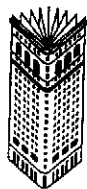


# Welcome to the Urban Revolution

*How Cities Are Changing the World*

JEB BRUGMANN



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## CHAPTER 13

### Building Local Culture

#### *Reclaiming the Streets of Gràcia District, Barcelona*

Toni Pujol is on his job, taking me to city-building projects across Barcelona's constantly renewing landscape. In his thirty years, the city has been completely transformed. In the early 1980s, it was a city that had been isolated for decades by the Franco dictatorship, marked by lost industry and rundown districts, rising poverty, and crime. Today, Barcelona is a global mecca of urbanism. Like Curitiba, thousands of urbanists and city leaders converge here each year to try to understand the genetics of its vitality, creativity, and transformational capacity.

Toni is one of the latest generation of urbanists mentored by this city. The young urban practitioners of most cities—architects, planners, social workers, engineers, or environmental managers—take their university degrees, gain professional certification, and then secure a job with a local government, a developer, or social service organization. Then they ply the textbook methods of their trade and abruptly learn the difference between the ideals of planning theory and the quintessential realism of the city.

In Barcelona, the young practitioner is guided by an additional tutoring: he is *enculturated* into a living tradition. He learns this tradition not in the classroom or in an internship. He lives it, as it is constantly changing the city around him. It is part of the debates that he hears when he joins friends for a beer. It supplies the local media with a constant feed

of controversy. Barcelona's urbanism never stops testing itself against new challenges, much like the city's most famous building, the Sagrada Família cathedral of Antonio Gaudí. The cathedral's construction began in 1882 and will be completed sometime between 2030 and 2060. Funded by thousands of patrons, organizations, and common citizens, it is as much a civic as an architectural venture. The 150-year continuity of such a project is itself unique. Like Sagrada Família, the urbanist project of Barcelona is never finished and never rests.

Without knowing it, Pujol is demonstrating this rich culture of urbanism as we tour the city. On the surface, he's explaining a project that has removed automobile traffic from most of the narrow streets of Gràcia district. The streets have been made level with the sidewalks, turning them into lanes for ambling groups of students, mothers with strollers, and pensioners. Where these lanes intersect with trafficked avenues, barrier posts have been installed; they can be lowered into the pavement with the swipe of a pass card so that local deliveries can be made. But Pujol's narrative is not limited to a technical account. Unlike his manner in other parts of the city, here in his own neighborhood, where he spontaneously meets friends in the public squares, he displays an uncontained exuberance for the place. He explains its history, describes the rhythms of its days, and in the midst of all this he starts talking to me about the little stones in the new pedestrian lanes.

These half-inch stones are used to break the monotony of the black asphalt. They are white. In another lane nearby, they are pink. Frankly, I hadn't noticed, but this was a matter of great controversy in Gràcia's squares and newspapers. Neighbors call them "chewing gum" stones, Toni explains. It is only then that I begin to even imagine the logic for any possible controversy. Here I stand in an atmospheric, architecturally attractive district, free of the automotive ruckus and ad hoc hodgepodge of Toronto. It is the kind of place that most anyone of means hopes to escape to on his vacation. But here there is a controversy: the stones challenge some minute facet of Gràcia's urbanism. They can be imagined as pieces of used chewing gum spit upon the pavement. More difficult to imagine is the intensity of local debate, the consultations between city departments and neighborhood associations, the interventions of local politicians, the letters to the editor. But by local tradition this is how the city is negotiated.

Here the bargaining is a collaborative process working toward a consensus goal. The goal is complex, but is distilled in a local code that the visitor hears time and again: to reclaim *espai public*. The phrase has a very special local meaning, which is not captured in its English translation as "public space." Private spaces, life, and organizations play a big role in Barcelona. City government rebuilds deteriorated districts and constructs and operates its transit systems, water, and energy supplies through partnerships with private companies. Districts like Gràcia are places of conservative, private homeowners and merchants. *Espai public*, therefore, is not a public zone separate from the private city; it is a third territory of streets and squares where private interests and public uses are vitally interwoven. The practice of urbanism in Barcelona focuses on this private-public territory, which provides the medium in which Barcelona's district citysystems grow.

For example, since the reestablishment of democracy in 1979 after decades of dictatorship, massive public investments have leveraged those of private owners to repair and redecorate square miles of buildings. One priority has been co-investment in the facades of private buildings. But the third territory is not limited to the facades that separate the public street from private interiors. *Espai public* also penetrates into the buildings. In revitalizing historic districts the city government substantially invested in ground-floor units, cocreating the cafés, lobbies, galleries, and retail shops that revitalized constant interaction between outside public life and inside proprietary life. The pedestrian street effectively flows in and out of the buildings. Similarly, the private has been extended into outdoor public space, with competing proprietors operating their restaurants on the squares and vendors lining both sides of the wide center-city pedestrian Rambla, turning public spaces into a permanent private market. Public facilities nestle among the redeveloped private buildings, old squares are reclaimed from their function as parking lots, and scores of new squares, parks, and *ramblas* have been created in the course of redevelopment projects. It is this expanding zone of interaction between the private and the public that makes Barcelona so dynamic. Looking at a picture of the peeling, gloomy facades and nearly vacant streets of Barcelona's historic center in the 1970s, it is almost impossible to imagine today's vivacious Barcelona as the same city.

Creating *espai public* and managing the mix of activities in it involves meticulous planning, negotiation, and design. For instance, shifting traffic from some Gràcia streets onto others to create the new *espai public* of the pedestrian streets reallocates property values, locational benefits, and nuisances between hundreds of families and small businesses. This reallocation involves a fine-grained negotiation, wholly unlike the blunt instrumentality of planning and renewal in most cities. “Barcelona is unique,” says Ramon Garcia-Bragado, head of Barcelona’s Urbanism Department, “because of the strength of public opinion on all urban questions. Nothing is easy. There’s lots of negotiation needed to achieve anything. Just the question of moving a bus stop causes people to get active, to organize demonstrations. They have a sense of public claim to that space, a sense of ownership of the city.”<sup>1</sup>

This one project in Gràcia involved sixty meetings among affected households, neighborhood associations, businesses, and schools. There were public demonstrations for and against different plans. It took a year to negotiate. Even then, as thousands of cars and motorcycles discovered new routes through the district, as pedestrians filled the new lanes, new customers filled the shops, and neighbors reclaimed their café-lined squares, there was still a controversy in the new *espai public*: the all-important detail of the “bubble gum” stones.

At the other end of this counterintuitive citywide transformation through micro-level negotiation was a visionary named Salvador Rueda, the founder and head of Barcelona’s Urban Ecology Agency. Rueda’s agency conceived and did the technical studies for the Gràcia project. In his office overlooking the seafront, he is projecting an interactive database model of Barcelona for us to view. His agency has documented the traffic patterns and types of activities in most districts of Barcelona, building by building, street by street. The model is a map of the city; he navigates with his mouse to an old neighborhood, part of a traditional Barcelona district citysystem with its dense mix of housing, small industry, and retail shops. He zeroes in on two streets on a short city block. With a few clicks we are looking at an assessment of the activities in this little patch. There are 222 distinct economic activities in

the patch, he reports: different stores, tailors, workshops, home-based professions. With a click, his model groups them into 132 different types of activities, an amazing diversity in a small area compared with the zoned commercial or residential districts of a master-planned city. I note that one typically finds this kind of dense economic diversity in a migrant city like Dharavi. But we are looking at an affluent, developed city—at one of the most livable cities in the world. Rueda is pleased by the observation. The notion that his city has retained the organic, vibrant economic character that made cities everywhere historic centers of every kind of revolutionary change is reassuring. But he shares his exasperation with Barcelona’s recent drift, like so many cities, toward planned mega-project dead zones, like the controversial seafront convention complex built to host a large international exposition in 2004. “What we are measuring,” he explains, coming back to the little urban patch, “is the complexity of organization in this one area.”

With his model he computes the resources that are consumed in the patch. Then he calculates what he calls the area’s “sustainability.” To do this he uses an established scientific formula for measuring entropy—the loss of energy, information, and organizational complexity—in that area. In a stable system, resource consumption is low relative to organizational complexity and activity. In these ecological terms, he explains, the citysystem on this typical Barcelona patch approximates the sustainability of a natural ecosystem. It is this sustainability that Barcelona urbanists are trying to reestablish in Gràcia and in *espai public* throughout the city.

My Barcelona colleagues don’t seem fazed by what we are discussing. They don’t realize how much this kind of urban thinking contrasts with the discussions in an average city planning department, where there are no such models, but more important, little time or inclination for such complex analysis. In other cities, Rueda and his model would be exotic, academic, and of marginal use. But here the city has founded and funded his institute and contracts it to plan major transformations of whole swaths of the city. Our discussion about methods for measuring the entropy of an urban patch is only relevant in Barcelona because it is supported by a set of widely held values and urbanist principles about the desirable qualities and benefits of city life. Rueda’s model, for this reason, is not abstract or academic; it reveals the underlying logic

of Barcelona urbanism and its fixation on *espai public*. The atmosphere we experience in a Barcelona square or *rambla* is the designed outcome of a low-entropy place.

The transformative potency of urbanism in any city is derived from its ability to translate the city's core values into a workable, replicable logic of city building. To use the language of business, the Barcelona government and urbanist community has established clear value propositions (e.g., *espai public*) and a practice for consistently delivering those propositions. Beyond addressing the preferences and needs of citizens in very fine-tuned ways, Barcelona has mastered the process of engaging citizens, landowners, and investors in repeated delivery of these propositions through explicit practices and recognizable types of city development. This is only possible because of the match between the practices of urbanism and local cultural values. Barcelona, in other words, can be said to have a coherent urbanism. Practice is bound to a foundation of shared values; the urbanism is as much a local culture of urban life as a professional practice. The result is a stable, engaged *community of practice*, which gives Barcelona its transformational capacity—its ability to consistently link analysis and policy to action, and to renew the city at a large scale in response to social, economic, and ecological change.

Progressive transformation is values-driven. People and institutions only align their private strategies and instrumental uses of the city to a common strategy because the ends create a more compelling value for them. Achieving strategic alignment in the urban free-for-all is near impossible if local practices of urbanism do not offer a value proposition that relates to the underlying culture of a good part of the city.

This cultural dimension of cities is perhaps the most subtle aspect of urban strategy. Take the example of metropolitan Miami, another Great Opportunities City. For decades Miami's local urban planners, environmentalists, and state-level fiscal planners have tried to insert density into Miami's economic logic. In 1975 they secured passage of one of the first comprehensive urban growth management plans in the United States. It called for concentrated growth along a central, high-density transit corridor. A few years later they received \$800 million

from the U.S. government to build the first part of that transit system. But even this highly subsidized density initiative did not synchronize with the region's basic values or with the suburban city models developed to serve those values.

During a visit to Miami I have a chance to meet up with my old friend Harvey Ruvin. He's been a fixture on the Miami political scene since 1968 and a tireless instigator of efforts to rein in urban sprawl and protect south Florida's environment. We've agreed to meet at his favorite roadside diner. We each drive half an hour in our separate cars, touching base by mobile phone to report our respective progress through traffic. Now, as we sit together in the air-conditioned diner, the noise of four lanes of traffic is muffled, and Harvey tells the story of their failed efforts to prevent the expansive and expensive sprawl that defines greater Miami today.

"Because the land was cheaper the farther you went west," Ruvin explains, "in the 1980s developers asked the county commission to consider a series of plan amendments to permit development farther and farther away from the designated transit and development corridor and infrastructure systems. I found myself losing votes five to four. The hearings were all perfunctory. Everyone knew what the votes would be. If you were on the 'five' side of that vote you wouldn't have trouble with campaign funding."<sup>2</sup>

Many urbanists have written off Miami as a depressing loss. The head of the Miami-Dade planning department tells me that they even have a hard time getting city planners to apply for jobs there. Ruvin has been constantly, calmly fighting for forty years against the region's strategic impotence. He and his colleagues won the establishment of Biscayne Bay National Park, America's first marine national park, located on the city's shoreline. They got massive funding to restore the Everglades. They passed some of the first local laws in the United States to control development around the region's groundwater resources and to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions. Now, under Ruvin's leadership, they are planning the massive investments necessary to protect greater Miami from rising sea levels and extreme weather events brought on by climate change. But when it comes to development control, according to Ruvin's three decades of stories, it seems to fall apart. In the face of a powerful suburban development alliance, based on

low-density city models that depend on cheap agricultural land, the county and state have lacked the will and muscle to see its policies through.

But the triumph of Miami's suburban city models reflects a conundrum more fundamental than political maneuvering and rural land conversion. The underlying issue is a lack of alignment between the dominant values of the local culture and its progressive strategies. The suburban builders have had the clout of culture, not just politics, on their side.

Take the issue of public space and public facilities. In contrast to Barcelona's teeming squares or Toronto's neighborhood parks, the public spaces in greater Miami are generally vacant. It is as if the local government maintains public parks only because they think a city should have them. But residents simply don't use the parks. Miami gives the impression of a region of beach-loving people, but excepting the athletic crowd, most of its beach-going crowds are tourists. Miamians favor their air-conditioned homes and private pools. They also favor their cars over the city's light rail system. When they seek the "public" they most often go to semi-private places like shopping malls, arenas, and attractions. Unlike Barcelona, which specializes in a mixed public-private zone where people of all backgrounds intensely interact, Miami specializes in privatizing public space, bringing public-like activities under private ownership, security, and climate control. Miami and many other American cities are preoccupied with "defensible space"<sup>3</sup>—places where urban design and security services create a privately controlled envelope in which people create their experience of community.

In spite of their origins in public-facing cities like New York, Havana, or Port-au-Prince, Miami's migrant population, as diverse as it is, shares a culture where private ownership and control, personal convenience, and safety rank very high on the hierarchy of local urban values. "There's been a kind of cultural mind-set," says Dario Moreno of Florida International University's Metropolitan Center. "Miami is a city of people who don't want to live in density. It's articulated in a sense that there are too many people or the city is dirty and crime ridden. The feeling about downtown is that there are too many people. Miami is a city where the suburban culture avoids downtown," he says.

Among the competing ideas for greater Miami's development, those that satisfy this value proposition have prevailed. The backyard pool, the restaurant patio, the gated suburban development, and the security-controlled shopping malls are the centers of conviviality. Streets and sidewalks are dominated by the region's vast private automobile fleet. Parking lots are the primary form of *espai public*.

The drive to assert this culture against the county government's attempts at higher density, mixed-use development and public facilities has taken a political dimension. Even as the county government (and federal prosecutors) began to rein in the suburban builders in the late 1980s and 1990s, clusters of suburban subdivisions seceded from the county and organized into new municipalities. Taking their local zoning and development control out of the county's reach, these new cities represent a further attempt to govern development according to very local core values. As a result of this clash between policy and planning and cultural orientation, greater Miami has never developed a coherent local urbanism.

Few cities pay detailed attention to analyzing their foundation values when they develop plans for their growth. On one hand, leaders try to intuit the likely responses to a new policy or development project, based on past experiences and their own sense of what makes the city tick. More sophisticated cities do opinion polling, but this doesn't give much insight into underlying values. Planners and engineers in most cities take a very technocratic approach, applying standards of the "right way" to design a city that have little reference to unique local values.

Our progressive agendas for sustainability, livability, or equity are often introduced into policy as a further imposition of external values that have little reference to the city's unarticulated values foundation. Except in this case, the values of the progressive agenda are very explicit. They therefore become a lightning rod for all the frustration that a community can feel when the city does not serve their strategies and needs. Policies to contain and control automobile use for environmental reasons, for instance, smack up against the frustrating inconveniences and costliness of living in a city of separate residential, employment, and shopping districts. Attempts to integrate new immigrant groups into an

area smack up against the frustrating lack of attention to the existing population's strategies. Because we don't really study local values, we aren't very effective in changing them. We rarely cultivate a consensus value proposition for the city, engage local populations in the design of new city models or citysystems, pilot these models so people can experience and fine-tune them, and ultimately articulate and confront the contradictions of their urban values.

This creates a huge problem for urban strategy. We spend a billion dollars on a transit system, as in Miami or Los Angeles, and people stay in their cars. Or we distribute social service facilities "for the sake of equity" throughout the neighborhoods of a city, and construction is stalled by not-in-my-backyard (NIMBY) battles. We thereby invest our political and financial capital in undisciplined trial-and-error. Take the gentrifying area of my Toronto neighborhood, for example. It is known as one of the most socially progressive in the city. Its residents like to wear their tolerance and appreciation for diversity on their sleeves. But when a socially progressive politician tried to locate a halfway house for teenagers at the edge of the neighborhood, implementing the city's policy of distributing such facilities throughout the city, these otherwise liberal-minded residents revert to an underlying value: ensuring the economic value of their homes. What gets generically labeled as NIMBYism is a distinct values conflict that needs to be understood and solved. People in downtown, middle-class Toronto neighborhoods invest vast sums to renovate and maintain their otherwise modest homes—more than is reflected in their properties' market prices. This kind of pride and upkeep is a core value in Toronto that preserves and improves an otherwise fiscally challenged city. But it conflicts with the social planning ideals that residents would otherwise support. Until a practice is developed to resolve such underlying values conflicts, the city will have problems implementing its progressive policies.

As this Toronto story illustrates, the cultural values in most cities are deeply conflicted. Even Barcelona's urbanism smacks up against values conflicts as it adapts to new challenges. For instance, southern Spain has been experiencing an extended drought. But local values for cleanliness support the daily washing of *espai public*—for example, sidewalks, lanes, and squares. Developing practices to reduce the use of potable water for this purpose is very controversial.

In Miami, people are deeply concerned with safety in public spaces, but the preferred mode of transportation—the private automobile—is the most dangerous daily activity in the city. People are trading off one strongly held value (i.e., safety) against others (i.e., convenience, privacy, and "freedom") all the time without any clear logic. Adding to the complexity, the values foundations of increasingly multicultural cities are in transition. Even in a citysystem like Dharavi, new ethnic migrant communities from northeastern India are using the migrant city and its markets in a different way from established groups. Few cities have the benefit of a city like Barcelona, whose historic isolation and relative homogeneity over centuries has allowed it to develop stable value propositions.

Traditional planning doesn't offer much help in navigating this landscape. A new practice is required, using anthropology, sociology, market research, and design to incrementally transform the local city-building practice and the values foundation together. The growing gap between official plans and the built city, accompanied by NIMBY and other values-based conflicts, has compelled planners to get increasingly involved in managing detailed design processes. One Sunday morning in Miami, I traveled (by car) to Dadeland, the southern terminus of the light rail transit system that Ruvin and his colleagues on the county commission voted for and lobbied into existence in the 1980s. Ever since, the county has been giving developers incentives to build higher density nodes like Dadeland around the transit stations, all to catalyze the high-density corridor that Ruvin described.

I stop at a number of transit stations but find no passengers there. The development around most of the stations is indistinguishable from any low-density highway strip mall. Along the half-hour drive, I see only two or three people riding on the wide bike path that parallels the train. The only high-density developments along the corridor are a few mega-malls at main highway crossroads. The county built the "right" infrastructure, but the developers didn't come.

But the planning department and developers have approached Dadeland differently. Rather than imposing a fixed paradigm or city model, they engaged each other in a process of more micro-level design. Working from a shared value proposition, they negotiated greater density, mixed use, pedestrian-friendly features into the building facades,

orientation, shops, sidewalks, courtyards, landscaping, and streetscape. This design process allowed the builders to test adjustments against their business models. It gave prospective users a chance to react to the new designs. The result is hardly a new urbanism for Miami, but it is a step toward a breakthrough from the high-stakes, rigid, all-or-nothing politics of the suburban builders. Now seven-story buildings abut the transit station; the sidewalks have shaded patios; fountains in the streets slow traffic; street-facing balconies create the sense of public-facing life. Through design collaborations like the one in Dadeland, North American cities are laying a foundation for the reemergence of urbanism.

Constantly renewing its basic practices of urbanism has been a central part of Barcelona's success over thirty years of transformation. Constant debate and self-criticism have kept the practices honest, ensuring their coherence and coevolution with the local culture, as the values proposition for each project is constantly renegotiated. It's no surprise, therefore, to find a person like city councillor Itziar González leading the transformation of another low-income neighborhood, Barceloneta. González is a professional urbanist. She describes her specialty as "conflict resolution and public space."<sup>4</sup> She has been a longtime resident in Barceloneta's adjoining low-income neighborhood, El Raval. She lived in El Raval during its transformation from the city's most run-down area to its prime cultural district. And she is critical of the approach taken and the outcome.

El Raval has been held up as a global best practice in urban regeneration. It is a mandatory stop on the ceaseless pilgrimage of foreign city leaders, planners, architects, and designers to Barcelona. In the nineteenth century, El Raval was an industrial-tenement area not unlike the industrial slums and chawls of south Mumbai. It hosted the city's dirtiest industries—slaughterhouses, tanneries, brick making, and coal-powered textile mills—which attracted migrant workers from the countryside. There was little sanitation. One street was called Chain Street because a chain was installed to pull one's way through the street's deep mud. The southern part of the neighborhood abutted the port, establishing it as a center for brothels, hostels, and taverns.

Thirty years ago El Raval was so degraded that one building collapsed every three weeks. It was one of the most densely settled areas in the world. The decline of traditional industries made it a center of petty street crime, prostitution, and drug dealing. The middle class had fled. Except for its small furniture, printing, and wholesale businesses, it was a stigmatized residential area without any source of investment. The idea behind its redevelopment was to clear the most dilapidated and crime-ridden areas and enhance El Raval's multi-use character with new cultural industries, public institutions, office and tourist facilities, and, above all, *espai public*.

Today El Raval's refurbished streets and squares are buzzing with activity. In addition to being a residential district it is also a center of universities, museums, cultural institutions, youthful pan-European tourism, and nightlife. The city approached this transformation with a signature method, which has been constantly critiqued and redesigned as it is applied across the rest of the city. González is currently redesigning the method for Barceloneta.

The basics are as follows. First, the city government designates an area for intensified redevelopment. When it is designated, all city departments (planning, transportation, parks, police, economic development, etc.), utilities, and social welfare agencies develop a common plan for new investments, facilities, and services in the area. Then the city creates a public-private company to ensure coordinated investment in redevelopment. In other words, redevelopment is approached as an investment project, led by a group of investor-shareholders. The legal shareholders of El Raval's transformation included city and regional government, the telephone company, major savings banks, the city's parking company, and a joint company of the neighborhood's small shopowners. To reinforce political alignment, the board of the company includes all the political parties represented on the city council. Together the initial shareholders in the El Raval project invested 18 million euros, creating a capacity to borrow 200 million euros more.

In parallel with the company's creation, the city amends its general plan to provide special conditions for investment, land uses, and public facilities in the area. In the Barcelona approach, Director of Urbanism Garcia-Bragado says there has been a steady shift away from strict building requirements "toward more flexible plans," which encourage

creative ways to address the neighborhood's problems and preferences. The revised plan for the district sets the parameters for trading public and private building rights and developing joint investments.

Take, for instance, the new law for low-income Barceloneta. It establishes a legal first option for the city to purchase a property when it is put up for sale. This achieves two objectives. It prevents the aggressive displacement of long-time tenants due to speculative hoarding by private developers who seek to gentrify the area for the pan-European market. It also gives the city landholdings that can be used to attract cultural or social service facilities or to negotiate local building projects—in other words, it makes the city and its public-private corporation a strategic force in the market.

Third, the city establishes what they variously call a “commission” or “consensus-building association.” This body facilitates agreement between neighborhood associations and the local, regional, and state governments. It formally establishes the public stakeholders in the redevelopment and defines the policy and business processes for project execution, particularly with regard to housing. In El Raval, the association negotiated a policy on maintaining rental housing, on resident relocation during redevelopment, and on allocating new housing units after completion. “This is part of our institutional culture here,” explains Rafael Tormo, the head of a redevelopment project in another Barcelona district. The Barcelona approach is based on a “culture of agreement,” he says.<sup>5</sup> “This is the edge of a Damocles sword,” he continues. The sword, in the case of Barcelona, is the precarious consensus that makes its urbanism coherent.

With these framework arrangements in place, the work begins. Bragado describes it as a process of “selective, public micro-surgical interventions” implemented across the whole area. The primary task in El Raval was renovating old housing and creating new public housing while repairing streets and facades, opening up new public squares and amenities, and bringing new commerce and employment into the neighborhood. The city co-invested with building owners in the facades and ground-floor shops of old buildings to reestablish pride and asset values. The company negotiated ownership of land parcels and recruited university facilities, museums, and cultural and research institutes to locate in El Raval. It transferred plots of land to the state

government for public housing projects. Bragado gives another example of how the city kick-starts investment. When Barcelona was selected in the early 1980s to host the 1992 Olympics it “was not a tourist city or even an interesting city,” he recalls. It didn’t even have a hotel industry. “The private sector didn’t believe that the Olympics would succeed in Barcelona,” says Bragado, so hoteliers weren’t investing. So the city had to come up with a way to spawn a hotel sector from scratch. The city selected ten locations around the city and zoned them for hotel development. Then it secured properties in these areas and offered fifty-year leases to hoteliers. This dramatically reduced their investment risks. Today, Barcelona has one of the healthiest hotel industries in the world.

Over the El Raval project’s fifteen years, the initiative and financing for redevelopment steadily shifted from the public to private sector. Building owners, proprietors, and middle-class residents steadily regained faith in the area. Along the way, private developers were retrained in Barcelona’s urbanism. “Now private developers have more interest in historical renewal and in higher-quality mixed-use development,” says Bragado. “They found that the market will pay more for this kind of development than their traditional designs.”

But González is unhappy with the outcome in El Raval. It has increased the assessed property value in the neighborhood by \$11 billion over twenty years, “but the city did the easy part,” she argues. “They did planning but not urbanism. They didn’t identify the strategic issues that were only known to the neighbors,” she says. Lack of attention to the values of the long-isolated tenant and immigrant residents created flaws and incoherence in the urbanism practiced there. As she tells her version of the story, the “strategic issue” becomes explicit: people wanted a stable community life and an affordable, accessible local economy, both of which have been compromised by the more transient, higher-cost cultural district created there.

“The neighborhood perspective,” she explains, “is that the development was driven by and for the redevelopment company and local private developers. Now there are no buildings collapsing, but the buildings have been emptied for expensive apartments or hotels. Before, we had subsistence-level criminality, but the local people knew the prostitutes and dealers as neighbors. Now the crime committed here is linked to international networks and mafias. One can argue that there



is a degradation of *espai public* because of the intensity of use by tourists. The old residents are moving out because of the constant busyness and noise." As a result, El Raval has become an area of temporary immigrant settlement and high disease rates side by side with the city's major cultural institutions and tourist district.

González sees this failing as a product of Barcelona's increasing substitution of urbanism with urban planning. Planning, she says, starts from the premise that "we want to reach this goal." Urbanism, in contrast, asks "how do we reach this goal?" She draws a picture of a boat on a large sheet of paper. Then she shows the boat being buffeted by strong winds, just like the pressures a city faces during its redevelopment, which threaten to push its vision off course. "To reduce the pressure of the winds on the boat," she argues, the planner makes the boat bigger and bigger. In other words, the project becomes less responsive to local values and priorities. It increasingly focuses on the needs of the boat. In contrast, she explains, as she continues her paper illustration, "urbanism is adding and developing solutions for all the different interests." She draws each "interest" as a little boat. "Urbanism is getting lots of little boats moving in a similar direction."

The starting point of strategic urban practice, in other words, is the constant articulation and evolution of the local values foundation that drives the citizens' choices, behaviors, and uses of the city. Strategic capability arises when urbanist practice is aligned with that foundation and develops numerous tailored solutions to create shared advantage on it. This approach to Barcelona's transformation is echoed by administrators and technical staff I meet throughout the city. None of this is taught in university courses for planners, architects, or civil engineers. It is learned as a local culture of practice. Jordi Campillo is the new managing director of the city's environment department. We're having a casual conversation about his new job and he expresses the same view. "The construction of the city," he says, "is not something that the city imposes but is built through consensus."

Campillo's words remind me of the transformational accomplishments of Kitakyushu, one of Japan's most historically burdened cities. A major postwar center of steel, chemical, and automotive production,

Kitakyushu was ranked by the United Nations as one of the top pollution hot spots in the world. Then, between the late 1960s and 1990, it underwent one of the largest industrial cleanups in history. It did so largely without national regulation or forced measures. The transformation started with a grassroots campaign by housewives. Before it was over, major manufacturers like Nippon Steel, Hitachi, Mitsubishi, and Toshiba and the city government had entered into 183 voluntary pollution control agreements and 883 written promises of action, altogether exceeding national law requirements. By the early 1990s, Kitakyushu had some of the best air and water quality in Japan. More than one hundred species of fish and marine birds were reestablished in what had been the largely dead Dokai Bay. Building on this success, Mayor Koichi Sueyoshi and his administration decided to make Kitakyushu a leading world center for sustainable urban development. One of his many initiatives was to re-create the natural watershed that flows into the bay.

During my first visit to Kitakyushu, Sueyoshi had me visit one of the many canalized streams that flow more like an engineering diagram than a natural watershed through the city. This particular stream canal ran along a road through a working-class neighborhood. At first I was unimpressed at the thought of this canal as some kind of environmental restoration. But the process of transformation in this city of engineers and heavy industry was unexpectedly subtle. The managers had us climb down the banks to look closely at the edges of the stream where the water lapped against the canal walls. Here and elsewhere, Sueyoshi's team had mobilized the neighbors to install rocky nooks and crannies in the stream beds. They had also established a nursery in each neighborhood for growing insect larvae. When ready, the citizens planted the larvae in the nooks. These were not just any larvae; they were larvae of the firefly.

The engineering of the watershed, they understood, had destroyed not only the fireflies' breeding grounds but also a cherished piece of local culture: the famous annual children's firefly festival. The firefly, Sueyoshi knew, was an indicator species that predicted not only the health of the whole riverine ecology but also of the human culture that had evolved around it. The river project was one of many ways his administration was engaging and educating citizens about their connection to global environmental issues.

Sueyoshi's ultimate ambition was to complete Kitakyushu's transformation from a top-ten pollution hot spot to a top-ten center for urban environmental sustainability. But to succeed he realized he needed more than political support; he needed a cultural momentum. To prepare one of the most ambitious environmental programs in the world of cities, Sueyoshi started not with a host of international experts but with a local citizens' commission. Its purpose was to renew the voluntary agreements approach used to clean up Dokai Bay and the city's air quality in the era before environmental regulation. The first task of the commission's industry, professional, NGO, and government representatives was to reach consensus on an explicit values foundation, consisting of ten consensus principles. The voluntary agreements were then negotiated on the basis of these principles.

Kitakyushu has excelled in the environmental arena and mobilized hundreds of millions of dollars behind its program because its strategies rest so explicitly upon such deep-seated, implicit cultural understandings. Many of the resulting principles are truly meaningful only to local people.<sup>6</sup> Consensus value statements, not technical prescriptions, served as their strategic planks.

Now Barcelona is testing its practice of urbanism against a different global challenge: building an urban value proposition in which the competing values of established local communities and of global industries begin to work together. Barcelona's powerful urbanism and its strategic capability evolved from its cultural homogeneity, regional commerce, and political isolation. But it also aspires to be a fully cosmopolitan city, supporting progressive transformation across the City. Managing the two-way process of extension in the final phase—the ways that global migrant companies and professionals seek to strengthen their global advantage in Barcelona, and the ways that Barcelona seeks to build its advantage across the City—is Tormo's new Damoclean sword. It is the fundamental challenge to the global City's coherence: the reconciliation of the local citysystem with the foreign city model, of the local *city of places* with the extended *city of flows*.

In an old, deteriorated textile and apparel manufacturing district called Poblenu, once known as the Spanish Manchester, Barcelona

urbanists are facing this challenge. Now designated in the city's official plan as a special redevelopment area called district 22, the District 22@ Project is working to reconcile the high-tech campus city model of the global ICT, design, media, and data industries with a very local citysystem that is hungry for renewal.

Poblenu is a conservative, lower-income community of some sixty thousand residents. Most of the families there have lived in the industrial neighborhood citysystem for generations. Its economic design is not unlike early industrial districts throughout the world. Residences are located among local manufacturers, shops, and warehouses. But Poblenu has a special local design, based on a grid of hundred-by-hundred-meter blocks or "islands" that mix these uses in a cellular, micro-citysystem structure.<sup>7</sup> The only problem is that Poblenu's industry began rapidly disappearing in the 1960s. The 22@ Project proposes to insert new industry into this existing citysystem structure and culture. The design challenge for the new, so-called innovation district, in other words, is to integrate more than three million square meters of new productive activities into 115 island blocks while stabilizing the local population and adding four thousand new affordable housing units, along with new infrastructure and more public amenities, all without undermining the values of the established community.

Barcelona is hungry for the new industry. "We're not a primary city," explains Xavier Romero, the philosophical marketing manager for the company that was established to lead the project. "We need to find creative ways to make ourselves attractive to these big companies. At the same time we have to resist the pressure from them" to accept their standard models. "We don't want a downtown here; we want a life here after seven P.M.," he says. Under a more typical redevelopment approach, he adds, local developers "would put in all middle-class residential buildings," given the region's booming housing market. Their aim is to renew the community of the existing population, not replace it.

To get started, the project had to "establish its DNA," as Romero puts it, and define "the rules of the game." The rules are as follows. First, to preserve the islands and their mixed-used vitality as the basic unit of Poblenu urbanism, the island and not individual land parcels were defined as the basic unit of regeneration. No redevelopment can take place in an island until 60 percent of the landowners agree to its

transformation. This condition forces integrated planning for each island.<sup>8</sup> Second, landowners are given an economic incentive to agree together on their island's redevelopment: they can rebuild the island at a substantially greater building height (density), automatically increasing their land value if they participate in the 22@ Project.<sup>9</sup> In this way the project facilitates the organization of a *community* to plan, build, and foster the renewed island citysystem. Third, as a quid pro quo for the increased density allowance, each landowner must transfer 30 percent of his lot to the municipality. Under the new density allowance, this still leaves the landowner with a bigger opportunity than before, but the municipality secures land for progressive investment in each island: one third is used for affordable housing, one third for *espai public*, and one third for educational, studio, and research facilities that support the targeted new industries. The fourth and final rule provides infrastructure for the renewed district, adding to its progressive character: each developer must pay a fee to cofinance a district heating and cooling system, a pneumatic underground waste disposal and transfer system, and a fiber-optic cable system.<sup>10</sup>

Within these rules, landowners and the city negotiate the transformation of each island. Meanwhile, a special citizens' commission oversees protection of 140 designated historical buildings and other structures, like old factory chimneys and walls, thus retaining the district's ties to its past.

By traditional measures, the project has already been a success. After decades of stagnancy, it has mobilized an enormous private investment: more than 60 percent of the 115 blocks are in the process of transformation. A remarkable 80 percent of the developers and more than half of the mobilized private investment are local. But 22@ still rebuilds on the sharp edge of the sword. We visited one particular block whose construction had been completed. It was a classic example of mixed-use development: a university facility abutting an office building for IT companies, which was next to a classy new hotel, which in turn abutted new affordable housing. In the middle of the island, shared by all, was a small, smartly designed open square—a newly minted piece of *espai public*. But the sterile quiet of the new island and this square contrasted starkly with the run-down island across the street, yet to be transformed. There you could see children playing in the street. There you saw people

transacting business in their street-front *espai public*. In the transformed island the only functioning *espai public* was the few tables of a street-front café, awaiting their lunchtime customers. In short, the old island was a place where people were at home. They lived, worked, argued, made their noise and money, and chased their children there. The transformed island was not yet either a neighborhood or a downtown.

It remains to be seen whether Project 22@ will evolve a common ground between the placed-based urbanism of the island citysystem and the globally extended building of the city model. But there can be no question about Poblenou's renewed historic significance. Project 22@ is breaking a path for the final phase, much as the *illes* of Poblenou gave shape to modern industrial life in the nineteenth century. This latest phase of Barcelona's twenty-year transformation is nothing less than an ambitious work in progress to discover an urbanism for the City.<sup>11</sup>