Analysing the role of citizens in urban regeneration: Bottom-linked initiatives in Barcelona[*]

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Abstract

This article analyses recent urban regeneration projects in Barcelona, focusing especially on the role of bottom-up initiatives and their consideration and inclusion in new policies n for the development of urban regeneration. In a context of social and political mobilisation against austerity, the combination of these two elements gives rise to the emergence of bottom-linked practices and new policy instruments. Our comparison of two case studies in Barcelona shows that a process of experimentation for broadening urban regeneration is underway, but also that the process is far from being consolidated and that it is not without its own contradictions and conflicts.

Keywords: bottom-linked initiatives, urban regeneration, social innovation, urban governance, anti-austerity movements

Word Count: 9,200

Introduction

This article analyses new forms of collaboration between citizens and public administration in the development of urban regeneration practices through the case study of Barcelona. More specifically,

the article analyses how bottom-up neighbourhood initiatives are being integrated into public schemes through existing and new instruments for participation. This gives place to bottom-linked governance in which local actions of citizens and public action combine, giving better provision of needs and distribution of resources (Eizaguirre et al. 2012).

Since the economic crisis and the imposition of austerity measures, southern European countries have seen the rise of movements demanding social justice and the fuller exercise of social and political rights. The *indignados* movement in Spain, which started in 2011, is an example of claims for greater democracy in front of austerity measures decided at supranational level. At the local scale, these movements have advocated a stronger role of community and the neighbourhood and have called for social policies and investments at neighbourhood level. These initiatives can be understood as practices of 'soft' urban regeneration, as they fulfil the transformation of underprivileged urban areas with the direct involvement of neighbours, with or without the involvement of local administration, having an impact, although often limited, in the transformation of the urban space and the neighbourhood (Rabbiosi 2016). Examples of these initiatives include the creation of urban gardens, self-managed social centres, projects for co-operative housing or the creation of self-managed community programs that foster employment.

The article analyses the relation between citizens' initiatives and local administration focusing on two projects currently underway in Barcelona. In previous research we stated that citizens' initiatives are more sustainable and have greater impact in terms of inclusion if they find collaboration with local administration (Pradel Miquel and García Cabeza 2018; García, Eizaguirre, and Pradel 2015). This article analyses specifically how this collaboration takes place using existing and new policy instruments.

The starting hypothesis is that in southern European countries, in which the welfare state has generally been weak, citizens fight to strengthen social citizenship rights and participation in policy-

making at the local level. Bottom-up initiatives for regeneration at neighbourhood level seek for collaboration with the administration and at the same time maintaining autonomy. In the context of anti-austerity local governments, some cities have seen processes of experimentation and innovation in the relations between civil society and local administration.

In Spain, the crisis and the rise of the *indignados* movement in 2011, brought the emergence of self-managed initiatives for neighbourhood development in Barcelona and other Spanish cities. Despite their reluctance to be enmeshed in traditional politics, some of these initiatives sought for collaboration with the administration. In parallel, the municipal elections of 2015 brought anti-austerity governments in Madrid, Barcelona and other large cities. These new governments promised to support citizens' initiatives and to reinforce their role in policy-making.

This article analyses in depth two case studies that illustrate two different types of projects for neighbourhood development. The first focuses on the strategic plan for economic development in La Barceloneta, called *Barceloneta Proa a la Mar*, which emerged from a bottom-up initiative but was later integrated into the existing public policy approaches to community development. The second is the Plan *Repensem el 22@* (Rethink 22@), a participatory process for redefining the ambitious plan for the transformation of the industrial area in the east of the city, which was launched in 2000 but was never finished because of the bursting of the housing bubble in Spain. The development of this participatory process involved community initiatives which put forward proposals for the plan and were able to influence its deployment.

The analysis of these two case studies shows how, in the specific institutional context of Barcelona, initiatives for neighbourhood development are able to impact local public policy, reinforcing the local welfare system and paving the way for new models of governance. The rest of the article is organized as follows: The next section introduces the debates and analysis on austerity urbanism and citizens' initiatives, and how they have been translated to the analysis of cases in southern

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Europe. It also proposes a theoretical approach based on institutional analysis. Following this, there is a contextualisation of the crisis and austerity in southern Europe, and how this has brought a new wave of anti-austerity movements at different scales. The third section introduces the case of Barcelona, stressing how the crisis has transformed its governance model. The fourth and fifth sections analyse the case studies as well as a comparison. Finally, the conclusions explore the possibilities of bottom-linked governance.

Governance, welfare provision and the role of civil society

The role of civil society in urban governance has been an important issue research since the 1990s , when the idea of linking competitiveness and social cohesion through governance spread and generated new forms of involvement of societal actors (Buck and Gordon 2005). With the Great Recession started in 2008, this issue became even more significant, as the European Commission as well as national and regional governments have increasingly encouraged the involvement of civil society in addressing issues of social inequalities (Martínez Moreno et al. 2019). The department of the European Commission BEPA[1], for instance, stresses that welfare state is no longer able to respond to all social problems and that solutions must come from civil society and private actors, who are able to innovate by generating new responses and contributing to social cohesion, inside a general framework in which we need to 'do more with less' (BEPA 2010). These solutions are presented as a response to the increasing social fragmentation and the growing diversity of social problems, in a setting in which making traditional welfare policies are becoming less effective.

In Spain, Italy, Greece and Portugal this shift has run in parallel to the imposition of austerity policies in exchange for financing and loans to tackle the debt contracted by the banking system

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[1] The Breau of European Policy Advisers (BEPA) was rebranded in 2014 as the European Political Stretegy Centre

(García 2018). The transfer from private to public debt and the accompanying austerity led to calls to strengthen political and social citizenship, advocating greater grassroots participation in political life and reasserting social rights that had been undermined. (García 2018). Southern European cities have become a laboratory for the experimentation of new projects in this direction, fostering the participation of citizens in public life through a variety of means. Some of these practices have focused on community development and bottom-up neighbourhood regeneration (Pradel Miquel and García Cabeza 2018; Rabbiosi 2016), in a context in which local administrations were no longer able to develop their own programmes as classic urban regeneration schemes were postponed or cancelled.

Some authors have linked the combination of these two trends with the deployment of neoliberalism as the state relies increasingly on community volunteering for social policies (Rosol 2012) and social movements tend to promote activation and self-responsibilization rather than political empowerment (Mayer 2013). Nevertheless, the analysis of southern European context shows that citizens initiatives during the crisis have relied on political empowerment and defending a new citizenship agenda, often uniting demands from different collectives around an anti-austerity agenda (De Weerdt and Garcia 2015; Davies and Blanco 2017; Blanco, Salazar, and Bianchi 2019; Eizaguirre, Pradel-Miquel, and García 2017).

To achieve fuller understanding of the role of such initiatives in the transformation of governance this article applies an institutional approach based on political economy (Le Galès 2018). The premise is that the relation between civil society and administration is constrained not just by structural pressures (the imposition of austerity policies, or processes of neoliberalisation) but also by local norms and values (both formal and informal), local traditions of participation, and the impact of clusters of local actors and of the conflicts between these actors in the past. As Eizaguirre et al. (2012) have pointed out, urban governance dynamics emerge from conflict between citizens

calls for strengthening social citizenship rights and the demands from private interests for the development of specific forms of economic development.

The concept of local welfare systems can be useful to analyse the role of civil society actors and social movements in governance. Local welfare systems are the result of growing processes of subsidiarization and giving responsibilities of cohesion to the local level, and include the role of formal and informal actors in the provision of welfare at the local level and the local governance arrangements that let some actors to be central in decision-making processes (Andreotti and Mingione 2016; Andreotti, Mingione, and Polizzi 2012).

The financial crisis entailed significant changes for these institutional contexts, ushering in new forms of interaction between citizens and local administrations. The critical approach to social innovation can help to understand how citizens generate new social responses in the context of these dynamics of conflict. Within the broad field of social innovation analysis, some researchers have focused specifically on social processes oriented towards strengthening social justice at the local level (Frank Moulaert et al. 2015; F. Moulaert et al. 2007; 2010). For these researchers, social innovation must be understood as a process that transforms social relations and in doing so, transforms life opportunities and empowers individuals and communities. In this regard, this approach explores power relations to explain and to tackle exclusion dynamics; it has been specially fruitful in the analysis of the involvement of citizens in urban and neighbourhood regeneration projects (F. Moulaert et al., 2007; Frank Moulaert, Mehmood, MacCallum, & Leubolt, 2017).

A key question is to what extent these initiatives are able to be autonomous from public administration, to promote the strengthening of communities and to generate new institutional architectures that would promote and reinforce social as well as citizen rights (Martínez Moreno et al. 2019). Focusing in the latter question, Pradel et al. (2013) have proposed to analyse the impact of socially innovative initiatives in governance focusing on three elements: a) the impact on how

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policy problems are defined, b) the distribution of decision-making power in the implementation of policies and c) the implementation of policies and the generation of new policies and programs themselves. In terms of urban regeneration, this means the conceptualisation of new solutions for deprived urban areas, the involvement of neighbours in the process and the development of specific programs.

The perspective of policy instruments can be useful to analyse the impact of citizens' initiatives on governance. Following Lascoumes and Le Galès (2007, 5) a policy instrument can be understood as 'a device both technical and social that organises specific social relations between the state and those it is addressed to, according to the representations and meanings it carries'. For these authors, policy instruments are institutions that frame problems and their solutions, and as such are a form of power; they structure public policy and modes of governance according to their own logic (Le Galès 2010). These policy instruments may be more traditional (for instance, the enforcement of laws or of fiscal instruments), or more innovative, based on the organisation of kinds of political relations other than command and control.

Applying this perspective, we aim to analyse how old and new policy instruments are being used to generate new relations between citizens and government in Barcelona. Many southern European cities have developed new policy instruments aimed at increasing the involvement of citizens in decision-making and supporting bottom-up initiatives fighting for social justice. For instance, we can find new approaches in this regard in Italian cities such as Bologna (Bianchi 2018), Naples (Ragozino, Varriale, and Varriale 2018), or Milan (Rabbiosi 2016) as well as Barcelona, Madrid and many other Spanish cities (Díaz-Orueta, Lourés, and Pradel-Miquel 2018; Pradel Miquel and García Cabeza 2018).

The analysis shows how through new and existing policy instruments, new arrangements for bottom-linked governance are put in practice. Bottom-linked governance combines mechanisms for

participation with dissent and conflict. Citizens may be able to collaborate with government but at the same time can confront and oppose it, making possible a combination of top-down administrative approaches and bottom-up initiatives (Eizaguirre et al. 2012).

The imposition of austerity in southern European cities and the emergence of anti-austerity movements

The impact of the Great Recession and the uneven imposition of austerity measures have been key factors in the transformation of urban governance in southern European cities. Both elements have led to changing conditions in terms of competences and resources, as well as the emergence of new political, economic and social actors. We can find differences between countries and cities in this regard. Retrenchment was more severe in Greece and Portugal, which had the weakest welfare states and suffered the severest bailout deals (Negri and Saraceno 2018), whereas Italy and Spain have had more room for manoeuvre. In Spain, the national government has increased control of spending from regional and local administrative levels. In first place, mechanisms for control of debt have been imposed following a change in the Spanish Constitution imposed in 2011 by two main national parties, Partido Popular (PP) and Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE). This change ensures the payment of debt over social spending at any administrative level, making the limitation of spending and the payment of debt according to EU standards constitutionally binding.

Secondly, the central government has reduced the resources available for regional and local governments and has strengthened control over their economic strategies. As welfare state is strongly decentralised, regional governments have been forced to apply cuts in healthcare, public education and social policies, such as minimum income grants for people at risk of poverty as the central government controls regional and local debt. Besides, the funding capacity of Spanish cities has been strongly affected by the end of the speculative bubble on the housing sector. Historically, these cities tended to rely on land development as a strategy to foster economic activity and to obtain funds, which are then reinvested through public policies in the provision of infrastructure and forms

of local welfare (Pradel Miquel and García Cabeza 2018). With the economic crisis, this source of revenue abruptly stopped, local administrations were plunged into debt, especially those most dependent on land development as a source of income. Large cities with more diversified economies have had more possibilities to obtain funds but many of their urban renewal projects were paralysed or postponed because of the fall in the value and future profitability of land.

The development of new policy approaches at the local level has other limitations beyond competences and resources. National strategies for economic recovery have affected the opportunities for cities in two ways: by prioritising some sectors and economic activities over others, and by transforming labour regulations. In Spain, as in Greece, successive governments have implemented new housing taxation systems and incentives for investment that have given the sector a new impetus (Maloutas 2014) but have also brought new problems in terms of access to housing and speculative bubbles, especially in cities more global cities such as Barcelona. Besides, in order to reduce debt, national, regional and local governments have privatised land and infrastructures, creating opportunities for global investors. The impact of this privatisation has been uneven and has been noted at different scales. In Spain, Madrid's local conservative government privatised the social housing stock, which was acquired by investment funds (Díaz-Orueta, Lourés, and Pradel-Miquel 2018). For its part, the Catalan government sold most of its properties, negotiating rents for them with the new private owners, and in the healthcare system intensified the role of private actors.

These pressures have been contested by anti-austerity movements, which advocate the strengthening of citizenship rights to counter the rule of the banks and the loss of sovereignty. These anti-austerity movements promoted local solidarity practices and initiatives to tackle the effects of inequality and exclusion in multiple fields such as housing, education and health (García 2018). In Greece these practices were based on self-organisation; most of them rejected negotiations with local or any other level of government, and also refused to participate in top-down policies (Vaiou

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and Kalandides 2016). In Spain, by contrast, these groups were keener to collaborate with local governments even though many of them were anxious to avoid co-option and the loss of autonomy to the state.

All this brought in a gradual process of formalisation and negotiation that has generated new forms of collaboration between civil society and public administration[2]. The emergence of local anti-austerity political organizations and governments in southern European cities can be better understood if we analyse them not only as a response to the deployment of austerity urbanism but also as the reaction of citizens trying to strengthen local welfare systems in a context of austerity imposed from above. For this reason, the degree of success and consolidation of these political movements in different cities, as well as their continuity over time, varies notably from place to place.

The case of Barcelona: new actors and new approaches to regeneration

The economic and urban transformation of Barcelona in the last forty years has been widely analysed in urban studies, focusing on the role of urban regeneration (Monclús 2003; Arbaci and Tapada-Berteli 2012) and the governance model of the city and its transformation (Blackeley 2005; Degen and García 2012; García 2008; Blanco, Bonet, and Walliser 2011; Blanco 2015; Casellas 2006). The 'Barcelona model' for urban transformation gave a central role to urban regeneration initiatives, even though they changed in scope and aim through time. The democratic city council must face the urban and social problems linked to the rapid and unregulated growth of the city during the sixties and seventies. During the first half of the eighties, this was tackled mainly through

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[2] Some initiatives rejected to find agreements with the local administration, relying on their own capacity of organisation and to obtain resources, but they have been a minority (Pradel Miquel and García Cabeza 2018).

small urban regeneration initiatives at neighbourhood scale (Capel 2007) in which neighbours could participate. Apart from formal participation in decision-making processes, citizens could participate in the definition of these public spaces through their daily use of the space and informal negotiation (Degen 2008). Programs for urban regeneration were based to a large extent on rebuilding part of the urban environment, creating public space and public facilities, as well as carrying cultural policies and other forms of redistribution. Even though the participation of neighbours in these processes was foreseen, direct management of facilities or involvement in the process of regeneration played a secondary role, and it diminished through time.

The selection of Barcelona as the host city of the Olympic games in 1992 meant an upscaling of regeneration projects, which started to be planned at city and metropolitan scales. From 1986 onwards, the city started public-led development of large infrastructures for the city: road rings, improvement of streets, more public transport, the reuse of the waterfront for leisure activities or the development of new cultural facilities, amongst others (Capel 2007). These larger projects brought also the inclusion of private actors in urban regeneration even though there was a strong public leadership. Citizens' participation lost relevance in comparison to the previous period.

Large urban regeneration projects continued being central during the nineties and the first decade of the 21st century. The objective was to transform the industrial east side of the city into a knowledge-intensive hub for activities, and to complete the development of the seafront. Nevertheless, the context of economic crisis and high debt of the city gave more power to private actors in decision-making. The renewal project for the East side was based on a new planning scheme, the 22@ plan, which allowed the construction of taller buildings in exchange for the development of office space restricted to knowledge-intensive companies (Martí-Costa and Pradel 2012). Besides, a new great event conceived by the city itself, *Forum de les cultures*, was planned for 2004, with the objective of attracting investments and promoting the redevelopment of the area (Majoor 2008).

In contrast to the Olympic project, these urban regeneration initiatives found strong opposition from neighbours, civil society groups and social movements. Since the 1990s the city council had taken on a more entrepreneurial approach, which weakened the role of citizens in governance. Participation mechanisms continued to exist, but they lost part of their decision-making capacity in favour of efficiency. (García 2008). As a result, by the beginning of the 21st century, the relation of city administration with citizens' groups and social movements had deteriorated and there was no clear consensus on the future developments of the city. This weakened the local government, led by the socialist party which had been ruling the city since 1979 with support of minor leftist parties.

Elsewhere in southern Europe the crisis and the imposition of austerity has enabled certain convergence of citizens' demands around a new citizenship agenda demanding greater participation in political life, transparency and control of corruption (García 2018). Youth movements had a relevant role in the organisation of anti-austerity movements. One of the leading organisations in Spain was *Juventud sin futuro* (youth without future), showing that previous conditions of precariousness and difficulties to access to housing were at the baseline of protests on the imposition of austerity. In Barcelona this translated into a growing criticism with the socialist party. Corruption, lack of transparency and not attending properly citizens' demands were key criticisms on the local level. The fact that the socialist party approved constitutional reforms to ensure the payment of debt also weakened the position of the ruling party.

As a result, the municipal elections in May 2011 meant a loss of electoral support for the PSC, and the victory of a conservative block formed by Catalan nationalists and the Spanish conservative party (Partido Popular, or PP). The new conservative government announced as many as ten strategic projects, including the development of a new neighbourhood in the harbour and the connection of the city with the mountains through the creation of 16 entry points to Collserola, a natural park. Nevertheless, none of these projects were executed and only small-scale interventions

were carried out in neighbourhoods. As mentioned above, the economic crisis severely hampered policies for local economic development, and large-scale urban renewal projects were abandoned or postponed in the name of austerity.

Small and large projects for regeneration also met with opposition from residents and social movements, who called for redistributive policies, transparency, and active involvement in decision-making processes. Inspired by the *indignados* movement, grassroots initiatives emerged in the city aiming to tackle social exclusion and to strengthen local relations and community. In some cases, these projects were based on the social and solidarity economy in the form of the creation of cooperatives and collective forms of organisation, the organisation of exchange or social markets, the development of alternative currencies, and alternative social centres based on self-management (Cano Hila & Pradel-Miquel, 2018)[3].

The development of these initiatives had an impact in neighbourhoods, reinvigorating social life and providing new services. At the same time, the strengthened communities were in a better position to negotiate with the city council and demand action, combining both formal and informal collaboration (Pradel Miquel and García Cabeza 2018). Thus, these practices can be considered as forms of 'soft', bottom-up regeneration initiatives.

The strength of this movement is reflected in the results of the municipal elections in 2015, when a new political coalition formed by activists from social movements and leftist parties under Ada Colau, won the local elections and took charge in the city council. This new platform, *Barcelona en*

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[3] Since 2011 seven self-managed social centres in traditionally working-class neighbourhoods have been created: Can Batlló (Sants), Ateneu L'Harmonia (Sant Andreu), Ateneu la Flor de Maig (Poblenou), Ateneu la Base (Poblesec), Ateneu la Bòbila (Porta, Nou Barris), Ateneu L'engranatge (La Marina del Port).

Comú, based its program on 'bring back the city to its inhabitants' promising greater transparency and opening decision-making processes to citizens.

Once in power, *Barcelona en Comú* foresaw strengthening participation and inclusive approaches to economic development[4]. It proposed a new citizenship agenda, bolstering citizenship rights and involving civil society in decision-making (Eizaguirre, Pradel-Miquel, and García 2017). New large urban interventions were left aside in favour of neighbourhood interventions and to finish the existing large projects. The most salient example of this approach is the Neighbourhood plan, an emergency plan for regeneration of poor neighbourhoods which includes measures in the fields of education, economic development, healthcare, housing and sustainability[5].

The following sections analyse how citizens' initiatives for urban regeneration and local administration have developed forms of collaboration. More specifically, I analyse two specific case studies in which neighbours are part of the process of regeneration and new tools are developed to integrate different actions into an economic and social plan. The first case is the economic development plan for Barceloneta neighbourhood, and the second one the participative process around the 22@ project. In each case study, reports and policy documents produced by the projects were analysed. In the case of *Barceloneta Proa a la Mar*, in addition to the study of the documents, two interviews were carried out with technical staff involved in the project. In the case of *Repensem*

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[4] Nevertheless, the victory was flawed by strong fragmentation of the political scene and the lack of a sufficient majority, which made difficult to establish a stable coalition and to develop key projects.

[5] https://pladebarris.barcelona/es/%C3%A1mbitos-de-actuaci%C3%B3n seen on 4th January 2020.

el 22@, the recordings of sessions and minutes of the meetings (both available from the project's

website) were used[6].

Integrating innovative initiatives in existing schemes: the case of Barceloneta

During the crisis, the neighbourhood of Barceloneta, in the old city centre, set in motion a

local development plan based largely on a bottom-up initiative. The case is an example of the use of

preexisting instruments to support bottom-up initiatives that can foster bottom-linked governance.

Part of the old city, Barceloneta was built in the eighteenth century and was originally a fishermen's

neighbourhood. A century later, industrialisation had turned it into a working-class area, hosting

large factories and a growing population. The economic and social transformation of the city after

the Olympic Games made the whole of the old town, including Barceloneta, a magnet for

immigrants; and today the foreign population of the neighbourhood doubles that of Barcelona as a

whole (34 % versus 17.8%). Barceloneta still has a strong working-class identity and its inhabitants

have seen their living conditions deteriorate, with rising poverty and unemployment and falling

family incomes during the crisis[7]. This process has run parallel to the ongoing transformation of the

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[6] The interviews for the *Barceloneta Proa a la Mar* were conducted in the framework of the national research project

INNOSOGO. The documental analysis included the strategic plan *Barceloneta Proa a la Mar* and the activity reports of

the initiative, available in the following link: http://placomunitaribarceloneta.org/transparencia/. The information used

for the analysis of the *Repensem 22@* case study is available in the following link:

https://www.decidim.barcelona/processes/Repensem22a

[7]According to data from the Statistics Department of the City Council for 2015, Standarized Houshold in-
come in Barceloneta was 75 (where 100 is the average in Barcelona). Data on foreign population from
the same source is for 2016.

local economy, increasingly based on tourism[8]. The perception in the neighbourhood is that locals are being evicted, both physically and symbolically.

In this context, in 2012 a group of residents launched the project "*Taula per l'Ocupació de la Barceloneta*", consisting in a group of volunteers collecting CVs from unemployed people in the neighbourhood and visiting local businesses to encourage them to apply the criterion of proximity when hiring new staff. The measure was a success, but two problems quickly emerged: most of the contracts were short-term, and the association's activities were carried out by volunteers. In order to become sustainable and to obtain some professional support, the project acquired funds and technical backing from an existing policy instrument which had been used by the city council since the nineteen nineties: the Community Plans, which promote participatory processes in the implementation of local development plans. The residents' project was integrated into the Plan, giving rise to the PIOL (*Punt d'informació i Orientació Laboral*, or Employment Information and Guidance f Centre), in which the work of the residents was complemented by city council technical staff. The action of the initiative was reinforced through this mechanism but its sustainability became strongly dependent on the city council (Cano Hila and Pradel-Miquel 2018).

To confront the second problem, that is, the poor quality of contracts, members of the project launched an ambitious proposal that culminated in a local employment agreement involving the local authorities, some businesses, and a large number of residents. Between 2013 and 2015 a participative process was introduced, which led to the employment agreement *Barceloneta Proa a la Mar* (literally *Barceloneta, prow to the sea*) 2015-2020. The main objective of the agreement is

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[8] Tourism accounted for 9.5% of the city's GDP in 2008, with a direct impact on a wide array of services (*Gabinet d'estudis econòmics* 2011). While other activities have declined, tourism has continued to grow during the crisis.

to make the local economy more dynamic, to improve residents' employment prospects, and to improve academic results in schools. A second aim of the agreement is to develop an economic model based on the social and solidarity economy and to strengthen the sense of community. As a general strategy, the agreement aims to reconnect the economy of the neighbourhood with the sea. Thus, apart from pursuing the traditional aims of employment schemes, the pact fosters training and supports collective entrepreneurship linked to the social and solidarity economy.

Nevertheless, the local government budget for this promising strategy is limited and is devoted mainly to paying the salaries of the technical staff involved. For this reason, the plan promotes activities based on the solidarity economy in order to obtain funds and to be self-sustainable. The first of these activities is a beach bar managed by residents' groups, which is based on the solidarity economy. The bar has created three stable jobs and is a mechanism for entry into the labour market, generating 10 temporary contracts per year in order to offer training to unemployed people in the neighbourhood. At the same time, it contributes to the financial sustainability of the overall project, making it less reliant on public funds and thus more resilient to any changes in the political leanings of the local government.

Barceloneta Proa a la Mar is an example of bottom-linked initiative in which the administration is able to support an innovative project created by neighbourhood residents while allowing the residents (represented both individually and by local associations) to be at the centre of the process (Cano Hila and Pradel-Miquel 2018). This approach has allowed the project to find technical resources without any impositions from above regarding the plan's contents, while at the same maintaining a space for discussion and negotiation. Thus, the case of Barceloneta shows how a bottom-up initiative can be integrated into an existing policy instrument (the Community Plan) in order to seek resources and support and to reframe relations between neighbourhood actors and the city authorities.

Reframing a large urban renewal projects through a participative process: rethinking the 22@

The second case analysed in this article shows how new policy instruments launched by local government can be used to integrate citizens' projects and demands. The case study focus on the reframing of the 22@district project, the largest urban renewal project in the city which started in 2000 but remains unfinished. As noted above, when the crisis broke in 2008, the future of 22@ district project was already under discussion; from the very beginning, the development of the plan had met opposition of the residents, who campaigned for greater social investment in the area more than its physical transformation. After negotiations and pressures from neighbourhood associations the city council included social measures in the plan, such as the development of facilities (schools, libraries, etc.) and social housing, but these measures were not introduced at the same pace as the private urban development. The creation of an autonomous agency to attract companies at around the same time helped the economic activity to grow, but the agency was not as successful as the city council had hoped (Dot Jutgla, Casellas, and Pallares-Barbera 2010).

In 2007 the new socialist mayor Jordi Hereu lost interest in the project. With the victory of the conservative government in 2011, the autonomous agency developing the area, the *Societat 22@*, was dissolved. The economic crisis stopped urban development, and part of the 22@ area was left as it was; many of the planned social facilities were abandoned. At the time of writing, in 2019, only 25% of the 22@ plan has been fully developed and another 25% is scheduled to be built in the coming years. Of the rest, 22% of the actions proposed in the plan are pending further negotiations and management, and 28% have been withdrawn[9].

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[9]https://www.elperiodico.cat/ca/barcelona/20181119/pacte-mes-vivenda-22-rova-7155718 consulted 3 December 2018.

Nevertheless, the arrival of companies and the growth of added-value services meant that the neighbourhood proved resilient to the economic downturn, and the transformation received renewed support. Furthermore, the demise of the 22@ project and the growing uncertainty created new opportunities for a broader range of economic activities, as small firms in the creative economy such as artists' workshops and art galleries move into the unreformed factories now available for rent (Zarlenga, Rius Uldemollins, and Rodríguez Morató 2013; Zarlenga 2013).

With the rise of the *indignados* movement, the neighbourhood saw the emergence of social projects linked to soft urban regeneration schemes, including the transformation of vacant lots into public spaces, the organisation of participatory processes for urban regeneration in some of the streets in the area, and the involvement of residents in the management of social centres. One of these projects was a bottom-up plan for the urban regeneration of c/ Pere IV, a long street that once connected the industrial area of Barcelona with Mataró, another important industrial city. Like the rest of the area, the road had been in decay since the 1980s, having lost its factories and its social spaces. The urban regeneration under the 22@ plan largely ignored this street, and some residents interpreted this as a form of disrespect to the neighbourhood's industrial past[10].

As the 22@ plan came to a halt, the residents grew more concerned about the degradation of the industrial areas in the neighbourhood and called for a complete urban reform, but from a different perspective. Instead of demanding action from the local government, some residents decided to develop their own proposal for urban regeneration in which they themselves took on a central role in the decision-making, and including their own economic and social initiatives. The platform '*Eix*

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[10]According the 22@ plan, the street was to be cut in two by a park (central park of Poblenou). The residents saw this decision as symptomatic of the disrespect for the past of the whole 22@ project.

Pere IV' (Pere IV Axis) was set up in 2014 with the objective of 'promoting the social, cultural and economic reactivation of c/ Pere IV'[11]. One of the main features of the project is the creation of an alternative economic and social model as a counterbalance the 22@ model based on large companies and competitiveness. For that reason, the platform promotes the social and solidarity economy and community-based activities, and includes them as central elements of the process of urban regeneration. The participatory process involved around 1500 people and generated 20 proposals for the urban regeneration of the area, most of them modifying the old 22@ plan in order to include the solidarity economy, social housing, and the development of community-based centres and public spaces.

The city council has supported the initiative in a number of ways. First, it has designed local economic development policies to foster the social and solidarity economy in collaboration with the *Eix Pere IV* platform. For instance, the programme *Enforteix* (Strengthen) was funded by the city council in cooperation with the city's economic development agency (*Barcelona Activa*) to help the creation of cooperatives and new economic activities. The programme was developed by a cooperative contracted by the city council together with the *Eix Pere IV* platform. Other examples are the leasing of public-owned spaces to the platform for the development of social activities and new initiatives, such as a social market or a co-working area for cooperatives and companies in the solidarity economy.

Secondly, in 2018 the council launched a broad participatory process to decide on the future of the 22@ plan. As mentioned, the original renewal plan is far from complete and parts of it are considered unfeasible, but the council wanted to revive the project in order to complete the urban

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[11] Eix Pere IV website, consulted on November 28 2018 https://eixpereiv.org/la-taula/

regeneration of this former industrial area. Residents and residents' groups were encouraged to take part in the decisions regarding the future of the area through a participatory process, a policy instrument based on constructing the legitimacy of decision-making on the ground. This process was partially based on a digital platform *'Decidim Barcelona'*, which enables residents to submit proposals and to participate in decision-making through the internet. The use of this platform, which allows the organisation of surveys, is combined with ordinary open meetings and ethnographic fieldwork in the neighbourhood to detect social needs and demands.

Through these mechanisms, the process included the main economic actors and companies already established in the 22@ area, grouped in the association 22@network and the creative association Poblenou Urban District[12], but also residents and associations such as the *Eix Pere IV* platform which saw the process as an opportunity to make their demands heard. The process included a diagnosis of citizens' needs and the existing risks for social exclusion, as well as the vision of a diverse and socially vibrant neighbourhood. Through it, the *Eix Pere IV* and many other neighbourhood associations were able to include most of their demands in the strategic plan for the reframing of the 22@ project. An agreement between the residents, economic actors and the city council was reached in November 2018, called the *Pact towards a Poblenou neighbourhood with a more inclusive 22@*. Among the signatories were Barcelona city council, the entrepreneurs' associations 22@Network and Poblenou Urban District, the federation of neighbourhood

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[12]Poblenou Urban District emerged in 2012 as a network of creative companies in the neighbourhood, comprising designers, artists, small shops, art galleries and some hotels and restaurants. In contrast to the 22@ network, which was promoted by the city council, it was created by the companies themselves. www.poblenouurbandistrict.com consulted on 3 December 2018.

associations of Barcelona (FAVB), the *Eix Pere IV* platform, and the three universities with faculties in the area[13].

As its objective is to transform the 22@ and to make it more inclusive, the pact responds to most of the residents' concerns. Firstly, it modifies the 22@ plan to allow more local commercial activity and a greater role for the social and solidarity economy. Secondly, c/ Pere IV will be re-urbanised and re-opened, and the industrial heritage will be preserved. Thirdly, the housing stock will be expanded in order to increase the population and revitalise the life of the neighbourhood, and more social housing is also planned. At the same time, the 22@ area will continue to be developed as an urban laboratory for knowledge-intensive companies and will be promoted as an innovation district. Innovation in housing and sustainable mobility will be especially promoted, and some manufacturing activities already in operation will continue.

In conclusion, the support for residents' proposals and the launch of a large participatory process has made possible an integrated plan for urban regeneration that combines a neighbourhood perspective with an economic strategy at citywide scale, including community-based initiatives. Even though the instruments for participation are not new, the innovation resides in their intensive use to develop a strategic plan that combines local economic development and social inclusion. In terms of policy instruments, this means using instruments based on agreements and communication with the residents and grassroots actors at neighbourhood level.

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[13] The list is completed by a public-private partnership for the metropolitan strategic planning of Barcelona, a university foundation, and a consortium of city councils of the eastern side of the metropolitan area. Small municipalities near Poblenou are affected by the dynamics of 22@, and so were included in the process.

Nevertheless, the results of the *repensem 22@* process must be approved by a majority in the city council, and the modification of the planning schemes must be negotiated with the Catalan government. This makes the results of the process much more difficult to apply, as many political parties have stressed their aim to modify the plan. Besides, private actors consider the plan to be excessively local and harmful for the competitiveness of the city in the global arena. Thus, the plan does not substitute existing governance mechanisms, but overlaps with them.

Table 1 summarises the two cases presented, showing the main features of the initiatives promoting urban regeneration practices, the tools used, and the relation between the project and the local government. As can be seen, both cases show forms of collaboration that sustain grassroots initiatives and give them a say in the transformation of the neighbourhood, although they differ in so far as in Barceloneta this collaboration takes place through already existing instruments while *Repensem 22@* involves a new process and the creation of new instruments. The collaboration is based through the strengthening of instruments for consultation and participation but directed mainly at residents and civil society groups, thus allowing for the development of strategic plans for urban regeneration with an inclusive perspective. Nevertheless, it should be stressed that these plans are not binding; to a large extent, they depend on the willingness of the local government and the capacity of civil society to engage with them.

Table 1 Summary of the two case studies

	Barceloneta	*Repensem 22@*
Initiatives	Platform for employment: to foster economic development and employment in the	Pere IV Platform: to revitalise deprived areas of the neighbourhood through

	neighbourhood	solidarity economy and strengthening the sense of community
Tools	Participatory process within an existing instrument: community plans	Participatory process through a new instrument
Collaboration between public administration and the initiative	Support for grassroots initiative activities. The initiative finds a framework to develop a participatory process and a strategic plan	Support for grassroots initiative; the initiative is included by the city council in broad participatory process.
Outcome	Employment Pact Barceloneta proa a la Mar	Pact for a Poblenou with a more inclusive 22@

Source: Compiled by author

Conclusions

This article has focused on the relations between civil society groups promoting initiatives for regeneration and local administration taking into consideration an institutional perspective. The analysis of case studies in Barcelona shows in first place that citizens' initiatives from below can play a role in strengthening social citizenship and communities, beyond being functional to austerity urbanism. The role that these initiatives play in governance depend on the previous trajectory of the city in terms of economic growth, involvement of civil society and citizens in governance and correlation of forces between local actors. In the case of Barcelona, the trajectory of citizens'

participation in governance, which weakened with the economic transformation of the city since the nineties, is key to understand the emergence of bottom-up initiatives and claims for more social justice with the city. In contrast to other cities such as Madrid, the existence of a certain tradition and policy instruments for participation paved the way for new forms of collaboration bringing bottom-linked governance.

The two case studies analysed in this article show that both local administration and civil society have promoted new policy-instruments based on agreements with citizens which give a source of legitimacy that goes beyond representative democracy. These new policy instruments differ from already existing governance mechanisms based on participation in that they seek to empower ordinary citizens and neighbours in decision-making and to prioritise them over economic actors and private interests. A key feature of these instruments is that they are co-produced from below. Social initiatives seek autonomy, for instance by putting in motion self-organised participatory processes, and then call on government to support the results and to integrate them in broader schemes. The case studies show how in Barcelona both the local government and social initiatives are already implementing existing policy instruments based on agreements (for instance *plans comunitaris, or Community Plans*) to integrate socially innovative practices and to put in motion bottom-linked approaches to urban regeneration.

These instruments, most of them created during the 1980s and 1990s, have seen a reinvigoration from below, as social movements have demanded a more central role in processes of urban regeneration. This is combined with the creation of new policy instruments, such as the platform *Decidim Barcelona*, and the launch of participatory processes and negotiation mechanisms between the actors involved.

The two case studies analysed show that this has given rise to a new wave of more socially inclusive strategic planning, which takes into consideration individuals and groups that in the past

were excluded from urban regeneration processes. In this strategic planning, the community and the neighbourhood take on central roles compared with the previous strategic planning launched during the 1980s and based on social dialogue. In terms of contents, the two case studies show that the role of the solidarity economy in the strategies of social initiatives is salient in two different ways. In the first place, it achieves a level of autonomy from the local authorities through an economic activity that is not governed by market competitiveness alone. Secondly, the solidarity economy offers an alternative way forward for local economic development and allows the inclusion of economic aspects in strategies for regeneration based on collective entrepreneurship and cooperation. Thus, the solidarity economy is included in plans and strategies for urban regeneration in parallel to more traditional approaches that prioritise market competitiveness.

Nevertheless, the legitimacy of the strategic plans for urban regeneration made possible by these policy instruments is debated by the political parties currently in the opposition, who stress the relevance of traditional representative legitimacy in decision-making. In this regard, the political fragmentation in the city council of Barcelona and the complex political scenario during the period 2015-2019 has made it difficult to consolidate these new instruments as a governance model, a situation that has given rise to experimentation both from below (social movements and civil society) and from above (local government). This model for the joint production of policies being explored during the 2015-2019 mandate is part of a wider project that includes the development of classic policy instruments based on taxation and new regulations, for instance designed to protect the right to housing and to avoid the perverse consequences of economic development based on the tourism and knowledge-intensive sectors. In this regard, the idea is to reinforce local welfare through the empowerment of civil society actors, through the development of alternative responses in terms of economic development, and by increasing social spending. The results of the elections in May 2019, when the mayor Ada Colau was re-elected through a pact with the Socialist party, may favour the institutionalisation of policy instruments and the consolidation of a stronger role of

the civil society and social movements in policy-making. Nevertheless, it remains to be seen how far this role of civil society can be combined with economic growth patterns and the pressure of private interests and global companies arriving in the city. Similarly, the compatibility of this approach with current and future policy on the climate crisis is another issue that needs to be studied in future research.

Acknowledgments

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