

UC Berkeley

Breslauer Symposium

Title

"It's Illegal to be Ugly and Do Anything That Isn't Profitable": Policing Public Space in Contemporary Barcelona

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/4qc9n3s2>

Author

Miranda, Lucrezia

Publication Date

2006-04-14

Lucrezia Miranda
PhD Candidate
Department of City and Regional Planning
University of California, Berkeley

lucrezia@berkeley.edu

“It’s illegal to be ugly and do anything that isn’t profitable”¹: Policing public space in contemporary Barcelona

The city of Barcelona has become internationally recognized for its ambitious programs of urban ‘regeneration’, initiated by the city council. Largely conceived around the organization of major international events (Olympic Games 1992, Universal Forum of Cultures 2004), dramatic physical changes have made possible the insertion of a ‘made anew’ Barcelona in the political, economic, cultural, and academic global map. In turn, local and international politicians and scholars have hailed the city as a model for a modernized social democracy with a ‘pragmatic but progressive urban politics’.

Today, Barcelona’s unrelenting development and strategically conceived beautification projects have made of tourism the number one source of revenue for the city—art, architecture, and ‘model,’ civic-minded urbanism featuring among its most valuable commodities. But concerns with the ‘real image’ of Barcelona, and with the possible disjunctions between the officially staged city and the projection of media vectors not always under control, may be taking a toll on the traditional openness of its public space. In today’s tourist-fed, immigrant-choked Barcelona, the ‘right to the city’ appears increasingly regulated by a control-obsessed local apparatus unable to negotiate the contradictions of the new global status of the city, and afraid of the political costs of the new ‘disorder’ that came with ‘success.’ Through an examination of the recently created and controversial *Civic Bylaws*² of Barcelona (creatively dubbed by its local critics as the *cynic* bylaws), I will explore some of these contradictions and disjunctions, as they are manifested in the city’s public space.

The paper is organized in four sections. The first and second sections introduce the problem and provide an account of the specificities that characterize Barcelona’s planning tradition and culture. This account, albeit brief, seeks to provide a point of reference to better understand continuities and departures of the so-called *Barcelona Model* in its latest expression. In the last two sections, I zoom in to illustrate some of Barcelona’s most recent planning endeavors and conclude the paper with a short theoretical discussion about the underpinnings and consequences of the new bylaws.

1. Introduction: Barcelona, the ‘Model’ City

“In 1999, precedent has been broken to award the Royal Gold Medal to a city: to Barcelona, its government, its citizens and design professionals of all sorts. Inspired city leadership, pursuing an ambitious yet pragmatic urban strategy and the highest design standards, has transformed the city’s public realm, immensely expanded its amenities and regenerated its economy, providing pride in its inhabitants and delight in its visitors. [...] *Barcelona is now more whole in every way* [...]. Past and present, work and play are *happily inter-meshed in a new totality*. [...] Probably nowhere else in the world are there so many recent examples, in large cities and small towns, of a *benign and appropriate attitude towards creating a civic setting* for the next century.”

--Press release by the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) upon the award of their Gold Medal to Barcelona in 1999 (my emphasis)

“And, once we are at home, it reminds us that the real city we inhabit is not exactly the same as the one we see. I say this in spite of myself, because I am among those who believe that a city you cannot see is more difficult to govern.”

--Pasqual Maragall, former Mayor of Barcelona, in his medal acceptance speech.

When it comes to urban planning and ‘exemplary’ city-making, the name of Barcelona conspicuously appears as a model to be followed. Without doubt, this Mediterranean city has been one of the most widely referred European cities of the last two decades, its *Barcelona Model* of urban development and ‘regeneration’ having conquered the seal of approval of academic and professional circles around the world. The words of the Royal Institute of British Architects quoted above are just one expression of the superlative terms commonly ascribed to Barcelona. They speak of the many changes that have made the city *whole* (‘in every way’), recount a flawless harmony between the old and the new, and commend the seamless design of spaces for economic production and leisure. Barcelona has managed, creatively and *happily*, to fit together the elements of its urban puzzle by creating a *new totality* through design. Working conscientiously behind the scenes, the local government has exhibited a *benign and appropriate attitude* to democratically balance its policy priorities and interventions, as manifested in its comprehensive program for the creation of public spaces in all corners of the city. They have always displayed a *visionary attitude* that understood *progress* as nobody else did, and they have left an unquestionable legacy for other cities to learn how to create model civic settings that foster community and citizenship –or so the official story goes, as it has been told for now some time, at home and abroad.

Today, I argue, the socially oriented character of Barcelona’s urban policymaking is highly questionable, and the once alleged sociospatial seamlessness and equal access to urban space are hard to defend. Against the laudatory words that continue to circulate about the progressive precepts of the *Barcelona Model* of urban development, the modern hegemonic project of a cosmopolitan, transparent, paradigmatically democratic city ‘open to all’ has started to show fissures.

The recently implemented, highly controversial, *Civic Bylaws* of Barcelona are a case in point, and provide a fertile ground to explore some of the contradictions and disjunctions in the current project of urban development and global projection, as they are manifested in the city's public space.

2. The Barcelona Model: Twenty years ...with a longstanding tradition

“Es el defecto de casi todo lo que se hace en Barcelona.
Hácese, en gran parte, para la galería, para asombrar al forastero.”
[It is the fault of virtually everything done in Barcelona. It is conceived, in
great part, for display –to amaze the stranger.]

--Miguel de Unamuno, 1928

The *Barcelona Model* of urban development and city regeneration has been widely referred to as a uniquely innovative set of policies that helped transform this Mediterranean city radically from the mid 1980s onwards. Largely conceived around the organization of international mega-events (the 1992 Olympic Games and, a decade later, the 2004 Universal Forum of Cultures) Barcelona's urban revitalization has been a key element in the city's strategies for transition into the global economy. Tied with such events, dramatic urban changes and a flexible institutional structure allowed for the creation and gradual insertion of a contemporary Barcelona—'made anew'—into the global (political, economic, cultural, academic) map.

Much has been written about the features of the 'model,' from its architectural riches to the specific institutional arrangements that allowed the city to materialize its many urban changes upon its transition to democracy.³ There is no room here to describe all aspects of the model in depth,⁴ nor are they relevant to address the main concerns of this paper. Thus, in this section, I limit myself to providing a short background of Barcelona's planning culture and tradition, as well as a succinct portrayal of the model. The following summary thus aims to clarify the larger historical context, and offer a background against which to measure the significance of some recent policy shifts. These shifts are important, not only because they reflect an ideological and political departure from the original values and priorities that once characterized the model—which are now more in accord to the global imperatives of flexible capital—but also because they redraw the sociospatial map of Barcelona and create new differential conditions in the access to public space.

2.1. Barcelona: A long planning tradition, a distinguishable planning culture

Understanding Barcelona's urban transformation requires going beyond the mere identification of its institutional agents and planning techniques. Specific historical and cultural factors helped shape Barcelona's 'way of doing' planning. Among them:

1. The Spanish town-planning tradition of *urbanism*. In this field, Barcelona's 'exemplary' planning can be traced as early as 1857, with the implementation of the comprehensive and visionary Plan Cerdà.⁵ Although many plans were never implemented, urbanism conquered its longstanding legitimacy in the hands of physical design professionals (engineers and architects known as *urbanists*).
2. Architects, who among other local intellectuals had radicalized during the dictatorship, became "essential drivers of the planning and implementation of urban change in Barcelona" after Franco's death in 1975 (Marshall 2004: 8; Moix 1994). This new Catalan *intelligentsia*, imbued in part with old liberal and nationalistic values rooted in the Catalan *Noucentista*⁶ movement of the early 1900s, had a fundamental role in shaping the singularities of the Barcelona Model many years later, especially during the 1980s.⁷ Creating a 'more democratic, cosmopolitan' city able to build community pride, help create a local civic identity, and foster citizenship were among these values. 'Opening the city' through the provision of new public spaces was a key piece for the materialization of this vision.
3. Historical political vision to create a cosmopolitan Barcelona economically well positioned beyond its provincial and national borders. Large-scale international events, accompanied by grand urban renovation and aesthetization of the public realm through monumental architecture and public art, are not new. The idea of 'elevating' the city to achieve 'European status' was the argument that the political class and business elites put forward for the organization of the Universal Expos the city hosted in 1888 and 1924.
4. Overall, starting in the 1980s, generalized consensus and exceptional motivation provided by the construction of the 'new Barcelona' in the historical juncture of return to democracy.
5. Neighborhood activists, union and community leaders active during the dictatorship became City Council members and administrators in the new democratic government, bringing their *social values* with them. These were reflected in the planning priorities of the early democratic years. However, as planning projects grew in scale and complexity, and governance shifted to allow an important role for the private sector, a growing disconnect with the citizenry emerged.

2.2. A quick guide to the 'Barcelona Model'

The key features of Barcelona's planning model have been summarized on countless occasions, and not always in the same manner. This lack of agreement in defining the 'model,' may indicate that Barcelona in fact never intended to conceive its planning as a 'model,' but rather became an 'after the fact' representation, or a successful 'brand' to present the city to the world. Next, I borrow from Joan Busquets (2004) who, as head of the Department of Urbanism in the 1980s, was responsible for the definition of some of the most significant, long-term urban projects in the new blueprint of the city. In his largely technical account, the most distinctive elements and dynamics in the planning experience of Barcelona are:

1. Change of scale in plans and projects throughout time: From small civic projects to large-scope planning interventions.⁸ The policy of *high quality public space provision* in both central and peripheral neighborhoods (with the motto:

‘recovering the center, monumentalizing the periphery’) was the key element of the model.⁹ [Yet, I offer, architects’ emphasis in the physical and visual form of planning schemes, and their accent in *aesthetics* came hand in hand with deficits in incorporating social and economic dimensions in their analysis of urban reality. The abstract and naturalizing vision of public space projects –built for an idealized, homogenous community—was compounded by the pervasive absence of channels for meaningful participation].

2. From an emphasis in publicly led projects (at the beginning of the model) to the creation of partnerships. Public-private partnerships, in fact, are central to the model. Barcelona’s ‘stamp,’ according to Busquets, consisted of securing private investment for interventions of clearly public interest. This was largely true during the first ten years, but today constitutes one of the greatest departures from the model’s original goals.
3. From ordinary planning to exceptional planning, by conceiving “common guidelines for the regulation of the city”—from its everyday problems to the big interventions aimed at 1992 (the Olympics).

Besides narrow model interpretations in strict technical and bureaucratic terms, other authors emphasize a sustained political leadership of the Left (in office, with different coalitions, until today) or the government’s ‘creative’ entrepreneurialism to promote economic development through ‘innovative’ means (McNeill 2003; Marshall 2000, 2004). Others also note the role of social movements and the priorities they set for planners upon the transition to democracy (as noted in the previous section), and the alleged presence of participation and consensus in the planning process (Borja and Castells 1996; Borja 2003). As for the latter, even though a quite limited, strategic, institutionally and economically oriented type of participation may have been present when seeking official consensus for the 1992 Olympics (and were conspicuously absent during the Forum 2004), claims of broader and more inclusive citizen participation are highly contested. In this regard, accounts of participation have generally come from the public sector –or key figures once associated with it—or have been collected in rather descriptive and superficial writings circulating mostly in international circles that, often, uncritically reiterate expressions of the official discourse.

Finally, if at the beginning of the democratic process the local council was receptive to neighborhoods’ demands, subsequent government emphasis in strategic infrastructural projects and large scope, internationally oriented undertakings in key areas of the city gradually displaced these early citizen oriented priorities.

Today, anxiety about the rising cost of living in Barcelona and official lack of response about some worsening social issues (e.g. housing, employment, immigration, homelessness, etc., the other side of the coin of ‘global success’) are renewing neighborhood organizations and citizen groups’ old calls for meaningful participation. Their demands, together with those of collectives that feel vulnerable, alienated, or rendered irrelevant in the account of the new global priorities of the city are starting to assert their presence and claim their ‘right to the city’ through various expressions of political protest. I return to some of these issues below.

3. Barcelona today: Cracks in the ‘benign city’ model?

“In all that has happened in the last twenty years, the most important change lies in the very continuity of the spectacle. Quite simple, the spectacle’s domination has succeeded in raising a whole generation molded to its laws. The extraordinary new conditions in which this entire generation has lived constitute a comprehensive summary of all that, henceforth, the spectacle will forbid; and also all that it will permit.”

--Guy Debord (1988, p. 7)

“Great shows, exhibits, conferences, congresses and a long list of events. 141 days in which we will immerse ourselves in a multicultural environment propitious for ‘renewing attitudes and behaviors’. It is not about a universal expo, or the Olympic games, or about a simple summer festival: It is something new, unprecedented: something that will move the world.”

--From the official publication of the City of Barcelona introducing the Forum Barcelona 2004 event to local citizens [my translation, my emphasis.]

3.1. From the Olympics to the Forum: Public who?

Barcelona figured out quite well how to conquer the death throes of the Olympic dream and by the mid nineties had already embarked in its next globally oriented mega-project: The 2004 Universal Forum of Cultures. This space for ‘encounter, reflection’ and ‘celebration of difference’ provided not only another instance for international marketing and display but also an excuse to push forward the last frontier available for development –in a prime location by the Mediterranean Sea. In fact, the urban area surrounding the Forum site –located in the historically blue-collar neighborhood of Poble Nou—had previously been rezoned by the City to allow new uses and activities, all of which were encompassed in an ambitious, privately developed new urban plan known as Diagonal Mar.¹⁰ Diagonal Mar, a portentous development made of five star hotels, luxury high rise condominiums, office space and an ‘American-signature’ shopping mall signaled the largest foreign real estate operation developed by the private sector in Barcelona, a clear departure from the earlier ways promoted by the Barcelona Model.

Meanwhile, the official account of the Forum (Forum Barcelona 2004: 2) presented the thirty-hectare project of new construction as a good “example of *social and environmental development* in a bordering area between Barcelona and Sant Adrià de Besòs” –a socially depressed area of this Barcelona’s neighboring municipality by the Besòs River, and the site of some of the worst examples of public housing policy under Franco. But in the mind of the Forum critics, the new development was a publicly sanctioned, outward expression of a new *revanchist* city squeezing the poor and some ‘problematic’ populations¹¹ out of the way—or, at least, out of sight—as well as of an ever-sophisticated official rhetoric to mask the reversion of public priorities and growing social exclusion (Lopez Petit 2004; Delgado 2004).

Interestingly, while the City of Barcelona was mobilizing a democratic rhetoric of ‘encounter’ between communities, the very design of the Forum site had become an elaborate *splintering* device for sociospatial exclusion—a physical and tangible ‘security

cushion' standing in between the 'problematic' surrounding neighborhoods (i.e. La Mina) and the new urban spaces of leisure and consumption (Delgado 2004, citing Muxi, n/d). Moreover, the official image of the Forum as a welcoming event open to community participation and the practice of citizenship was contradicted by the virtually impenetrable organizing and managing structure, and its lack of openness towards the very communities the Forum sought to *include* by way of dedicated *online* spaces for participation and discussion (Garcia 2004). Finally, the 'celebration of citizenship' was contradicted by yet another, albeit less conspicuous, barrier in the prohibitive cost of entry determining differential degrees of access based on class and income.

3.2. *Growing contradictions... But the show must go on.*

Barcelona... is not content with having made a great leap forward, as it had already done in 1888 and 1929. It is aiming for a permanent place among the world's great cities. It wants to stay at the top and not lose any ground.
Pasqual Maragall, in "Governing Barcelona"

The Forum example illustrates a clear departure from the earlier values and civic priorities once ascribed to the Barcelona Model, and inaugurates a new era in the way to conceive planning in the city. Most importantly, the magnitude of recent interventions lays bare in all force the true makeup of *abstract space* and the associated public schemes that in earlier years may have gone unnoticed. The lack of civic enthusiasm with—and in several cases outright resistance to—the Forum project indicates a loss of innocence on the part of a 'public' that is breaking away from the hegemonic underpinnings of the Barcelona Model.¹²

The old rhetoric of 'public-ness,' the benign character of urban projects for the city that are able to instill 'pride in its inhabitants and delight in its visitors,' have very much cracked under the sight of all too conspicuous private developments that have little to do with civic values and the burning priorities of great part of the population.

A benign account of the dynamics that moves Barcelona today would see recent developments as the 'other side of the coin' resulting from the city's physical and infrastructural upgrade and an economic ascendance that makes it desirable for new global agents. As Borja (2003) put it, they are 'the perverse effects of success.'

But in the minds of many citizens and citizen groups today, Barcelona has become, more than ever, a city "for sale" –while they are simultaneously aware of their growing inability "to buy." The city, defined as aesthetic product, has become a coveted object readily available for consumption. Barcelona's aggressive marketing strategy to promote itself through international mega-events achieved its intended goal of making of tourism its number one industry—a longstanding goal from the early democratic years. And the city must carry on, nonstop, with the spectacle-machine that sustains it.

3.3. *Totalizing Public Space*

Among the multiple attractions that embody its recently conquered first class status, the *city-product* is built upon carefully conceived promises of grand architecture, public art,

and high quality, meticulously designed ‘public’ spaces —the hallmark of the Barcelona Model. In its quest to preserve its international status, and the accompanying spectacular image with which the city has made itself known, the importance of an aesthetic, inviting and safe ‘public space open to all’ is paramount.

Barcelona, from the all-encompassing Plan Cerdà in the nineteenth century, to the urban model of the last twenty-some years, has always deposited great faith in the ‘goodness’ of design and the prowess of its architects. The alliance between urban and aesthetic disciplines and the uses of aesthetic ideologies at the service of economic development is not exclusive to Barcelona. Now —as Deutsche has eloquently demonstrated in her discussion of New York City—this mutually supportive relationship continues to exist, ubiquitously, to disguise oppressive urban restructuring programs—and the gradual constriction of public space (Deutsche 1998).

However, this association acquires a complex dimension in Barcelona: a city where public space has been rhetorically defined as open to all, (“la ciudad es la calle” = the city is the street), and as a necessary premise to build democracy, strengthen civic pride, build collective identity (Bohigas 1985),¹³¹⁴ and “give greater dignity to its inhabitants” (Borja 2004: 101). Significantly, in the official view, this “aesthetic concern is indicative of the administration’s commitment to work well done, and helps to make the city *more egalitarian and community-minded*” (ibid., my emphasis). Moreover, the creation of public spaces, in Borja’s words, was a key “hardware” in the city’s social policy (Borja 2004: 99).

According to ex-Mayor Pasqual Maragall, the aesthetization of the city —promoted by City led campaigns such as *Barcelona posa’t guapa* (“Barcelona, look your best”)— “consolidates *the citizen’s* perception of the public landscape as a common and public good, contributes to the improvement of the collective heritage, and increases the comfort, tranquility, and sociability in the city” (Ajuntament 1992: 6). This aestheticizing political discourse (Benjamin’s ‘aesthetization of politics’) as well as the ‘re-semanticizing’ of the urban landscape and naturalization of the built environment —where the city is reduced to an attractive and self-complacent totality—excludes all dissonant elements. But as Jane Flax has suggested,

“Perhaps reality can have ‘a’ structure only from the falsely universalizing perspective of the dominant group. That is, only to the extent that one person or group can dominate the whole will reality appear to be governed by one set of rules or to be constituted by one privileged set of social relations.”

Jane Flax (cited by Nicholson, 1990: 6),

The totalizing image with which Barcelona is continuously presented and reconstructed in public discourse, “implicitly denies the existence of what is not made visible: undesirable spaces and subjects, the increasingly transnational circuit of capital, information and interests that make the city possible” (Balibrea).

4. The Civic ByLaws in ‘la ciutat de la gent’

The construction of global Barcelona as a leisure and tourist site needs to produce a totalizing and coherent representation/meaning of the city, one that can be cogently

read and is pleasant to consume by visitors. But the embracing of such an orderly totality, Michel de Certeau would caution, has its risks. This unifying and cogent representation, the result of some carefully measured decisions of the local power, is a fiction: a fiction made up precisely but the ability of that power to engage in the production of ‘truths,’ a device of power that transforms ‘the city’s complexity into readability and that freezes its opaque mobility into a crystal-clear text...’ (de Certeau 1985: 128).

Then, how to conciliate this ‘crystal-clear’ vision with the ‘opaque mobility’ of social processes, with the countless and different uses of public space in a city that proudly defines itself as ‘la ciutat de la gent’ (*the city of the people*)? How to conciliate Barcelona’s controlled and controlling *representation of space* with the conflicting prerogatives of truly lived *representational spaces*? (the very spaces for the ‘exercise of citizenship’ paradoxically promoted by the rhetoric of democratic Barcelona). In the orderly conception of Barcelona’s planning, public space has also a ‘civilizing’ (disciplining) mission, and is portrayed as the equalizing locus for the building of *community* and the celebration of *collective identity*. But it is behind this essentializing definition of an homogenous, pliable and civically-minded ‘public’ that lies conflict: Barcelona may seek to homogenize and control, through minute design, its representations of public space in the city-spectacle; but how to design ‘out’ images and behaviors that disrupt this order?

4.1. *Designing ‘in’, designing ‘out’: Barcelona Civic ByLaws*

Soon after the summer of 2005, a clamor of voices demanding a cleaner, more orderly and ‘tough’ Barcelona started rising in the city: locals and tourists urinate everywhere, young people stay late in the streets and congregate in plazas to drink in an improvised Mediterranean open air ‘bar’ (*turismo de botellón* / ‘big bottle’ tourism), prostitutes and beggars are an unsightly presence that scare away potential shoppers, the city is no longer safe. Rather surprisingly, the local media—rarely a voice of dissent with the official views—had taken the lead, echoing the local conservative and right wing parties of the opposition.¹⁵ The Barcelona City Council had a problem: Somewhere along the line, the ‘spatialization of virtue’¹⁶ imaginarily embedded in the design of public spaces had ceased to work. And local elections were less than a year away.

The *Bylaws to Promote and Guarantee Citizen’s Coexistence in the Public Space of Barcelona*¹⁷ (Civic Bylaws, CBL), approved with the dissenting voice of one of the left coalition parties and under the weight of enormous opposition (notably, by the respected Barcelona Neighborhood Associations’ Federation), was implemented the first day of 2006. The official discourse went out of its way to defend the bylaws as an instrument to regulate ‘cohabitation’—not to define ‘civic-mindedness.’ Conservatives expressed its ample support to the ordinance as an instrument to put a stop to the growing *deterioration of public space* and *cohabitation* in the city (El País 2005), and the right wing straightforwardly demanded ‘zero tolerance.’ In the meantime, the incumbent conservative Mayor from CiU defended that the bylaws were *not* the expression of a particular ideology: ‘They are not norms from the left or from the right: they are *everybody’s norms*’ (ibid.), the norms of the (homogenized) *citizen* of Barcelona.

The ‘conduct of conduct’ of the Barcelona *citizen*—as conceived in this new authoritarian space of government that subsumes left and right—essentializes the notion of an ideal

citizen and the *collective good*, and acquires a moralizing tone in the definition of the *proper place* (and *behavior*, as regulated in its Title II: “Rules of Behavior in Public Space”) for a wide range of individuals.¹⁸ Worse yet, it perversely hides the logic by which many of the ‘redundant’ subjects are where they are –and readily assumes, as prostitutes have charged, that there are some that need to be ‘saved.’

The CBL claims as its main goal ‘to *preserve public space* as a place of cohabitation and civic-mindedness where all persons may carry out, in freedom, their activities of free circulation, leisure, encounter and recreation with ample respect for the dignity and rights of others, and for the plurality of expressions and lifestyles present in Barcelona” (CBL, p.5). But behind this apparently benign rhetoric there is an intricate engineering that classifies and regulates subjects and activities, and a perverse logic that leaves out social expressions indissolubly linked to the new ‘global’ position of Barcelona. Rhetoric aside, the long list of dispositions of the CBL has a less manifest, disciplining goal: the repression of behavior in public space. But *whose* behavior, *what* behavior?

The hodgepodge of regulations about peoples and behaviors in public spaces –which stigmatizes the ‘usual suspects’ already punished in many cities (beggars, homeless, prostitutes, immigrants, young people), appears conceived almost as a ‘natural extension’ of the architects’ work to construct the ideal image of Barcelona. A fully accomplished project of public space *design*, as seamlessly conceived in the *diagrammatic* (Osborne & Rose 1999) of the Barcelona Model, cannot afford the display of unplanned disjunctions. Thus, in the utterly commodified, aestheticized and ever regulated Barcelona, “it is now illegal to be ugly and do anything that isn’t profitable,” as creatively summarizes a young blogger in frustration. Skating, drinking and gathering casually in public spaces are, in the mind of many, expressions of leisure, encounter and free association—but no longer so in the image of the new governing imagination of Barcelona. Even the hallmarks of creative spontaneity traditionally contributed by street musicians, mimes, and jugglers have been regulated, as they may contradict and ‘interfere with the enjoyment’ of the true ‘nature and purpose of public space’ (CBL, p. 22). Yet, as abundantly discussed earlier, the naturalization and symbiotic objectification of the relationship between public spaces and model citizens is not new. What *is* new, however, is the growing magnitude of the cracks in the model.

Conclusion

Barcelona is finding increasingly difficult to articulate its longstanding project of insertion in “the global map” with the growing discontent of a citizenry that sees itself ever more excluded from the local space of the city. The city appears trapped by its commitment to maintain an expansionary economic project and its promise to furnish an ever-expanding urban frontier for the global capital. But the local citizens of the aspiring global city are committed to reminding the *architects* of the new, repressive space of government that not everything can be controlled through design.

¹ From a blog posting criticizing the new civic laws of Barcelona.
<http://www.negrophonic.com/words/pivot/entry.php?id=296>

² In its original name in Catalan, “Ordenança de Mesures per Fomentar i Garantir la Convivència Ciudadana a L’Espai Públic de Barcelona” (Bylaws to Promote and Guarantee Citizen’s Coexistence in the Public Space of Barcelona”)

³ Spain was under the autarchic rule of Franco for almost four decades (1936-1975) After a convoluted period of transition to democracy, the first national democratic government was established in 1979.

⁴ A comprehensive and ‘official’ account of different dimensions of the Barcelona Model is provided in a series known as “Model Barcelona: Quaderns de Gestio,” edited by Aula Barcelona.

⁵ This plan reconfigured the whole city through the creation of the urban fabric we know today (the *Eixample*) and the annexation of neighboring towns –today, fully integrated into the main fabric of the city.

⁶ *Noucentisme* was a cultural movement that influenced all areas of artistic activity in Catalonia between 1908 and 1923. The term was coined by the philosopher Eugenio d’Ors, who used it to refer to a new ‘20th-century’ spirit and a new sensibility that he perceived in Catalan art at the beginning of the century. The *noucentistes*, who were characterized by a particular interest in urban life, also encouraged a return to ‘order’ and ‘normality’ after the radicalism, bohemianism and individualism that had characterized some of the major figures of modernism. Noucentisme also inspired the foundation of such cultural institutions as the Institut d’Estudis Catalans.

⁷ These ‘well versed’ generation of architects—many of whom had acquired strong technical and intellectual planning experience in Italy, Britain and France during Franco’s dictatorship at home—helped consolidate the privileged role of architecture in the new process of city transformation through the organization of public debates in the local Catalan Architectural Association, student and professional forums, etc. During these years, the media was also saturated with discussions about ongoing architecture and urban design projects, a topic that continues to feature prominently and routinely in Barcelona’s local newspapers.

⁸ Urban planning and design interventions evolved, over time, from simple ‘monographic’ projects (i.e. plazas, parks, schools, etc.) to complex, large-scale multidimensional projects.

⁹ According to Borja, the provision of public space and facilities was ‘the great strategy of the 1980s.’ Borja notes the creation of 300 interventions of different scales, ‘half of which were open public spaces’ and the greatest part of which were built in just a few years’. Above all, he said, this was a ‘social strategy’ aimed at ‘bringing some light to each area of the city.’ (Borja 2003: 172).

¹⁰ This plan completed an ambitious operation to open the Diagonal Mar all the way to the sea (an idea already reflected in the Plan Cerdà of 1958). This operation implied cutting through the Poblenou neighborhood between Glories (one of the new central areas and large infrastructural projects planned by Joan Busquets in the Olympic period) and the seafront, in the area near the Besós River. The opening of this last stretch of the Diagonal did away with old warehouses and industrial buildings (some with ongoing activities) which in many cases required the use of eminent domain and provoked mass, yet unsuccessful, neighborhood mobilizations. The battle for the preservation and meaningful adaptive reuse (i.e. housing or community uses) of important buildings and industrial structures in the area (which was one known as the ‘Catalan Manchester’) is ongoing, and has become a highly politicized issue with which to illustrate the lack of official response to collective demands and meaningful participation of affected populations.

¹¹ Most criticism was made in reference to the La Mina neighborhood, an old and massive public housing project build under Franco to house some very low-income, minority populations (mostly Gypsies) originally living in barracks. A good part of ‘La Mina’ inhabitants have historically suffered from a host of economic, social and health problems, from lack of formal education and a marginal insertion in the labor market to drug-dependence and other issues. Recently, with the construction of the Forum, the Council has ‘rediscovered’ La Mina and is implementing, with the help of some active community organizations, a new “Plan de Rehabilitación” for the neighborhood.

¹² According to Balibrea, the persuasiveness of official discourses, had not only ‘overwhelmingly, almost monolithically, been favorable’ to implemented urban changes in the city, but had pervasively contributed to give ‘public meaning to the changes.’ (Balibrea 2004)

¹³ As Garcia has written, there is an “apparent conflict between the relevance of the intangible matters’ in the mission statement of the Forum ‘and the very tangible urban transformation surrounding them. The latter, it is argued, seems to respond to the interests of private speculators rather than the wider community and may endanger the sustainability of existing neighborhoods in the area” (Garcia 2004: 112-3).

¹⁴ More provocatively, the pervasive official rhetoric about ‘public space’ can be read as an expression of an almost symbiotic relationship between ideology and place, where the naturalized, totalized design of the built

environment in Barcelona has been thought as ‘supporting a motivational structure and a guide for (civic) action,’ and becomes an expression of the ‘ideology-zation’ of place by the official power structure (Delgado 2004: 117). As Delgado argues, Bohigas –the head of the Urban Projects Department in the early 1980s—was always straightforward about his goal to achieve the “city’s quantitative and qualitative homogeneity [...] emphasizing the unitary representation of the city...” Delgado (2004: 118)

¹⁵ Convergència i Unió (center-conservative) and Partido Popular (right wing). The current government of Barcelona, a coalition from the left, had been in office throughout all these years, uninterruptedly, since the transition to democracy.

¹⁶ I borrow from Osborne and Rose. See “Governing cities: notes on the spatialisation of virtue” (1999).

¹⁷ The full text (available only in Catalan) can be found in the official website of the City of Barcelona, www.barcelona.es

¹⁸ In fact, the CBL has been recently challenged in court, collectively, by the newly created “Sexual Work and Cohabitation Community Platform,” joined by disparate groups such as the Barcelona Neighborhood Associations’ Federation, human right groups, sex workers’ union, the Collective of Transsexuals of Catalonia and women’s organizations (including the Women Secretariat of the main union, CCOO). The Platform, among other things, denounces not only the increasing persecution and repression of sexual workers (in great part recent immigrants from Eastern Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America) though fines for ‘the abusive use of public space’ but also through the implementation of arbitrary use of immigration controls. More mainstream organizations such as the Catalan Institute of Human Rights and the Commission for the Defense of the Individual of the Lawyers’ Association have also denounced the CBL.

Cited References

- Balibrea, Ma. Paz. 2004. “Urbanism, culture and the post-industrial city: challenging the ‘Barcelona Model’”, pp. 205-24, in Marshall 2004, cited.
- _____. 2005. Barcelona: del modelo a la marca,” e-barcelona.org, www.e-barcelona.org
- Bohigas, Oriol. 1985. *Reconstrucció de Barcelona*. Barcelona: Edicions 62.
- Borja, Jordi. 2003. “Barcelona y su urbanismo: Exitos pasados, desafíos presentes, oportunidades futuras,” pp. 171-182, in Borja and Muxi, 2004.
- _____. 2004. “The city, democracy and governability: the case of Barcelona,” pp. 97-110, in Marshall, cited.
- _____. and Zaida Muxi, eds. 2004. *Urbanismo en el siglo XXI*. Barcelona: Edicions UPC.
- Cia, Blanca. 2005. “Barcelona aprueba la ordenanza de civismo con reproches cruzados entre ERC e ICV. *El País*, Dec. 24, 2005. Online archive, PDF version.
- Debord, Guy. 1988/2002. *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle*. London and NYC: Verso.
- De Certeau, Michel. 1984/1988. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley and London: University of California Press.
- Delgado, Manuel. 2005. *Elogi del Vianant: Del “model Barcelona” a la Barcelona real*. Barcelona: Edicions de 1984.
- Deutsche, Rosalyn. 1998. *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics*. London and Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Garcia, Beatriz. 2004. “La dimension cultural de los macro-eventos en el 2004: Potenciales y limitaciones para una experiencia sostenible,” Portal Iberoamericano de Gestion Cultural, www.gestioncultural.org
- Lefebvre, Henri. 1991. *The Production of Space*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Lopez Petit, Santiago and Manuel Delgado. 2004. Lecture in occasion of the presentation of the book *La otra cara del Forum de les Cultures, S.A.* Universitat de Barcelona, May 30, 2004.
- Maragall, Pasqual. 1986. *Refent Barcelona*. Barcelona: Planeta.
- Marshall, Tim, ed. 2004. *Transforming Barcelona*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Mitchell, Don. 2003. *The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space*. New York and London: The Guilford Press.
- Moitx, Llatzer. 2002. *La ciudad de los arquitectos*. Barcelona: Anagrama.
- Nicholson, Linda. 1990. *Feminism/Postmodernism*. London: Routledge.
- Smith, Neil. 1996. *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City*. London/NY: Routledge.