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Manuel Vázquez Montalbán - Fragmento de *La literatura en la construcción de la ciudad democrática y Barcelonas*

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Tim Marshall, urbanista y académico británico, se especializó en urbanismo de renovación y enseña desde 1991 en la universidad Oxford Brookes. Durante la década de 1990, investigó el emprendimiento y la promoción de la ciudad en Barcelona. Este interés alimentó el libro *Transforming Barcelona* (2004). Su trabajo siguiente se centró en la infraestructura y planificación regional en toda Europa, recogido en publicaciones como *Regional Planning* (2007) y *Planning Major Infrastructure: A critical Analysis* (2012).

Escrito con miras al público británico, este volumen es uno de los textos más citados en inglés acerca del urbanismo barcelonés. La existencia misma del libro subraya el carácter dual del "modelo Barcelona" y de la voluntad de otras ciudades, particularmente Londres, de importar las políticas de urbanismo para sus propias transformaciones. La obra trata de explicar el fenómeno de Barcelona, si no desmitificarlo, destacando las normas urbanísticas y la política. Marshall logra su objetivo reuniendo artículos, en su mayoría previamente publicados, tanto de actores como de observadores de la transformación de la ciudad.

El libro está organizado en tres partes. La primera, titulada *What Happened*, es la más extensa. Como han apuntado otras críticas, algunos de estos recuentos pueden leerse como un «documento de propaganda» (Neuman, 2006), pero se espera de los funcionarios que explican el éxito de sus acciones. Entre los contribuyentes se incluyen el exalcalde Pasqual Maragall, el entonces director de urbanismo Oriol Bohigas y el arquitecto Joan Busquets, entre otros personajes de alto nivel. Jordi Borja, Zaida Muxí, Carme Ribas y Joan Subirats proporcionan un estudio de varios proyectos urbanos ejemplares que demuestran algunas inquietudes. Estos ensayos sobre la gestión pública de la ciudad, la política del urbanismo, la gestión metropolitana y el papel del diseño urbano se ven reforzados por un debate revelador sobre los movimientos sociales urbanos a cargo de Nico Calavita y Amador Ferrer.

La segunda sección, *Present and Futures*, completa el libro con algunos ejemplos contemporáneos de Barcelona Regional y con el 22@ del Poblenou. Aunque se trata de valiosos resúmenes, la publicación del volumen en 2004 hizo que, lamentablemente, no se pudiera incluir una visión crítica del proyecto Fòrum 2004, que marcó un cambio profundo en la política urbanística. La tan necesaria crítica aparece en la sección final, *Critical Perspectives*. Mari Paz Balibrea escribe el comentario más incisivo del libro, rechazando el modelo hegemónico del urbanismo y sus consiguientes injusticias sociales, y Enric Tello cuestiona la sostenibilidad ambiental de la migración suburbana de la región.

El fragmento seleccionado pertenece a la introducción de Marshall, en la cual esboza cuatro dimensiones de cambio: espacial, económico, político y social. Para concluir, proporciona un análisis de los «logros y perspectivas», en el que mide los beneficios contra algunos de los desencantos. Hay que agradecer a Marshall haber sembrado algunas semillas de duda en un volumen que acerca la «historia exitosa» de Barcelona a un público que la quiere copiar.

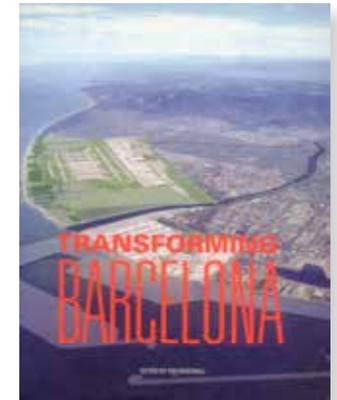
David de la Peña

Transforming Barcelona

Autor: **Tim Marshall** (ed.).

Edición: Routledge, Londres, 2004.

Fragmento seleccionado: Páginas 12 a 22.



FOUR DIMENSIONS OF CHANGE

Let us cut up this activity another way, viewing four different dimensions. This will help to explore the varying factors in play in the big changes.

Treating public spaces and buildings

This has been the area of intervention par excellence, at least as viewed by most visitors to the city, as well as for many citizens. It includes:

- new roads, and redesign of existing roads;
- new public spaces – squares, beaches, promenades (ramblas);
- new public buildings, most delivering public services (libraries, museums, sports centres, offices, community centres, health centres, schools, markets), some doubling up as tourist venues;
- new infrastructure – many expanded or completely new facilities, whether the large storm drains, rail extensions or diversions, stations, airport, street lighting, telecommunications.

This effort represents large public investment, mostly with public funding and producing publicly managed and owned facilities. This may be, conceivably, the last phase of such investment. But it is another core ingredient of the Barcelona achievement. Such integrated achievement as is visible in many Barcelona neighbourhoods would be difficult to achieve with the now familiar jungle of public-private partnerships with which regeneration specialists have to struggle in most developed countries.

Often, observers have remarked on the quality of design across these programmes. Some exploration of this theme has uncovered the roots of this ability to concentrate on detailed implementation, with the development of a “design culture” from the 1950s, with one eye at least on Italy (Narotsky 2000). Discussion has also focused on the public space component of the programmes, drawing out a lesson on democratic interaction on the streets and a post-modern slant on the encounter of diversity that this enables (Borja 2000, Balibrea this volume). Streets are for all, whatever income, colour of skin or age a person may have.

Such an understanding chimes with the long-standing progressive tradition of wide parts of Barcelona society, including the strain of anarchism, in education and art, and the generation since the 1960s of powerful theatrical groupings: la Fura dels Baus, els Comediants, els Joglars being three alternative theatre troupes now feted around the world. The tradition, common to Mediterranean countries, of frequent use of streets and other spaces for festivals and parties, reinforces the willingness of politicians to invest in street quality and to sponsor regularly such festivals at the level of the city and each neighbourhood. Unthinking transfer to countries without such tradition needs very careful thought.

ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS OF THE URBAN CHANGES

Financing the programmes

I have already commented in part on the public inputs to Barcelona's programmes. Private finance has been very important in many areas as well, and this has sometimes generated significant tensions and debates. The most famous of these was that about the use of the Olympic Village. Maragall had promised that much of this housing (at least 50%) would be available for social housing. Subsequently, it became clear that funding was not available to achieve this. The whole project was handed over to private developers, and the area became one for up-market owners and investors. After 1992 the pressure has been on to produce the promised units for those on lower incomes, with success in other schemes in that area of the City (the Five Blocks scheme). But this has only been possible where public authorities could subsidize through their existing land holdings. Barcelona suffers the same problems as other cities in this respect. Only where housing finance (provided by the regional government) has been prioritized have social goals been achievable. This has mainly been in rehousing schemes, either in clearance areas of the old city, or in clearance of blocks of older public housing or private housing affected by aluminosis (concrete decay), in the outer suburbs.

Private finance has been successful in certain profitable sectors – the modernization of telecommunications infrastructure, up-market housing, the rapid increase in hotel provision, the booming of restaurants and bars, the creation of four or five major new shopping centres. Different opinions exist on these latter newcomers to Barcelona's life, challenging the dominance of more traditional neighbourhood provision, including smaller supermarkets and municipal markets. It is possible that neither city council nor regional government (with a final say on the creation of major retail provision) will want to approve more schemes after those recently completed. But those now existing may well hit local provision heavily.

It has been conventional since the early 1990s, in the UK at least, to couch discussion of this kind in terms of "partnership" – generally between governments and the private (profit-making) sector. A very clear description of Barcelona's work in these terms, but retaining an understanding of the trade-offs and risks involved, is provided by Francesc Raventós, one of the economists supporting the City's efforts in strategic planning and elsewhere during the 1980s and 1990s (Raventós 2000). Sections at the end of Chapter 10 provide some details on the funding of the current (2004) investment round, and of the Olympics.

Raventós discussed the varying balances and approaches used in six different spheres of public operation – the urban visual improvement scheme (*Barcelona posa't guapa* – make yourself beautiful), the Olympics, the recuperation of the Old City, the Plan 2000, international economic promotion, and the investment company formed to invest in industry. One of the factors he stressed was the importance

of public sector leadership, and especially the need to commit municipal funds to catalyse action. As often in Barcelona, this may have a rather "old left" ring to it. But the most recent initiatives for the 2004 Forum and the 22@ area (described in Chapters 10 and 11) show that this approach is by no means of the past, although the emphasis has undoubtedly shifted as municipal finances and ideologies have changed.

In Britain and other north European countries, much of Barcelona's efforts since the late 1970s might have been presented in terms of the re-use of "brownfield" land. Old industrial sites have, after all, been the key source of development land since the early days, and partial or complete ownership by the municipality or other public bodies has been one necessary condition for many, perhaps most, of the achievements of the city. This relatively simple lesson about the importance of public ownership perhaps bears repeating, at a time when, again in the UK at least, the struggle to develop remaining brownfield sites and to avoid taking farmland is at the centre of planning debates. In fact, in Barcelona it may be precisely the lower amounts of publicly owned land in the next phase of intervention, in the 22@ area of Poblenou, which is behind the increased conflict with local residents. In this area the calculus of social gains/private profits is less conducive, it would appear, to public objectives. This has led the council to make plans that allow rather intensive development, including high-rise schemes. Similar recent moves backed by the Mayor of London, who also, and in greater degree, lacks land reserves and public funds, suggest that this is not a situation unique to Barcelona.

Impact of the programmes

Most of the programmes for which Barcelona is renowned, certainly to the mid-1990s, were not conceived with the aim of boosting the city's economy, or its global competitiveness. Many have, however, done precisely that. Making the central area, particularly the port and the old city, more attractive has allowed tourism to flourish in that area, with the beaches, provided with locals in mind, giving an extra attraction. A functioning public transport system is essentially for residents, but helps to make visitors' experience much more pleasant. It is no doubt this trick, of having made improvements for locals "pay" internationally, which has impressed many city managers around the world.

More widely, the good reputation that the city has obtained appears to encourage investment generally in manufacturing, research and services by multinationals. This is, at any rate, the interpretation that economists place on the city and region's success in this respect since around 1990 (Trullén 2001). It is presumably here that the major investments in motorways, the airport, industrial land provision around the region, and that proposed in the port, is paying off.

The 2004 Forum was designed much more consciously with wider economic objectives in mind. Those involved with the project in the city hoped that this further push would bring the city's reputation and functioning onto a new plateau, without at the same time leaving a problematic burden of debt. Evaluation after the event will probably be as difficult to do as after the Olympics. In the meantime, Chapter 10 by Barcelona Regional gives us some idea of the amounts of money and issues involved.

THE POLITICS OF CHANGE

This book is primarily about change within the municipal boundary of Barcelona, even though such change is in many ways inseparable from wider processes, particularly in patterns of employment and

residential decentralization. The municipal government is evidently the central actor in what has happened since it was given democratic legitimacy following the 1979 elections. We need to understand several aspects of this political leadership.

The dominant political party has been the Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya (PSC), the Catalan affiliate of the Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE). It has lost no election since 1979 (at the time of writing), an almost unprecedented feat in Spain, only matched amongst cities by La Coruña in Galicia. Socialist or Communist control, which was almost universal in the cities in 1979, has normally given way to centrist or right wing parties. Always, the Socialists have had to make pacts with one of the smaller parties, generally the Communists, or their successors Iniciativa per Catalunya, and in the 1990s Esquerra Republicana, a historic centre-left party favouring Catalan independence. But the Socialists have normally had around 16 seats to the 3 or 4 of the smaller parties. The two right wing parties of Convergència i Unió and Partido Popular have always been rather weak in the city, even though until 2003 one ran the regional government and the other, between 1996 and 2004, the central government.

The Socialists have had three leaders of the council. The first was Narcís Serra, a heavyweight locally who became a minister (finally deputy prime minister) in the PSOE Madrid governments 1982-96. The second was Pasqual Maragall, who dominated municipal politics until his resignation in 1997. He was from a well-known family of the Barcelona bourgeoisie, grandson of perhaps Catalonia's most famous modern poet, Joan Maragall, and already very familiar with how the council worked (or did not), as an employee through much of the 1970s. Spanish mayors are not elected directly, but once installed as leader of the Socialist group, he could wield considerable powers of decision making and patronage. Such power was naturally reinforced by successive victories in elections in 1983, 1987, 1991 and 1995. He had a strong interest and expertise in planning, which became one of the cornerstones of the council's drive. However, it was by no means the only major emphasis. Part of the planning success doubtless lay in the ability to combine urban development with policies on culture, economic development, transport (through control of the metropolitan transport body which ran metro and buses), to name the most important. Nevertheless there were difficulties in achieving full integration, as the council remained dependent for many policies on the regional government—to varying degrees for education, housing, social services and transport. Maragall's ability to make deals with Pujol and with González (in Madrid) was vital to the council's achievements. The same point would surely hold if we were examining the achievements of urban leaders in New York, London, Paris – or Madrid itself.

This need for coordination was particularly vital in the Olympics phase, when the meeting of deadlines was by no means guaranteed, as a Barcelona journalist's blow-by-blow account of these years revealed (Moix 1994). It was necessary to set up a top-level working group at the end of 1988 to drive forward the works and exercise financial control, with a special representative brought in by Madrid to look after its budgetary interests, and a Generalitat member, too. The group was chaired by Maragall and met fortnightly.

The third leader was Joan Clos, groomed by Maragall for a year or two before 1997. He had made a success of renewal in the old city, and was able to retain Socialist control in 1999 and in 2003. As a medical doctor, he did not have the background interest or expertise in planning, and there was a sense amongst professionals that planning matters were downgraded after Maragall's departure. But Maragall had, before leaving, pushed the commitment to a new "big event" the 2004 Forum, and this legacy meant that the council had a certain programme of work laid out for at least seven years to come.

There is no doubt that the quality of mayor has mattered in Barcelona. The support of other key politicians has also been important. Amongst these may be mentioned Jordi Borja, an academic and political activist, originally in the Communist party (PSUC), but by the 1980s an independent. He took over the job of decentralising the organization of the council, a vital part of the reform of the council's structures. From 1986 there were ten "mini town halls", each with a local district council made up of the councillors for that part of the city and a district leader. District offices gradually took over all front-line services, although specialist services have remained in a strong central core. This localization of services was seen as key to both serving citizens and allowing wider participation. It was a natural outcome of the force coming from the residents associations, which were still flourishing in the early 1980s. Borja added his own emphases as a theorist of popular control, a sociologist who had studied with Manuel Castells in the 1960s in Paris. He particularly supported the programme of building community centres in each neighbourhood. Subsequently he was to move on to thinking about city management and planning more widely, as evidenced in the publication of a book by himself and Castells (1997).

A very wide semi-technical, semi-political elite supported these politicians through the 1980s and 1990s, part of the same generation and with broadly the same values – progressive, egalitarian, gradualist, as interested in economic and social as cultural dimensions of the city's renewal, a mainly middle class grouping, products of the university expansion since the 1960s. As described, they provided in particular the cadre of expertise in the planning sections of the council. Unlike some smaller Spanish cities, Barcelona has had a fairly well staffed planning service, and could draw in extra expertise from the universities. It was nevertheless necessary, when Oriol Bohigas arrived as planning director in 1980, to bring in a phalanx of very recently graduated architects to get the new programmes moving (Moix 1994). The same skilled personnel base applied in the strategic and economic planning which emerged in the late 1980s. The first "Economic and Social Strategic Plan Barcelona 2000" was prepared by drawing liberally on the skills of sympathetic academic expertise, as well as, to a lesser degree, on staff in the trade unions and employers organizations (Marshall 1996).

Reference to the employers bodies is a reminder that the council's project was far from disturbing to most of the "normal powers" in the city. Although business may have generally been more sympathetic to the right wing parties, they were, at least in part, successfully brought inside the council's project with the Olympics, Barcelona 2000 and other initiatives. It can be argued that the council leaders forged a relatively successful hegemonic project during this period. Academics may argue whether this is best described in the political science language of "urban regime" (Lauria 1997): an interest-based, enduring coalition, to an extent cross class, which delivers a city elite's aspirations as well as a broader programme. At any rate, up to the time of writing there has been no effective counter project. It would seem that there has been an ability to open to new currents, whether by adopting the language and practice of partnership with business in the 1990s, or by pressing green credentials, against ecologists' criticisms, in the same years: for example by the creation of a "sustainable city" division and programme in the late 1990s.

Is the council as open to public participation and influence as it was 10 or 15 years ago? Many residents groups in the 1990s would say not, as evidenced in the consistent criticisms in the residents' federation newspaper *La Veu del Carrer* over this period (and see Huertas and Andreu 1996, FAVB 1999). Probably the change of approach in the council to more dependence on private funding has brought a shift of attitude, narrowing the range of matters on which the council wishes to negotiate with local groups. However, there is probably still a broad commitment to discussion on many issues, where the council feels it has room to manoeuvre.

Planning therefore rested on political foundations, specifically the force of the social movements of the 1970s, the careful building in the 1980s of a cross-class hegemonic coalition by Maragall and his associates, and the absence of any other really challenging political forces in subsequent years. Lest this summary and much in this book makes the path look too smooth, it should be emphasized that there were many tensions, throughout the period. Luck, careful management and many other factors kept the programmes more or less on course, but this was by no means inevitable. Many criticisms can be made of what Barcelona has done or not done, and these have been as much caused by these political dynamics as the widely acknowledged successes.

Social dimensions of planning

As I have explained, urban development and planning has been multi-faceted over these years, moving forward on many fronts at once. On all of these it can be argued that there have been gains for a broad swathe of the city's inhabitants – in public spaces, in public facilities, in infrastructure, in housing, in providing jobs. It is difficult to make any broad assessment of such an effort over more than two decades. Whilst some efforts were made to evaluate particular elements of the programmes (the Olympics – Brunet 1995, the ring roads-Riera 1993), a wider coverage would be hard. From the left there have been major criticisms. One was at the time of the Olympics, when it was argued that the investment style and practice of the council was not so different from that of the Franco years, with authorities and developers working hand in glove in ways that might have been close to corruption (Moreno and Vázquez Montalbán 1991). Other criticisms in more recent years have detected a drift towards business-friendly planning, marked by developments like the high rise US style development at Diagonal Mar (see Chapter 9; also McNeill 2003). The debates about the highly commercial development of the old port in 1989-93 had had the same concerns, seeing Baltimore's projects of leisure schemes and shopping malls unthinkingly transferred. Since 2000 there has been sharp controversy about the plans for the 22@ Quarter in Poblenou. This scheme, which intensified development for both business and housing use well above Metropolitan Plan norms, was opposed vigorously by residents in the area, and in 2002 the council backed down to some extent, reducing intensity and the height of proposed tower blocks.

More generally, there has been persistent criticism of the council's inability to tackle housing needs, for those who cannot afford the spiralling cost of paying mortgages or rents in the city since the late 1980s. As mentioned above, this is not a failure limited to Barcelona amongst western cities. However, it is the one on which there has been perhaps most debate in recent years, and where the council's record may be most clearly weak. If the Barcelona model includes such a central failure, then evidently that model needs careful examination before being given undiluted praise.

More generally, there has been a view that Barcelona is gradually becoming a city more suitable for rich people (including tourists) than for ordinary citizens. The cost of living in the city has certainly been a factor in the continuing exodus of people, which has brought its population down to one and a half million from about 1,800,000. This decline might continue, though probably at a lesser rate. This throws up as a major issue the planning of the wider metropolitan region, because many of these people still depend economically, or educationally or in other ways, on the central city. But it is precisely this wider scale of change where limited progress has been made in the last decade, as Nella discusses (and as I have discussed elsewhere. 2000). This shifting in the social composition of the city region is regarded by many commentators as the key issue for the present. Whilst it is probably exaggerated to see the planning processes underway as creating a city for the rich, rather than the thoroughly cross-class city of the past, there are surely major questions arising about future social change.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROSPECTS

Few argue against the scale of achievement of the first 10 or 15 years of urban work in the city. This remains a laboratory of successful practice that will continue to repay study, perhaps for some years. Much of what follows gives detail on that achievement. Let us just recap on the conditions necessary for that achievement (of course, it is not possible to be definitive on what exactly was most necessary, or what might have perhaps been less essential):

- skills and commitments of professionals;
- skills and commitments of the people involved “at the base” in neighbourhoods;
- energy spread even more widely than this, released after the end of a dictatorship – Francoism;
- ideology contained within a broadly hegemonic political project;
- wealth in the city built up over long periods;
- other historical-geographical features giving some “winning cards”;
- the global historical moment of the 1970/80s

To judge whether the more “structural” or “agency” features of these conditions were more important would be to enter the most contested zones of history and the social sciences. Was the opportunity really quite specific to those years, or is there something more fundamental in the Barcelona/Catalan air which has a longer drive? No doubt we must try to keep our focus simultaneously on a range of factors. The deep structures facilitated by the contemporary movements of capitalism and state forms have mattered a very great deal in Barcelona: just compare the difference with the equivalent structuring forces affecting the trajectories of say London, Rome or New York to start to get a feel for the power of these active mechanisms. Equally, the agents, individually and as wider interests, fought and struggled to achieve what has been achieved; it would not have happened in the same way at all otherwise. The core actors had social democratic or socialist ideals. Barcelona's success is in part a success story of a certain kind of Left.

At any rate, the whole period was still deeply contested, between more egalitarian and more conservative forces, so that however much one may see a broad hegemony, this was never a settled or fundamental consensus. Now, around the achievements of the recent past and the plans put together since about 1998, there is again less consensus in the city, at least amongst the interested experts. Almost certainly the level of technical skills remains high. Schemes, such as that for the 2004 Forum, will very likely be delivered on time and to an acceptable standard. The Besòs river area will probably be greatly improved in the next few years, and the Llobregat projects will be completed – port, airport, transport links – if not all to the satisfaction of environmentalists. Larger question marks may hang over the 22@ scheme, but this also is highly innovative. Whether the intensive mix of residential and business uses will emerge and work in this vital new central district will only be known over a 10-20 year period.

That scheme and others will be dependent largely on a development model which is increasingly generalized in Europe, whereby private profitable schemes pay for public gains, simply because public budgets are seen as not able (or willing) to carry the costs. That is the fundamental issue underlying the prospects for the city's planning. Now that the coalition of progressive forces which impelled the earlier project has, arguably, more or less lost its ideological strength, does the development model inevitably slide into the more normal pattern, normal often in Barcelona in past eras and normal in most of Europe now?

The challenges to such an assumption of “return to normality” are various, and could be connected to each of the conditioning factors listed above. One is the question of the economic solidity of the city and region. This now depends on the three legs of manufacturing within a continental division of labour, advanced services partly serving that manufacturing and partly working more widely, and tourism. Economic success has been considerable since the mid-1980s, on these bases, and could plausibly continue. However, these depend on many wider economic and environmental conditions which could change dramatically; cheap energy of various forms is just one, and critical for all three legs.

Social solidity is also an issue. The dimension of this most commented on since about 1990 has been the challenge of immigration from poorer countries, especially northern Africa. Barcelona has become, like most other European cities, a multinational City, along several dimensions. This cheap labour is essential to the effective functioning of the city, especially to the tourist trade, but causes some social conflict, and always threatens to emerge over the political parapet and drive politics towards less tolerant and liberal practices. Parts of the city and region have become more segregated by ethnic group. This becomes an issue in planning, as it did in other countries with large immigrations much earlier, but it is not an issue which has yet been much addressed.

The nature of political agency is perhaps the biggest question mark. Since 1980 the city and Catalonia as a whole has had a relatively stable political landscape. Although there have been undoubted drifts in emphasis, a broad commitment to public action for wide sectors of the citizenry has continued in public discourse. This has been a vital accompaniment to planning, from the level of the design of quality street furniture to the debates on the location of the high-speed train station (in La Sagrera, an area of regeneration). Any shift towards a more US style model that puts private needs and dynamics in the centre of programmes would clearly challenge this functioning tandem of action. Given that such changes have happened to varying degrees in most other Spanish cities, such a panorama is by no means implausible. Equally though, pressures from other directions – sharpening housing problems, environmental stresses, disenfranchised immigrant groupings, rising unemployed – could drive towards the creation of a quite fresh coagulation of political interests. Whatever the direction taken, the action will play out in a city which was comprehensively transformed in the last quarter of the twentieth century, in one of the most sustained bursts of planning and conscious governance seen anywhere at the urban level. Probably that burst will not be forgotten for a long while. It may then generate its own legacy.

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