and public debate (Clarós & Grup de Patrimoni Industrial del Fòrum de la Ribera del Besòs, 2005) (see Figure 4)



Figure 3. Cultural events as part of *Salvem Can Ricart*'s campaign: Children's theatre in the old factory

Some insights on the 22@bcn Plan and its evolution

In the first stage of the 22@bcn Plan (from 1995 to 1999), the basic lines of urban intervention in Poblenou were drawn: maintenance of industrial activity, recognition of existing illegal housing, proposals for diversity and compactness of land uses. Corporative links between municipal technical staff and professional lobbies without public participation prevailed. Municipal policy towards Poblenou was characterized by instability and hesitation, especially because it was still not seen as a priority.

In a second phase (1999 onwards), the ideas impelled by the "digital lobby" prevailed thanks to the development of a specific conceptual framework regarding the future of Poblenou. This framework was influenced by, among other factors, the economic ideas of Manuel Castells, by theories on regional development, and by experiences of other cities on innovative milieu and technological parks (Castells, 1996).

At that precise moment, the ".com" companies (based on the uses, contents and applications of Internet and ICT) seemed to offer unlimited potential, even more so than the "consumer solutions" (only based on the specialization of the city as a tourist attraction). Compared to the apparently simple development brought by tourism, a presumed "Digital City" (the supposed excellent potential of Barcelona for economic

activities based on the intensive use of knowledge and ICT –design, creativeness, research-) appeared to be a firm proposal to increase economic dynamism in the city and metropolitan region, creating new and highly qualified jobs, and helping to build a more complex and sustainable city.

The “digital lobby” exerts a real strategic power over future options for the district and its economic changes, projecting a wishful but necessary future for the city. In fact, the proposed ideas are not new at all, as they repeat the typical options of international urban entrepreneurialism that have existed since the mid 1980’s in many other cities with projects related to ICT.

The strategic vision of the “digital lobby” became strategic power when political connections were brought into play: in 1999 the municipality urgently needed new and original ideas and some members of the lobby became councilors or began to work directly with decision makers, facilitating the approval and implementation of the Plan. Consequently, the “success” of the 22@bcn Plan sheds light on the power exerted by professionals from the public and private sectors: together with land owners and promoters, they emerge as the groups that have an enormous capacity to influence the decisions and the governance of the city: the knowledge that those professionals, governmental employees and non-elected local agencies have, together with their privileged economic position, becomes a key resource that makes it possible for different groups to accede to the decision processes.

The structural power of the real estate sector and its increasing interest in obtaining the greatest possible economic benefits requires continuous regulation and strong political leadership; looking back on the process, this political leadership from the municipality has shown great weakness and lack of control over these tendencies. Private initiative is mainly devoted to filling the district with new hotels, banal office buildings, and lofts, taking advantage of the possibility to increase built-upon surface area (in principle granted only for 22@ activities) with little consideration for the social, productive and architectural heritage of Poblenou.

Although 22@bcn initially generated enormous consensus, the Plan was basically devoted to economic promotion and development, with a metropolitan overview of the reality, and its goals were based primarily on land availability in a privileged location in the center of the city. This is why social, cultural and heritage policies, together with links with citizen’s goals and interests, were not well-defined. The urgent need of the 22@Office for investments and clear results from the 22@bcn Plan, and the lack of clear political directives, has undeniably pushed to consolidate this tendency to grant privileges to private and economic interests.

CONCLUDING REMARKS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Barcelona's urban development has gone through various stages: in the first (which culminated with the 1992 Olympic Games), the city was re-conceived by developing an urban planning policy based on two pillars: urban transformation and the production of images. The language of culture and the role of public spaces shifted into urban planning strategies that morphologically changed the city and created images capable of uniting the citizenry. This urban planning policy itself, elevated to the level of model, became the very image of the city.

In the second stage, the pillars of the urban planning policy remained the same, but the requirements for private initiative were much greater and more evident. From the emphasis on public spaces, community facilities and collective infrastructures, primacy shifted to private spaces, unique buildings and individual interests: thus arose the paradox that the "Barcelona experience" from the Olympic period, supposedly a model, was not fulfilled in the city where it was created. Once the aftereffects of the Olympic period had subsided, an apparent bid for a "city of knowledge" arose, which in fact was simply a functional image that is now used in order to foster the discourse of a city of knowledge and innovation, expelling old industrial activities to the metropolitan peripheries and, then, allowing the introduction of new speculative activities based on a supposed prosperous "new economy".

The 22@bcn Plan has given the opportunity to introduce public debate on urban development. Neighborhood associations have assumed a central role connecting ideas coming from the Plan with the social reality of the district. A significant part of neighborhood and social movement are the groups that more strategically support the 22@bcn Plan by bringing new and fresh ideas, simultaneously exerting these as a mechanism of control. Their power lies in their capability for mobilization and their ability to create alliances between non-organic professionals and intellectuals, creating the possibility to exert another kind of strategic power. The campaign to preserve historical heritage in Poblenou is very significant, and runs in parallel to the vindication of economic innovation and cultural diversity. Nevertheless, social claims in Barcelona do not have as much public visibility as private initiative (Zusman, 2004).

There are two paradoxes stemming from the economic transformation of Barcelona. The first one is that although the service sector (and particularly the tourism sector) and the real state sector (particularly, construction) are the economic activities that have experimented major growth in terms of employment, the local authorities are investing all their efforts on recognizing the "@ sector" as fundamental for Barcelona's future. A great deal of the urban strategy is oriented toward the consolidation of Barcelona as a "city of knowledge". However, the local working class does not fit with the expectations of local entrepreneurs.

According to several reports, though, Barcelona is far from reaching the necessary conditions for transcending the industrial era today. As many local analysts have stated, it

is not industrial activity which is in decline, but the type of economic structures and sectors related to the Fordist system of production and the specific patterns of localization of industrial activities. Factories are moving from the central city to the metropolitan peripheries (Balibrea, 2001; Ferrer & Nel-lo, 1990; Trullén, 1998, 2001, n.d.). According to these analyses, the city cannot obviate its current labor market conditions. As Joan Trullén has stated, Barcelona needs to “fight against the growing polarization and disarrangement between offer and demand in the metropolitan labor market” (Trullén, 1998: p. 17).

A second important paradox is that although Barcelona, Catalonia and Spain are relying on the new economy as the magic key for entering the Information Era, the country does not occupy a privileged position on the list of developed countries in terms of knowledge production and ICT industrial implementation. “Cyber-illiteracy” is still quite generalized and formation is more devoted to business requirements of the new economy than to social needs coming from the challenges of the new social and demographic profile of the city. The new on-line participation only permits an individualized interaction (information inquiries, bureaucratic procedures, etc.). Therefore, the “city of knowledge” strategy needs to implement a real “network mentality” (Castells & Ollé, 2004). The gap between access to technology and access to knowledge grows hand in hand with the gap between basic facilities and cultural, formative and labor conditions.

In fact, the emergence of new sectors and actors has raised new challenges. The first one is to apply policies to promote interconnectivity between different fields of action, thus leading to better administrative and management organization. The second challenge is that public initiative must not lose the protagonism it achieved during the period of the “Barcelona Model”: the City Council must maintain its key role as the primary city promoter.

All of these questions indicate to us that local government in Barcelona needs to improve the balance between long-term projects and short-term profits. In Barcelona there is a clear imbalance between the strategic projection of the “city of knowledge”, and the execution of this project through urban planning. The comprehensive conception of the “city as a whole”, which characterized the “Barcelona Model”, is now under question.

Perhaps the 22@bcn Plan should be seen as a great exception to this situation and an excellent example of a “good practice” of urban policy implementation, combining urban planning (urban physical transformation) and urban discourse (the need for a “city of knowledge”). The ideas proposed in the 22@bcn Plan are not innovative, even on a local level. What is really new and important is that those ideas are formulated in a broader context (Barcelona in the economy and the society of knowledge and information); there is a real possibility to implement them, and they are presented under a new and exclusive brand: “22@”. On a conceptual level, this is essential because the existence of a label (that recalls the passage from the industrial 22a to the informational 22@), allows for the development of effective marketing of the idea and the project (both internally in Barcelona and abroad) and creates a powerful coalition between professionals,

technicians, land promoters, neighborhood associations, councilors of the municipality, etc. In addition, the strict guidelines of the Master Plan should bring some sense of security and certainty regarding the good will and public leadership of the project and the need for social consensus (between all involved agents) in every change proposed for the 22@ district.

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