

RETHINKING THE “BARCELONA MODEL”: MULTIPLE REPRESENTATIONS OF THE CITY

REPENSANDO O MODELO BARCELONA: AS MÚLTIPLAS REPRESENTAÇÕES DA CIDADE

REPENSANDO EL “MODELO BARCELONA”: LAS MÚLTIPLES REPRESENTACIONES DE LA CIUDAD

ABSTRACT



Introduction: this paper analyzes the renovation that took place in Barcelona, Spain, between the 1980s and 1990s, when significant transformations were made to host the 1992 Olympics, and takes this urbanism of the “Barcelona Model” as a reference to reflect on the process of contemporary urban regeneration from the implementation of policies of image and refuncionalization of tourism. **Objective:** after recovering the historical process of such interventions that initially sought to correct the problems inherited from Francoism, such as densities and scarcity of public spaces, equipment, services and housing, we seek to present the strategies of urban planning to introduce the city to the global market, making it one of the main tourist destinations in Europe, with strong socio-spatial contradictions between tourist uses and the uses of the city by local residents. **Methods:** the results of this research were based on literature review, documents analysis and fieldwork with the conduction of in-depth interviews with important agents representing the analysed process. **Results:** the demystification of the “Barcelona Model”, based on its presentation and critical analysis, confirms that urban “models” can only serve as inspiration, review and criticism, but cannot be replicated as recipes in cities with different influences. **Conclusion:** the uncontrolled excess of tourists in the city revealed the need for new instruments to regulate the sector regarding the concentration in tourist spots and the quality of life of the local residents, mainly in relation to real estate speculation, the cost of living, and the cultural impacts of the so-called 'overtourism'.

Keywords: Barcelona Model. Urban Renewal. Tourism. Socio-spatial contradictions.

RESUMO

Introdução: Este artigo analisa a renovação ocorrida na cidade de Barcelona, Espanha, entre as décadas de 1980 e 1990, quando foram realizadas transformações significativas para acolher as Olimpíadas de 1992, e toma esse urbanismo do “Modelo de Barcelona” como referência para refletir sobre o processo contemporâneo de renovação urbana com a implementação de políticas de imagem e de refuncionalização turística. **Objetivo:** Após recuperarmos o processo histórico de tais intervenções que, inicialmente, buscaram corrigir os problemas herdados do franquismo, tais como densidades e escassez de espaços públicos, equipamentos, serviços e moradias, buscamos apresentar as estratégias do planejamento urbano para introduzir a cidade no mercado global, transformando-a em um dos principais destinos turísticos da Europa, com fortes contradições socioespaciais entre os usos turísticos e os usos da cidade pelos moradores locais. **Métodos:** Os resultados desta pesquisa foram baseados em revisão bibliográfica, documental e trabalho de campo com aplicação de entrevistas com importantes sujeitos representantes do processo analisado. **Resultados:** A desmistificação do “Modelo Barcelona”, com base na sua apresentação e análise crítica, confirma que os “modelos” urbanos só podem servir de inspiração, revisão e crítica, mas não podem ser replicados como receitas em cidades com influências diversas. **Conclusão:** O excesso descontrolado de turistas na cidade demonstrou a necessidade de novos instrumentos para regular o setor quanto à concentração em pontos turísticos e à qualidade de vida dos moradores locais, principalmente em relação à especulação imobiliária, ao custo de vida, e aos impactos culturais do chamado 'overtourism'.

Palavras-chave: Modelo Barcelona. Renovação Urbana. Turismo. Contradições socioespaciais.

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RESUMEN

Introducción: este artículo analiza la renovación que tuvo lugar en Barcelona, España, entre 1980 y 1990, cuando se produjeron importantes transformaciones para albergar las Olimpiadas de 1992, y toma este urbanismo del “Modelo Barcelona” como referencia para reflejar sobre el proceso de renovación urbana contemporánea con la implementación de políticas de imagen y refuncionalización turística. **Objetivo:** tras recuperar el proceso histórico de tales intervenciones que buscaban corregir los problemas heredados del franquismo, como las densidades y escasez de espacios públicos, equipamientos, servicios y vivienda, buscamos presentar las estrategias del urbanismo para introducir la ciudad en el mercado global, convirtiéndola en uno de los principales destinos turísticos de Europa, con fuertes contradicciones socioespaciales entre los usos turísticos y los usos de la ciudad por parte de los residentes locales. **Métodos:** los resultados se basaron en la revisión bibliográfica, documental y en el trabajo de campo con la aplicación de entrevistas con los actores que representan el proceso analizado. **Resultados:** la desmitificación del “Modelo Barcelona”, a partir de su presentación y análisis crítico, confirma que los “modelos” urbanos solo pueden servir de inspiración, revisión y crítica, pero no pueden ser replicados como recetas en ciudades con distintas influencias. **Conclusión:** el descontrolado exceso de turistas en la ciudad demostró la necesidad de nuevos instrumentos para regular el sector en cuanto a la concentración de puntos turísticos y la calidad de vida de los vecinos, principalmente en relación a la especulación inmobiliaria, el costo de vida y los impactos culturales del llamado 'overtourism'.

Palabras-clave: Modelo Barcelona. Renovación Urbana. Turismo. Contradicciones socioespaciales.



INTRODUCTION – ON THE OLD CITY, THE OLYMPIC BARCELONA

Having undergone more than two thousand years of transformation, Barcelona is a mosaic of landscapes among fragments of defensive walls and aqueducts of the old Roman city, monumental medieval gothic buildings, a modern planned central area designed by the Catalan urban planner Ildefons Cerdá and buildings that show its urban and touristic renewal.

Urban evolution in Barcelona comprises five main periods that resulted in the current urban planning: 1) Roman Barcelona (1st century A.D.); 2) Medieval Barcelona (13th century); 3) Modern Barcelona (19th century); 4) Immigrants’ Barcelona (20th century - 1950 and 1960); and 5) Summer Olympics Barcelona (20th century – 1980 and 1990). Contemporary Barcelona would then live its six period of urban transformation: the “Touristic Barcelona” (ABELLA, 2004).

Current and touristic Ciutat Vella encompasses the historical center and suburbs Gòtic, Raval and Barceloneta, in a dense weave of narrow streets, shaded by Roman and medieval architecture. Barcelona is characterized as a compact city stretched over a 10km x 10km square that has 1.6 million inhabitants living in 102.2 km² (ABELLA, 2004; MUXÍ, 2005)¹.

In 1859, due to high density, insalubrious housing and disease proliferation, the Crown of Spain allowed the defensive walls to be demolished. The Urbanistic Plann of *Cerdá* aimed at better life quality, international acknowledgement and economic growth by means of expansion of industries that had already been installed in the walled city (ABELLA, 2004). In the new area, the city observed the development of the central suburb Eixample² (BUSQUETS, 2004), which was an ordered rectangular mesh of parallel streets, perpendicular to the sea, thus forming islands of houses in uniform squares (**Figure 1**). It was different from the dense maze found in Ciutat Vella. Such plan revealed a modern Barcelona which had an architecture differentiated by works carried out by the architect Antoni Gaudí

¹ Barcelona had 859 inhabitants per hectare, while Paris had 356, Madrid had 324 and London had 86 in 1859 (MUXÍ, 2005).

² “Eixample”, in Catalan, and “*Ensanche*”, in Spanish, mean “expansion”.



Figure 1. Ensanche Plan and Ciutat Vella. Source: Google Earth, organised by author, 2017.



The expansion meant the decadence of Ciutat Vella, which would not get investments in infrastructure and services anymore, underwent decrease in rental prices and attracted immigrants who looked for jobs in the industries (ABELLA, 2004; CABRERA, 2007; BUSQUETS, 2004).

After Franco’s death in 1975 and the end of the Civil War, Barcelona experienced the beginning of democracy and, simultaneously, a strong economic crisis that resulted from closed industries and unemployment, which affected mainly immigrants (CABRERA, 2007; MUXÍ, 2005). In the 1980’s, the city started to undergo a requalification program of public spaces. These interventions preceded larger ones that were carried out for the 1992 Summer Olympics. The latter are analyzed below.

Formatting the “Barcelona Model”: public policies and private interests

The summit of transformations in Barcelona took place between 1980 and 1990, when the city got ready for the 1992 Summer Olympics, right after interventions that had already been carried out after the end of the Francoist dictatorship to mitigate the crisis and problems inherited from the regime, i. e., shortage of public spaces, urban density, scarcity of equipment and public services and lack of housing due to demolition of buildings aiming at the sanitation of the city (CABRERA, 2007).

In 1976, the first democratic *Ayuntamiento de Barcelona* approved the *Pla General Metropolità* (PGM) to propose urban strategic projects. Barcelona then started several large operations with the participation of neighborhood associations and took on the concept of regeneration, similar to a “*metàstasi en el teixit urbà*” (BOHIGAS, 1985, p. 15).



Urban plans, such as the *Plan Especial de Reforma Interior* (PERI) and the *Plan de Usos*, were developed in every district in the 1980's, so as to connect the city with its citizens (ABELLA, 2004). These programs have been updated in every public management term and have mainly dealt with regulations of tourism activities these days.

The first PERI was approved in Ciutat Vella, in Barceloneta, an old suburb whose residents were fishermen and stevedores, and in suburbs Gòtic, Raval and El Borne, in 1983. The Barceloneta PERI proposed to intervene in the main problems of the suburb, e. g., precarious and old housing affected by sea spray, such as “*habitatges de quart*” (small buildings whose apartments measure 30m²), opening of beach season and beach occupation, equipment installation, development of public spaces and connection with the rest of the city, so as to cut off isolation of the population that lived between the sea and the railways (BORJA, 2011). Afterwards, both suburbs Gòtic (1984) and Raval (1985) also had their PERI's approved, a fact that determined the new phase of urban renewal (ABELLA, 2004).

In 1986, when Barcelona won the bid to host the 1992 Summer Olympics, such interventions were intensified and extended to other areas of the city, with public and private investments: “Fueron seis años de actividad constructiva, que pusieron a prueba la capacidad de organización del Ayuntamiento y de sus técnicos, con un resultado sumamente apreciable” (CAPEL, 2011, P. 15).

The idea was to use the opportunity posed by the Olympics to put Barcelona on the “world tourism map”, making it a competitive city in the global market, since the model of a competitive city matches the strategy of hosting the Summer Olympics to enhance urban renewal (TUFTS, 2004). Thus, according to para Jordi Borja (verbal communication, 2014)³: “sin los presupuestos de los juegos, Barcelona no tendría condiciones para tantas transformaciones. Los juegos impulsaron las intervenciones”.

The Summer Olympics was not the first event to trigger transformations in the urban space of the Catalan capital, since this association had already happened at the Universal (1888) and the International (1929) Exhibitions. But the set of urban interventions, called the “Barcelona Model”, was interpreted as its triumph because of its “policies on image promotion” (AUTHOR, 2008) that put it in the international scenario. Barcelona became an example to many cities worldwide, such as European ones and mainly Latin American ones (CAPEL, 2011).

³ This paper uses reports and information collected in interviews carried out by one of the authors, whose advisor was the another author, in her doctoral apprenticeship (PDSE/Capes) in Barcelona, Spain, from December 2013 to June 2014. Several social agents involved in the city renewal, such as technicians, researchers and residents, were interviewed and cited: (author, verbal communication, 2014). Jordi Borja, a Catalan geographer and sociologist, was one of the interviewees. He was a member of the *Parlament de Catalunya* (from 1980 to 1984) and the *Ayuntamiento de Barcelona* (from 1983 to 1995), besides having been a technician of strategic management plans and urban policies in the city. He became famous worldwide for his opinions cited in publications and for his consultancy in cities in several countries. Since his contributions were strongly criticized by many experts who analyzed the city's strategic planning, his talk was given special emphasis.



The conception of “model” in the strategic planning of Barcelona and its implications has still been controversial after more than two decades, even though it keeps inspiring other cities. Twenty-five years after the implementation of the “model”, several advocates have become its critics. According to Borja (2011, p. 226), “*las luces y las sombras*”, or “*la mitificación del ‘modelo Barcelona’ ha sido un factor de promoción de la ciudad, pero también ha tenido efectos negativos*” on its population.

The term “Barcelona Model”, which was coined to represent its urbanistic operations, may be criticized since it is impossible to replicate this model in cities – complex and dynamic structures – in different contexts. Not even Barcelona could replicate it; the success of urbanistic operations just took place in that period due to a unique combination of events, such as economic growth, political stability, fiscal reform, appreciation of public space and popular participation (CAPEL, 2011). The end of the 40-year dictatorship and shared management among the public sector, the population and the private sector created fundamental consensus to make the model take place, a private and continuous political process that enabled Barcelona to enjoy stable social and political majority that stayed in office for thirty years and that had tradition in urban planning and popular participation (BORJA, 2011).

After 1995, when he left public management, Borja started to travel around the world, mainly in Latin America, to advertise the “model”. He influenced urban management in several cities, such as Mexico, Monterrey, Bogotá, Santiago, Valparaíso, Buenos Aires, Córdoba, Rosário, São Paulo, Santo André and Rio de Janeiro. He stated that, in these cities, he had only seen scattered actions, “*ideas en el aire*” (BORJA, verbal communication, 2014), but no continuous and transforming ones. Lack of criteria and plans that mitigate inequalities and promote life quality in these places cannot be rectified by punctual urban interventions (BORJA, 2011, p. 234).

According to Pere Cabrera, an architect of the *Ayuntamiento de Barcelona* who was responsible for transformations in Ciutat Vella between 1980 and 1990, the *Ayuntamiento* was often requested by public managers. In the 1980’s, the mayor of Guadalajara, Mexico, looked for him and stated his wish to take *Las Ramblas*, with calm public promenades, coffeeshops, flower shops and bird shops at that time, to his city. Cabrera answered: “*si te refieres a lo que no es tangible creo que sí, que es posible, adecuando a las condiciones sociales y culturales de tu país. Si te refieres a lo tangible eso es una estupidez, es como se quiera montar un parque temático, entonces, utilizar la palabra modelo tienes esa dificultad*” (CABRERA, verbal communication, 2014). Therefore, we agree that every city is a singular case.

Even though shared management and public-private partnerships have become a reality in neoliberal economies, when the private sector has the opportunity of intervention, it is hard to prevent its interests from prevailing over public ones. It took place in Barcelona in the long term, since the city has suffered with excess tourism and saturation of equipment and services in the place where its population used to live.



Main urban interventions in Barcelona: from 1983 to 2013

From 1983 to 2013, Barcelona underwent economic and territorial transformations, from an industrial city to a city of services inserted in the competitive circle of international capital. This period encompasses projects that caused main changes in suburbs, which had been outlined in plans approved from 1983 on, such as the PERI's and the *Planes de Usos*. Based on the strategic plans, such as the 2000 Barcelona Strategic Plan, which were important legal thresholds in the city's urbanistic legislation, urban interventions were intensified. This plan was approved in 1990 and used the “synergy of the Summer Olympics to convert Barcelona into an international center of services and consumption” (TELLO, 1994, p. 157). Some of its objectives were to improve the use of natural, social, productive and technical-scientific potentialities, to broaden international accessibility, to diminish social conflicts, to quality the urban environment; to create infrastructure and services to attract foreign investment and to enhance the city's cultural and industrial products (TELLO, 1994). It strengthened global competitiveness and inserted social welfare initiatives in the local level, even though the metropolitan region had initially been ignored.

Strategic lines of action led to the renewal of historical centers, industrial areas and housing, to the development of equipment and public spaces, to new centralities and mobility projects and to the opening of the city to the sea, by renewing the port area, the seacoast⁴ and by building Olympic installations, which were integrated with the city, so that they could be used after the event (BORJA, 2011; MONTANER, 2011). The *Ayuntamiento* also promoted the cultural market as the core of urban renewal strategies (UTE, 2004).

This paper introduces the most important places where interventions of strategic and *metastatic* urbanism took place (BOHIGAS, 1985; CABRERA, 2007): suburbs of districts Sants-Montjuic (urbanization of the Montjuic Hill and installation of the Olympics equipment), San Martí (renewal of *Port Vell* and construction of the Olympic Village Poblenou and the Olympic Port) and Ciutat Vella (renewal of suburbs Barceloneta, Raval and Gòtic).

The Montjuic Hill, one the main areas of the Olympic Barcelona, had already been urbanized for the 1929 Barcelona International Exposition (BUSQUETS, 2004; MUXÍ, 2005) to promote certain interventions, such as the installation of subway lines, the opening of public parks, the installation of cultural equipment and renewal of squares, e. g., the *Plaza España*.

⁴ The *Plan de la Ribera*, from 1960, had already aimed at redesigning the seashore. However, such plan, which was a private initiative, was turned down by local citizens, besides civic and professional institutions, by means of a petition, since it privileged speculative interests. (MUXÍ, 2011).



One of the icons of the landscape in Barcelona, the *Palau Nacional de Montjuic*, which was built for the Exposition in 1929, was transformed into the *Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya* (MANAC) in 1934. This area also includes the Olympic Ring Complex, which comprises the *Palau Sant Jordi* (covered arena), where international events are held, the *Fundació Joan Miró* (museum), the Botanic Garden and the Montjuic Castle. The Montjuic Tower, which also belongs to the touristic Ring Complex, became an icon of the 1992 Summer Olympics. It was projected by the Catalan architect Santiago Calatrava, who also designed the *Museu do Amanhã*, a museum in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Both are marks in their cities.

Even though it was symbolic in the 1992 Summer Olympics, the Olympic Ring Complex did not affect the remodeling of the city as much as interventions carried out on its seashore. Borja stated in an interview that it was a city with “*espaldas al mar*”. Its beaches were not only separated from the city by disabled railways, docks and warehouses, but also some of them were prohibited to be used, since industries discarded their waste there (BOHIGAS; MARTORELL; MACKAY; PUIGDOMÈNECH, 1988). Barcelona was an industrial city with factories and chimneys that filled its landscape with smoke (**Figure 2**).

Figure 2. Industrial Barcelona (1903). Source: Ayuntamiento de Barcelona, 2014.



Restructuring of the seashore and the urbanization project of the *Port Vell* were restarted in the 1980’s, when the *Moll de la Fusta* (“wood dock”) was built, the old railway was deactivated and the connection between the city and the port was made. However, it was also a physical barrier that did not enable direct access to the sea, a fact that was criticized by the population and by researchers (ARANTES, 2012; BORJA, 2011; MUXÍ, 2005).

Interventions also affected *Las Ramblas* – a type of wide street for pedestrians – that connected the city center to the sea; it is now one of the most visited places in Barcelona, where tourists consume souvenirs, street art works, bars and restaurants. The Summer Olympics enabled the city to be opened to the sea; the



Port begins where *Las Ramblas* end. An extension of *Las Ramblas* – *La Rambla del Mar* (**Figure 3**) – was also built; it is a broad walkway over the sea which crosses the old port and has a set of leisure equipment (the *Maremagnum* Shopping Mall, the *Port Vell* IMAX and the *Aquàrium*).

At the end of the *Moll de la Fusta*, which stretches over the whole shore of the *Port Vell*, lies the traditional *Barceloneta* beach. Renewals left different marks in the landscape of the old port. Firstly, intervention projects were discussed and approved by the population. However, throughout six years, real estate speculation changed the project and luxurious and touristic restaurants proliferated, rather than the so-called “*chiringuitos*” (food kiosks), a fact that generated conflicts between the population and public managers (ARANTES, 2012).

The *Barceloneta* shore was negatively affected by private appropriation of public space, since hotels, such as the emblematic 5-star W Hotel (**Figure 4**), were built and habits of this old fisherman suburb were altered. Thus, it has become a place where a part of its population protests and shows its tourismphobia⁵.

Figure 3. Rambla del Mar



Figure 4. W Hotel (Hotel “Vella”)



⁵ The term tourismphobia, which is dealt with later in this text, has been deeply analyzed by researchers and mainly the media due to current increase in conflicts between tourists and residents in cities that are very touristified (BARBERÍA, 2017; BLANCHAR, 2017; NEHER, 2018).



The largest effort made towards infrastructure centered on rescuing the dialogue between the city and the port (BUSQUETS, 2004). Such interventions erased old industries from the landscape and promoted new economic possibilities; the scale of space shifted from the local citizen to the one of international tourism.

The Olympic Village of Barcelona is located at the other end of the *Montjuic*, between *Barceloneta* and *Poblenou*. This place was chosen because *Poblenou* was farther away, with obsolete uses and degraded and deficient urban infrastructure (BOHIGAS; MARTORELL; MACKAY; PUIGDOMÈNECH, 1988). The aim was to create new centralities in order to decrease density in the central suburb *Eixample* when suburbs with no infrastructure were used and renewed, thus, transforming their potential of use and their urban morphology.

Poblenou is a large suburb from 1840 which was included in the tracing created by Cerdà in 1859 to make the connection between medieval Barcelona and the population in its surroundings. A priori, it was a swampy area with abandoned farmlands and plots, since the city only existed inside its defensive walls. When they were demolished, Cerdà included this area in his plan and traced a territorial ordering perimeter for industrial use, since the soil was cheap and the location was strategic, near the city and the port, a fact that made outflow of industrial goods easier (BOHIGAS, 1985; BUSQUETS, 2004).

The city kept this way until the 1974 oil crisis affected industrial cities and the old economic paradigm. *Poblenou* went through a process of functional obsolescence, loss of competitiveness in the textile sector and shutout of many factories. Such decline lasted until the 1990's, when the suburb was transformed as the result of the construction of the Olympic Village (UTE, 2004). The new proposal included multiple uses with houses for different social classes, commerce, leisure and a hotel area on the seashore (BOHIGAS; MARTORELL; MACKAY; PUIGDOMÈNECH, 1988). When the proposal brought the Olympic Village to the consolidated urban area, it agreed with the interests of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and strategies to promote urban renewal (BORJA, verbal communication, 2014; MUXÍ, 2011).

The *Poblenou* soil was mainly destined for industrial use, with some deactivated factories and two railways that crossed it and were characterized as urban barriers between the center and the beaches (BOHIGAS; MARTORELL; MACKAY; PUIGDOMÈNECH, 1988). Since this area also held precarious housing and an open water channel, Borja (verbal communication, 2014) classified it as “*siniestra*”. What happened is that, despite the area deterioration, the remaining industrial heritage was not saved. According to Salvador Clarós (verbal communication, 2014), “el efecto ilusório que generaron los juegos actuó como un anestésico para la población”.

The renewed city would erase the image of the old, industrial and decadent city, a project that, along with expropriations, increased the worth of housing and valued the region (MUXÍ, 2011). The Olympic Village would be the first fortress of the waterfront renewal that could materialize the new reunion between the new



inhabitants and the sea (BUSQUETS, 1988). In the Village, 1,812 apartments were projected by 18 famous architects and built by 9 construction companies (VIVIR BARCELONA, 1991). According to Borja (verbal communication, 2014), all units had already been sold before the beginning of the Olympics; it reiterates that “requalification of industrial premises and use by cultural, business and leisure activities creates new urban tourism space” (LIM & BOUCHON, 2017, p.15).

Before the project, this area was inhabited by approximately 500 people in about 168 houses. The *Ayuntamiento*, then, paid damages so that they could rent a house in a housing development built by the City Hall. However, 25 families rejected the governmental payments. Due to increase in rent and new transportation costs, those families that used to work close to their houses had an increase in their costs of living (MUXÍ, 2011). Obviously, such effects of urban renewal were not publicized.

According to Capel (2011), residents’ resettlement was a “white expulsion” – no accessible public house was built for the residents. According to Clarós (verbal communication, 2014), such urbanization was elitist since its beginning, since the new apartments had high prices to recover the investment that had been made.

In 1994, the II 2000 Barcelona Strategic Plan was carried out. The scale moved from the city to the metropolitan region and projected more insertion in the global economy (TELLO, 1994). In 1998, the city started to debate the future of industrial areas and the so-called “knowledge economy” became a new strategy of urban renewal in *Poblenou*. The “22@” Project – the name associates 22 from the industrial area to the @ of technological innovation – implemented by the *Ayuntamiento* in 2000 led to another significant transformation, i. e., from the industrial district to the innovation district.

The main objective of the project was to create new centrality in the city, diversify the use of the suburb and blend professional activities connected to knowledge, innovation and technology, thus, transforming old industrial areas into a suburb with houses, local commerce and leisure areas. However, according to Borja (verbal communication, 2014), the suburb got no life because, with expressways that prevent citizens from walking, “*la vila Olímpica se ha quedado muerta*”.

Raval was also negatively affected by renewal processes resulting from its PERI, in 1985. It had a dense tangle of medieval buildings and went through a process of physical degradation and social stigma. The main demands of the suburb were social ones, such as the creation of new public spaces and equipment, besides housing improvement and development. They made it necessary to demolish buildings and resettle the population (BUSQUETS, 2004; CABRERA, 2007).

It was harder to renew Ciutat Vella than the seashore because of geographical conditions and its high population density (CAPEL, 2011). The opening of new public spaces meant the demolition of several historical



constructions, such as the *Rambla del Raval*, which was 18,300 m² long. Work started in the 1980’s and, after the demolition of 62 buildings, it was opened in 1995 (CABRERA, 2007).

Capel (2011, p. 61) criticized the way interventions were carried out in the historical center and stated that technicians and architects conducted them “con una brocha gorda y no con un pincel fino”. According to him, many buildings could have been refurbished, rather than demolished, since they belonged to the urban mesh, memory, culture and identity of Barcelona. However, according to Cabrera, in order to reach the expected life quality – sun, public spaces and equipment installation in the suburb –, the only alternative was to demolish the buildings: “no hay como hacer tortillas sin quebrar los huevos” (CABRERA, verbal communication, 2014).

Joan Roca (verbal communication, 2014), director of the *Museu d’Història de Barcelona*, warned that it would be necessary to care for what he called the historical heritage of Raval. He said that: “Antes de las intervenciones, el barrio era un miserable suburbio, era terrible. Las intervenciones fueran la mejor cosa que sucedieron al barrio”.

Besides the buildings that were demolished to open the *Rambla*, 50 others close to it were also torn down (ARANTES, 2012). This space was open until 2008, when the luxurious *Barceló Raval Hotel* was opened and, consequently, increased population density, number of cars and cost of living. According to Benach (2009), this area, open to the *Rambla*, created “reserve spaces”, i. e., speculation areas waiting for future urban appreciation.

Nowadays, walking on the streets parallel to the *Rambla del Raval*, it is hard to imagine that there has been some type of renewal in the suburb. Prostitution, drug trafficking and small shops owned by Chinese and Pakistani immigrants dominate the place in the narrow streets suffocated by old buildings which keep their critical conditions.

In *Gòtic*, whole blocks were also demolished to enable public spaces to be created.

Joan Riba, the president of the *Comissió d’Afectats pel Projecte Urbanístic del Born*, stated that his house was one of the demolished buildings and that the *Ayuntamiento* had conceded popular houses in a certain place to all residents as a compensation, but that it was very hard:

Yo no he me adaptado en mi nueva casa. Ya llevo casi un par de décadas ahí pero aún estoy traumatizado con mi antigua casa. Yo nasci allà, es mi vida. Menos mal que estoy cerca de ella. Mi antigua casa estaba dónde está aquella terraza, un poco más allá y más o menos estoy ubicado, pero forma parte de mi memoria. Pero hay personas que son desplazadas para sítios muy lejos. (...) Para mí tenía mucho sentimiento. Mi casa era gòtica, muy bonita, yo valorava lo que era el edificio. Y fue demolido para ser esa plaza que estás mirando ahora (RIBA, verbal communication, 2014).



When Borja was questioned about the effects of the so-called “Barcelona Model”, he stated that he acknowledges criticism and faults, but does not agree with radical negative views expressed by many critics:

Siempre intento evaluar los efectos positivos y negativos de los juegos olímpicos. Diría que son 70, 80% positivo. Lo que intento es salirme del esquema maniqueo, o fundamentalmente es malo o fundamentalmente es bueno. Hay muchas criticas radicales y descualificadoras, sobretudo de la gente que no conoces el modelo. Lo que puedo decir es que Barcelona se ha puesto de moda y para eso hay una ventaja e una desventaja. La ventaja es que afluído dinero, más privado que publico, se ha actuado más sobre la ciudad, se ha dinamizado y atraído una actividad que antes no era muy desarrollada debido a la industria, que es el turismo. La desventaja es el incremento de los precios de la ciudad y la expulsión de los vecinos de sus barrios tradicionales (BORJA, verbal communication, 2014).

In fact, suburb renewal was appropriated by the population. Diversity resulting from flows of immigrants and new users, such as young college students, made the center get social vitality. Creation of new centralities, opening of the city to the sea and improvement in urban mobility are positive facts mentioned by residents/interviewees, even though many problems have not been solved yet.

Strategies used to promote the image of Barcelona placed it in the global market in a competitive way, a fact that was initially considered successful by the city management. Nowadays, perverse effects of the “Barcelona Model” make new urban management projects try to refrain overtourism and tourismphobia, so as to get public spaces back for residents and improve their life quality.

Far from the Butler’s Tourism Area Life Cycle (1980), but with some premonitory connection, since such cycles followed the sequence “exploration, involvement, development, consolidation, stagnation and decline”, overtourism and tourismphobia reflect the limit which many places reached after a period of overexploitation. Doxey (1972) had already pointed out perverse effects of excess tourism on residents in his “irritation index”, which consists of the following stages: “euphoria, apathy, annoyance and antagonism”. Regardless of the origin of these concepts, it may be stated that Barcelona is an explicit example of this process.

According to Milano (2017, p. 553), overtourism, which is not a new phenomenon, must be understood in all dimensions: “La percepción de saturación será diferente y dependerá siempre de la percepción subjetiva o colectiva de los actores implicados y no tendrá que ver solamente con el elemento cuantitativo”. Because tourism has become a permanent activity in cities, there is a systemic matter of urban management that must integrate tourism with all economic, political, psychosocial, cultural, territorial, environmental and technical sectors it is related to.

“Políticas turísticas neoliberales que se han impuesto en las ciudades globales desde finales del siglo pasado” (MILANO, 2017, p. 560) generated social movements against the expansion of the sector and marked interventions of tourismphobia in many cities, such as Barcelona, Venice, Roma, Palma de Mallorca, Lisbon, Berlin and Amsterdam. Despite criticism to the media sensationalism of the issue, it is clear that politicization



of social movements regarding the excess number of tourists in many places shows the need for new instruments to regulate the sector in terms of touristic places and the population’s life quality.

Policies on the city image: Barcelona as a trademark

Strategies that promote the image of Barcelona date back to the beginning of the 20th century; at that time, they were already connected to the political intention of promoting tourism as an institution (PALOU, 2012). In the 1980’s, production and promotion of the image of Barcelona became a key element in its urban policies, intertwining local interventions and strategies of urban marketing to make it stand out in the global scenario. The idea was not only to promote its urban renewal but also make the capital of Catalonia become the capital of the Eastern Mediterranean (CAPEL, 2011).

In the 1990’s, the Committee of the 1992 Summer Olympics depicted Barcelona as a touristic destination and bet on its international visibility by using the following strategies of tourism management: *i-* creation of a positive image that could show the city’s identity; *ii-* hospitality ways to host visitors; *iii-* promotion of cultural offers; and *iv-* incentive to citizens involved in touristic projects (PALOU, 2012).

Barcelona became one of the most visited destinations in Europe (UNWTO, 2015) and was ranked one of the most competitive cities in the world. One of the main mottos of the *Ayuntamiento* at that time was: “*Poner la ciudad en el mapa*”. It supported the creation of the city as a brand in policies on strategic planning with a set of urban interventions. Therefore, the development of the city’s branding, the process of construction and management of the brand (CHAVES, 2011; CHIAS, 2007), was based on images and ideas chosen to represent Barcelona. According to Chias (2007, p. 131): “[...] given the impossibility of patenting a country, region or city, the trademark constitutes the only element which is capable of supporting our exclusivity in the market”.

The “Barcelona Model” and its brand were designed by technicians who created a triumphalist discourse as part of the city’s self-promotion (CHAVES, 2011). According to Montaner (2011, p. 223), “podríamos decir que el modelo se refiere a lo local, a los derechos de la ciudadanía; en cambio, la marca se refiere al mundo global”.

Before standing out internationally, Barcelona promoted policies associated with the sense of pride on the renewed city. Thus, at the time of the Summer Olympics, the city experienced a sequence of campaigns that aimed at the population and at showing the city as a cosmopolitan, cultural and mediterranean city worldwide. The most emblematic campaign was called “*Barcelona Posat guapa*” (“Barcelona, get pretty”).



This campaign enabled to restore façades of private and commercial buildings and attract sponsors to refurbish monuments and the cultural heritage. Collective equipment was recovered and recyclable waste collection was stimulated (AYUNTAMIENTO DE BARCELONA, 2010). The campaign, which was launched in 1985, was intensified when Barcelona was chosen to host the 1992 Summer Olympics in 1986. Known as a “gray city” because of its industrial past, image transformation included changing its colors with the help of artists from the *Fundació Joan Miró*.

The *Ayuntamiento* gave the example and refurbished its headquarters on the *Plaça Sant Jaume*. The owners of the *Casa Milà*, (“*La Pedrera*” by Gaudí) also refurbished it, since it was in terrible conditions due to pollution and lack of maintenance. In December 1986, 196 façades had already been recovered. In 1987, having been chosen to host the Summer Olympics, the number increased to 1,198 façades and kept going on (VIANA, verbal communication, 2014). Throughout the 25-year campaign (from 1985 to 2010), 450 out of 86,744 buildings – in all suburbs in Barcelona – were refurbished (AYUNTAMIENTO DE BARCELONA, 2010). According to Delgado, the personification of the city promoted as a woman transformed it, from a model, into a top model and, afterwards, into a show-city.

A decade after the Summer Olympics, the *Ayuntamiento* promoted the International Year of Gaudí in 2002, considering the cultural heritage, or rather, the modernist architectural heritage, a touristic resource re-signified in consumption (AUTHOR, 2016).

Barcelona has focused its promotional strategies on pluralism and diversity these days. It is ranked the 6th most powerful city worldwide and the 10th in projects of international investments from 2009 to 2014 (BARCELONA TURISME, 2015). So many investments were responsible for touristification and increased land values, mischaracterizing many suburbs and generating socio-spatial inequalities.

Fast emergence of tourism has been proved by numbers, from 1.7 million tourists in 1990 to 3.3 million ones in 2000. The number of hotels in Barcelona increased from 118 to 381 between 1990 and 2015 (BARCELONA TURISME, 2015). In this period, Barcelona was ranked one of the ten most visited European cities in the world and kept in the 8th place worldwide throughout the decade (BARCELONA TURISME, 2005; DURAN, 2005).

In 2019, the city got almost 14 million tourists; the number is based on hotel nights (there are 442 nowadays), hostels and registered guest houses, Airbnb⁶ (more than 3 million in this category), besides tourists that are hosted by friends and/or relatives, the ones who spend a day in the city but do not spend the night

⁶ *Airbnb* (*air bed and breakfast*), an online hosting service, has grown much as an alternative practice in the last five years. In many touristic cities, such as some in the European Union, it has led to a process of gentrification and generated regulation rules (COSTA, 2016).



there and the ones that rent guest houses that are not registered (BARCELONA TURISME, 2019). In sum, this number does not represent the true demand, but, even so, Barcelona keeps its place among the ten main European touristic cities for at least two decades.

The number of tourists and the impact they cause in the city also increase when leisure cruisers that moor to the Barcelona Port in summer are considered. In 2019, the port got 3,137,918 passengers on 800 leisure cruisers. These data make it the most important port in the Mediterranean Sea (BARCELONA TURISME, 2019). Such numbers are huge in a city that has 1,604,555 inhabitants and stretches over 101.4 km², even though they have been celebrated by public managers and agents of the tourism sector. The economic crisis that has taken place in Europe from 2008 on has reinforced tourism as one of the investment priorities of urban policies issued by the *Ayuntamiento*.

While public and private managers celebrate such success, the Suburb Association for Sustainable Tourism, considering spaces of suburbs where there is high touristic pressure (*Raval, Gòtic, Barceloneta, Eixample*), posted some criticism to the new strategy to attract tourists at the end of the year in its social network: “If it is summer, it is because it is summer. If it is Christmas, it is because it is Christmas. It is the expansion of the touristic calendar. All is growth, growth, growth. A suicide mantra.” (ASSEMBLEA BARRISTURISME SOSTENIBLE, 2016).

Between touristic territorialities and residents’ everyday public spaces

Organization and management of tourism in Barcelona were structured when the public-private consortium *Consorci de Turisme de Barcelona* was created in 1993 by the *Ayuntamiento de Barcelona*, the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Navigation and the *Fundació Barcelona Promoció* (BARCELONA TURISME, 2015).

The *Turisme de Barcelona*, composed of 25 departments in every field of work, whose management is organized by the General Council, is led by the mayor of Barcelona and funded by the *Ayuntamiento*, the Chamber of Commerce, the *Fundació* and donations of individual entities, such as entrepreneurs of the sector that invest in its self-financing (BARCELONA TURISME, 2015).

The main touristic offer in Barcelona is the “Modernist Barcelona”, which explores Gaudí’s cultural heritage, that has been acknowledged as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Touristic refunctionalization (Own Authorship, 2012) of the assets led to strategies of narrative reduction (BERDOULAY; CLARIMONT; VLÉS, 2005) in the city and affected asset fruition, due to excess visitation in certain circuits and omission of other historical and cultural narratives of the city (AUTHOR, 2016; 2017). Nowadays, almost 14 million tourist per year push



the urban mesh and dispute space with the resident in the city’s compact morphology, a fact that led the population to stage several protests (BARCELONA TURISME, 2019).

One of the first actions carried out by Ada Colau, the mayor elected in 2015, was to interrupt concession permits to build hotels in the city for a year. In this period, the *Ayuntamiento* created the 2016-2020 Tourism Strategic Plan. According to the mayor in Blanchar (2015), activities must be considered in urban planning, rather than “un parque temático que perjudica a los vecinos y disgusta a los propios turistas, pues el actual modelo pone en riesgo el mismo modelo”.

Besides hotels and cruisers, 1-day tourists and the European that still use low cost transportation also influence touristic flow in agencies that sell these tours and push fruition of public spaces in the city (**Figures 5 and 6**).

Figure 5. Tourists at Sagrada Familia. Source: of the authors, 2014.



Figure 6. Tourists at the Rambla. Source: of the authors, 2014.





According to Lim & Bouchon (2017, p.15), “new urban planning, infrastructure and attractions have changed the quality of urban offer and proposed new space production and territories for tourism. It creates a dilution of urban character with a serialisation of urban spaces”.

Tourism itself is not the problem. The matter is the management of the activity when the target is to increase demand. Overtourism is one of the major effects of city thematization, while the reverse is also true, a fact that reveals the paradoxism of this process.

In Barcelona, flocks of tourists concentrate around some main attractions, such as the *Sagrada Família*, the *Park Guell*, the *Ramblas*, squares and beaches, creating exclusively touristic territorialities (AUTHOR, 2017). The number of tour buses and official Touristic Barcelona Buses transform the city into a scenario of constant and noisy flow. According to Zaida Muxí (verbal communication, 2014), an Architecture professor at the *Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya* who lives in *Raval*, the *Ramblas* were spaces where people co-existed and shared at the beginning of the 20th century. For instance, *La Boquería* used to be an old and traditional market located in the suburb. When it began a touristic icon, it started a gentrification process and sophisticated consumption which was not accessible to the population anymore (CORDERO AND ENEVA, 2016).

Ciutat Vella is also negatively affected by density and tourists’ abusive practices. The *Ayuntamiento* even launched a campaign to ask for respect for the population’s rest by distributing posters with the following message: “Thank you for letting me rest: turn down the volume at night. Make it compatible to enjoy the city and let residents rest”.

Private appropriation of public spaces by the so-called *terrazas*, tables and chairs spread on sidewalks by restaurants, despite their licenses, violate their limits and invade squares and sidewalks as aggressive dominance of public space (RIBA, verbal communication, 2014). Regarding this issue, Montaner & Muxí (2011, p.151) stated that many American tourists that visit the suburb often ask what time it closes “(...) it seems incomprehensible that it should not close at night, just like amusement parks and shopping centers”.

The residents’ association, presided by Joan Riba since 2013, has vehemently fought against privatization of public spaces in the suburb. It started after the approval of the new *Ordenamento de Terrazas*, which concede new licenses to certain businesses, such as bakeries and sweet shops. The installation of more hotels, closing of traditional businesses and invasion of franchise and touristic shops made the place more expensive and expelled residents. Organizing lunches and dinners on squares and placing posters on façades are residents’ ways of resisting against tourists’ invasions of their everyday territory (**Figures 7 and 8**).



Figure 7 and 8. banners exposed by residents to appropriate public spaces in Born. Source: of the authors, 2014.



According to Pepa Picas, a member of the residents’ association in Barceloneta, similar movements take place in his suburb:

No estamos en contra del turismo pero creemos que hay que tener un control. No podemos soportar más gente. No podemos basar toda nuestra economía en esta actividad. Los nuevos planes de gestión y uso turístico están acabando conosco porque incentivan esa actividad, incentivan la construcción de hoteles. Hay mucha especulación, injusticias y pérdida de nuestra identidad. Tampoco podemos trabajar en el sector turístico porque hay que tener una mínima formación o experiencia para eso y la mayoría de los vecinos de la Barceloneta son gente mayor y jubilada. No queremos más hoteles en nuestro barrio. Esto está un desastre. Los gestores piensan que este modelo turístico es una maravilla porque viene muchos turistas, pero es una maravilla sólo para los empresarios del sector turístico. Para la población queda solamente los efectos negativos (PICAS, verbal communication, 2014).

The transformation of senses in the city has been felt in the place, in everyday life, in the conflictive meetings between residents and tourists in the new conditions of reproduction and space consumption (LEFEBVRE, 2000). In cases in which residents resist, they are often forced to move by real estate mobbing, a procedure that uses “[...] toda clase de subterfugios, coacciones e incluso violencia para expulsar los antiguos residentes y colocar ventajosamente en el mercado espacios cada vez más cotizados y más lucrativos para usos turísticos” (BENACH, 2009, p. 267). Such practice, which has currently been known as real estate bullying, includes cutting electricity and water to embarrass residents and open space for touristic uses.

In opposition to residents’ complaints, managers’ and tourism agents’ talks keep defending the entrepreneurial view towards the renewal of degraded suburbs. Tomas Medina⁷, a hotel owner and president of the ACPT, stated that, before the tourism boom, nobody dared to go to the “xino” suburb (*Raval*) and that it has become one of the most visited suburbs in Barcelona due to sanitation provided by the touristic commerce.

⁷ Speech given in the round table organized by the *Facultat de Ciències Socials i Lletres* (School of Social Sciences and Languages) at the UAB, on May 29th, 2014.



According to Albert Sancho, a resident in *Raval*, touristic activities only contributed to the suburb renewal in the 1990’s. From the 2000’s on, tourism massified and impacted local life, architectural heritage and urban environment. In his words, “la ciudad hoy es pensada para ser visitada y no vivida” (SANCHO, verbal communication, 2014).

Therefore, conflictive views and actions between managers and scholars, residents and tourists, public and private spaces, regulations and political and economic liberalism go on. Barcelona is not the only city that goes through these problems. Since it is “the case”, “the model” that has often been used as reference for many other cities, it still deserves to be carefully observed. Its new steps may be ours tomorrow.

CONCLUDING REMARKS - BARCELONA: WHAT KIND OF MODEL?

Barcelona has not only been seen as a “*modélica*” city and an example to many others that aim at taking part in the global market, but has also been considered a “lying city” (DELGADO, 2007) because it promoted its image and its strategic urbanism by expelling residents and, in Borja and Castells’ words (1996, p. 153), by attracting users that are able to pay, to its economy; thus, it seems “[...] una falsa victoria sobre las patologías urbanas y una engañosa eficacia a la hora de producir bienestar humano y calidad formal” (DELGADO, 2007, p. 12).

Perverse contradictions of this urban renewal, disguised by the triumphalist discourse of the urbanism “model”, create and reinforce inequalities that deny citizens the “right to the city” (AUTHOR, 2017). Therefore, which model would Barcelona be? For whom? It is clear that it was successful in developing some type of planning which was participative and concerned with the scale of everyday life at the beginning of the 1980’s, but facing the opportunity of taking part in the global market, it carried out political actions in strategic planning that prioritized the city as an international product, but neglected its population’s life quality.

After almost three decades of the “Barcelona Model” implementation, much criticism has been made, even by some technicians that used to defend it. Borja is its main example. Even though he was one the main references in its defense – having been criticized for doing it –, he has recently analyzed the process critically and shown his lucid view on the interventions and its consequences.

Although there are several studies of this theme, there has been a shortage of discussions about how to effectively work to solve problems resulting from the “model” of the city, mainly related to real estate speculation and its population’s dissatisfaction. Borja stated that discussions are Manichaeian, with hard and dichotomic opinions in a game between “against” and “in favor” (BORJA, verbal communication, 2014). The speech is either political, to highlight the triumph of interventions in explicit urban marketing that makes conflicts invisible, or radically against it to emphasize only its perverse effects.



Demystification of the “Barcelona Model” based on the presentation and critical analysis of its “shadows”, or perverse effects, is the best way to clarify it, making its “lights” (BORJA, 2011) more credible. Every city has its own particularities and morphologies; thus, even though urban “models” cannot be replicated, they may be used as inspiration, review and criticism.

By insisting in this “model” after the Summer Olympics, Barcelona showed that it did not learn much from its own experience. It minimized its urbanism “model” to a touristic brand for international projection. Such policy on its image stole the city from its inhabitants and transformed it into an exclusive scenario of touristic attractions. It is about time to look at its population again, at the broad scale of the city in planning and management of residents’ life.

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