Chapter 22

Barcelona: A Citizen's Agreement for an Inclusive City

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22.1 Barcelona's Sociopolitical Structure

The administrative decentralisation of the political structure in Spain grants regional and local councils a set of legislative and executive competencies which, in the case of social welfare services, are very far-reaching. The social innovations that we find in Barcelona today are related to two basic factors: the continuity in city government and the dynamics of civil society.

From the first local elections (after the re-establishment of democracy) and until 2011, a period of over 30 years, the city council of Barcelona was in the hands of the left (the Socialist Party won the elections and governed in coalition with two other left wing parties). The main characteristics of the social welfare system of the city, therefore, are (1) continuity in the government team over a long period of time, (2) starting from zero, that is, they had to build the system from scratch, and (3) citizens who—after the long period of dictatorship—wanted to be involved in political action, to participate. Municipal policymakers made the most of this potential when it came to setting up the local welfare system, as did other political actors (the opposition parties and civil society) to some extent. The civil society in the Autonomous Community of Catalonia has traditionally been participative and enterprising, as demonstrated by the large number of cooperatives that existed in Barcelona at the end of the nineteenth century.

Another element that helps to understand the context is the fact that in Barcelona we find an objective that cuts across all areas of political action: the “modernisation” of the city. This is a manifestation of the desire to recover the spirit of enterprise that

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the city once had, to recover its own brand of economic and cultural dynamism that was forbidden during the years of dictatorship. It finds its expression in the construction of the “Barcelona model”, a model that can be seen clearly in the changes in urban development as a result of the 1992 Olympic Games, the success of which was to a large extent due to the involvement of civil society, although it also affected other areas of society. In this way, policymakers in the Social Welfare Department set themselves a basic goal of building a social services model that was participative. As no welfare services system yet existed, there was no widespread culture of commitment to, or participation in, the city’s social welfare. The structures used to encourage and enable people to commit themselves to collective responsibilities would also have to be created.

The search for a “Barcelona model” has meanwhile continued ever more seriously in various political arenas, and collaboration with civil society in social welfare matters has also increased significantly, representing a force for social innovation in the city.

22.2 The Programme “Citizen’s Agreement for an Inclusive Barcelona”

22.2.1 The Programme

The programme Citizen’s Agreement for an Inclusive Barcelona (CA) is an example of social innovation that fits in with a new form of governance. It establishes both a new form of participation and policy-making. The CA is not only based on new practices but also introduces changes in social responsibilities (public and private) in the local welfare system. By bringing about a new culture in the management of the welfare system, it also affects attitudes and values within local government. It is an example of social innovation resulting from a two-way process: (1) A top-down process, in the sense that it was proposed by the municipal government, which (2) intersects with a bottom-up process based on the effort and interests of different organisations and social networks that work within the city’s social welfare system. We consider that this is a programme with great potential, and it could be implemented in other cities with similar conditions.

The programme was established in April 2005. The ultimate goal of the programme is to redistribute responsibilities in the social welfare sector in Barcelona through a broad agreement among representatives of the main social agents in the sector. The intention is to create a strategic framework shared by all participating entities. This is a new philosophy, which integrates the diversity of activities that are carried out in the local social welfare system into a single framework or joint strategy. It is based on a policy decision to coordinate the diverse activities of different social actors. No one loses their space for action; rather, it is possible to improve results by combining efforts.

At the moment of its creation, a total of 235 entities of diverse nature (organisations, businesses and universities) signed the agreement. Since its public presentation, the number of institutions and organisations involved and attached to the agreement has grown each year. In December 2011, there were a total of 467 participating organisations, institutions and businesses (doubling the number of participants in 5 years), and in 2013 there were more than 500.

The agreement has been promoted and is coordinated by the municipal government. Currently, the more than 500 participating entities work in such distinct spheres as the economy, culture, education, social action, housing, health and labour. The values that the CA promotes are identified in the strategic framework that defines the programme: coexistence, cooperation, social cohesion, creativity and community. From the perspective of the internal administration of the agreement, the aim is to encourage values like democratic governance, networking and quality of work.

To sign the agreement means joining a network that provides opportunities for access to and exchange of information, resources and knowledge. It also promotes projects in which cooperation between diverse entities and organisations in the city is key.

The CA is organised on different levels: (a) there is an annual meeting of all the signatories to the agreement, in which participants provide an account of the work they have carried out during the year and agree on the direction of the work for the following year; (b) there is a governing council, which is a deliberative and decision-making body that shapes the development of the agreement and its actions; (c) there are work commissions, formed by organisations that temporarily work on concrete issues, and (d) there are action networks formed by organisations, institutions and other bodies that work in specific sectors, which establish common objectives to improve the work they do.

The Action Networks

Direct action depends on the networks. The organisations and city institutions in these networks share concrete methodologies and goals; they cooperate and direct their shared work toward common strategic and operational objectives. The networks begin with a desire to work together on a particular issue or matter and to achieve improvements in the respective fields of the participants. Each network is independent and has, based on its objectives, its own dynamics and working plan. At the time of this study (2013), ten networks had been formed:

- Network for the Reception and Support of Migrants in Barcelona
- Network for Assistance to the Homeless
- Network of Businesses with Social Responsibility Projects
- Network for Social and Labour Market Integration (now: for "Social Economy")
- Network of Centres for Children and Teens
- Support Network for Family Caregivers
- Inclusion Housing Network
- Cultural Network for Social Inclusion
- Network for Children's Rights
- Network for Coexistence and Prevention

Some of the networks have progressed more than others, and some have managed to agree on common citywide projects or programmes. In terms of the CA's direct impact on social welfare policies, there have been two networks in particular that have achieved significant results: the first one is the Network of Centres for Children and Teens, which has agreed on one model for all the city's centres, both public and private, providing assistance for children and teens at risk. The other one is the Network for Assistance to the Homeless, which has created a solid network for the exchange of resources and information.

Network of Centres for Children and Teens

This network is formed by 17 organisations and was established in April 2006. Its aim is to improve the city's responsiveness to children and adolescents in situations of social risk. It was an initiative of the organisations that manage or run centres for children and teens (outside school hours), the aim of which was to gain greater recognition for the work they were doing. Through the network, the member organisations would work on developing a common model of care for young people for all the centres in the city, even though managed by different entities.

Today there is one model for the centres agreed upon by all. During the work carried out, new centres have been established, and today there are centres that depend on the city and centres that depend on the social organisations, all of them with the same programme for teens and children.

Network for Assistance to the Homeless

This network was created in November 2005 and consists of 26 organisations and federations. The social organisations participating in the network are committed to working together to help homeless persons regain autonomy and social relations. Various working groups were established and together they have carried out diverse actions, such as the following: a count of the number of homeless persons in Barcelona; preparation of a document with proposals on how to improve healthcare for the mentally ill; coming to agreement on proposals for action; sharing information and data and creating an open online catalogue of all the resources and services available through government and other entities.

The network has representation and dialogue with officials of local and regional government. The administration, politicians and professionals with responsibility in this area have embraced this new way of working horizontally with third sector organisations. This network has made it possible to create a new form of governance in this area.

22.2.2 Impact of the Programme

The CA has had an interesting impact on social welfare policy in the city. Not only has it made it possible to share resources and information but it has also changed forms of governance. The groups involved see themselves as actors who can have an impact on social welfare. It has led to the participation of citizens and social

organisations in welfare policies through different forms of deliberation and action. The programme has changed the social welfare system in the city in various ways. For example, the structures of the CA represent a new form of governance, in particular the dynamic in the Executive Commission, which allows and promotes proactiveness with a very high level of reflection and production of documents (I-6)¹. There is participation in the overall welfare system, which also improves or facilitates the activities carried out by each of the participating entities.

The importance of the CA in the city's social welfare system can also be measured with the change in the municipal government. The municipal elections in May 2011 led to the election of a *Convergència i Unió* (CiU) centre-right nationalist coalition government. After 30 years of left-wing hegemony in the municipal government, a centre-right party came into power. This change concerned the participating groups in the CA: "When the new council member entered, we all had concerns about what would happen with the CA because, of course, the CA is an uncomfortable space.... but at that time, we discovered that not only was the CA not cancelled, but it seems to have been strengthened" (I-12)². Clearly, the new government in power has given its support to the programme. In the words of the member entities: "the new government has made it theirs".

22.3 Conclusions

The balance of the work carried out and the challenges and difficulties involved—or that had to be overcome in the framework of the CA—are different if we take as a reference the CA programme in its entirety, or if we consider the action networks. It is necessary to separate these levels analytically to better understand the CA.

22.3.1 *The CA Programme*

The CA is an increasingly consolidated programme. The new administrative and governing structure of the municipal government considers it a flagship programme. It is not considered a programme designed and developed by its political rivals but rather as one the current government has chosen and wants to strengthen. The member entities say that "come what may, and whoever is in the municipal government, it will continue and has to continue" (I-8)³. In fact, it can even be stated that in this period in which we have a centre-right municipal government, recognition of the CA on the part of the administrative structure (civil service) of the government has

¹ I-6 Interview Third Sector entity

² I-12 Interview Technical Secretary of CA

³ I-8 Interview Third Sector entity

advanced. In the process of the creation and subsequent development of participatory programmes, it was difficult for part of the government structure to understand that the CA was a space for sharing equal responsibility between the government and civil society; “it was the professionals and not the administrative structure that understood it and implemented it” (I-12). This was the greatest obstacle to be overcome; for example, there were difficulties ensuring that in the actions of the CA, the government and entities had the same visibility. However, it seems that relations with the administration are more fluid today and the consolidation of the CA is such (there are more than 500 entities involved in the programme) that it can be assumed that any attempt to eliminate or reduce its role would be too costly.

At this time (2013), a further step has been taken in the framework of the CA. This is the “shared strategy”. As the entities say: “... the CA was not formed and left as it was but is constantly being revised...” (I-8). The “shared strategy” proposal emerged when the municipal government presented its *Plan for Inclusion 2012–2015* in the CA plenary. The entities understood that although the Plan for Inclusion was a government plan, it was necessary that a distinct and complementary proposal emerge from the CA to establish a strategy for shared actions and policies between the government and the entities. The “shared strategy” covers a total of 936 projects and actions, channelling a total of around 500 million €.

22.3.2 *The Action Networks*

Regarding the balance of the work of the action networks, the results cannot be generalised, as each network functions independently and depends on the efforts of the entities comprising it. Each network depends on the dynamic that its component entities contribute. Thus, there are large and small entities, proactive and more passive entities, some which want—and have—greater roles and others that have less of a role. These characteristics, among others, such as the very goal of the work of the network, have an impact on the dynamic of each network. Although the two networks briefly discussed above seem to have found a dynamic of cooperative work and joint reflection that has allowed solid relations to develop to the satisfaction of their participants, we have also found that the political changes appear to have affected certain other networks significantly.

This is the case of the Social Economy Network (earlier, the Network for Social and Labour Market Integration), which is headed by the municipal institution *Barcelona Activa*. It seems that the change in government, combined with the effects of the economic crisis (government budget cuts as well as a decrease in money from the European Union for insertion programmes), led to a shift in the focus of the network that seems to have slowed the dynamic with which it had begun. Specifically, today there is more talk about self-employment than there is about social and labour market integration. The goal of the network is to “promote the social economy of the city”. The network has opened up to include companies (those with *corporate social responsibility policies*) which are more interested in self-employment than in

developing a programme with the city to create jobs or for the social and economic insertion of those groups with difficulties. In the very dynamic of how it operates, there is a lack of proactivity and its dynamism is much more dependent on Barcelona Activa. It does not meet as often, and it needs to find a common stimulus, which can—in these times of serious economic crisis—stimulate its work. It is necessary to monitor the work of the various networks in order to make a comprehensive evaluation of their functioning. This is one of the issues that the entities leading the CA have on the table for upcoming discussion.

Finally, and by way of conclusion, we can say that the “Citizen's Agreement for an Inclusive Barcelona” programme has had a strong impact, which is continuing to grow. It is proving to have a broad consensus, which is attracting other entities that have not yet become part of the agreement.

To a great extent, the programme's success is a result of the relationships that are formed between the participants, who are essentially working in a network. But the participants also appreciate the fact that being focused on action, their impact is multiplied. They also value the influence the CA has at times had on municipal authorities.

It is possible to spread this innovation. In fact, it is a project that has been sparking a lot of interest in other municipalities in Spain and in other countries as well. However, this is a project that requires a two-way social process. It would not have been possible without the interaction between clear leadership in charge of the project and a dynamic civil society.

For an innovation in governance to become established, a broad consensus is required on the part of all the actors involved. And perhaps, not only a consensus on the idea but also regarding capacity, in other words: on the one hand, a clear idea and the real possibility of designing a new model by the government leaders responsible and on the other hand, the existence of a network of entities that want to be involved and participate in designing and managing the social services of the city.

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