

# BUILDING ALTERNATIVES TO THE CREATIVE TURN IN BARCELONA: THE CASE OF THE SOCIO-CULTURAL CENTRE CAN BATLLÓ

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## INTRODUCTION

The role of culture and creativity (Florida, 2002a, 2002b, 2005a, 2005b; Landry & Bianchini, 1995) in post-Fordist cities has been critically assessed at length; with regards to economic growth and branding strategies (d'Ovidio, 2016; Scott, 2010, 2014; Vicari Haddock, 2010) and urban remake and changes in the socio-spatial dimension of cities (Bianchini, 1993; Evans & Shaw, 2004; Harvey, 2001b; Pratt, 2010; García, 2004a; Zukin, 1989, 1995; Peck, 2005; Zukin & Braslow, 2011). Authors have criticized the rhetoric about the efficacy of culture to tackle social problems (Belfiore, 2002; Connolly, 2013; Pratt, 2010), the creative city's power to shape artistic practices (McLean, 2014), as well as the contradictory inclusion of local community and artists in the cultural development of cities (Comunian, 2011; Duxbury & Jeannotte, 2011; García, 2004b; Kagan & Hahn, 2011; Majoor, 2011; Novy & Colomb, 2013; Rius & Sánchez Belando, 2015). Scholars have also underscored the normative character, the contextual disembeddedness and the fuzziness of the notion of creativity within Florida's thesis, that underlies creative city policies (Borén & Young, 2013; d'Ovidio, 2016; Kirchberg & Kagan, 2013; Markusen, 2006; Pratt, 2010, 2011)

Nevertheless, the study of bottom-up experiences that broaden this meaning of creativity is an incipient area of research (D'Ovidio & Pradel, 2013; García et al., 2015; Kagan & Hahn, 2011; Miles, 2013; Novy & Colomb, 2013; Tremblay & Pilati, 2013; Moulaert, 2010; André et al., 2009). Thus, we focus here on the strategies that organised civil society implement in order to confront and create alternatives to the entrepreneurial dynamics that underpin the so-called creative city model. In this paper, we study the nature of local Socially Innovative Initiatives (SInI) developed in the socio-cultural field and their capacity to counterbalance and overcome the tendency towards market rationale in urban cultural affairs, which have accelerated in the context of welfare state cutbacks since 2008. We examine this problem through a significant case study: the community-managed socio-cultural centre Can Batlló (CB). We can consider CB as an emblematic case since it is leading the debate around community-driven SInI (Moulaert, 2010, p. 4 - 15) and becoming a model for social organisations, as well as for policy makers in and beyond Barcelona. By analysing this case we propose to explore how and to what extent SInI such as CB are contributing to build alternatives to the creative city policies, in particular, regarding innovation in governance and decision-making.

Like in other western cities, since the 80s, cultural policies in Barcelona have experienced a change in balance between social, political and economic concerns, as policy-makers have stressed the value of culture in the economic and physical regeneration of cities (Bianchini, 1993: 1, 9-15). In Barcelona, this shift took place alongside the urban metamorphosis and local development project initiated in 1979 (Balibrea, 2001; Degen & García, 2012; McNeill, 1999; Rodríguez Morató, 2008). This turn to market rationality in the understanding of culture has been condemned by many grassroots organizations and social movements due to three main questions (Andreu, 2014; Balibrea, 2001; Degen & García, 2012; Majoor, 2011; Marrero Guillamón, 2008; Marti-Costa & Cruz y Gallach, 2010; Sánchez Belando et al., 2012): Firstly, the exclusion of local communities from decision making on urban cultural affairs<sup>1</sup>; secondly, the

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<sup>1</sup> Since the '90s, the main features of the cultural democracy paradigm (Zimmer & Toepler, 1996)(i.e. social participation and community management) have been displaced from City Council's concerns. The rise of outsourcing and the reconfiguration of decentralized socio-cultural facilities (in Barcelona Civic Centers) under the influence of creative policies, illustrates this shift (Sánchez Belando, 2015).

dominance of a reductionist vision of culture and creativity in the city and thirdly, the dynamics of commodification of urban space through culture.

The literature reviewed suggests that these questions can be identified in different contexts where creative city policies have been implemented. Therefore, counter actions that take the form of SI practices are taking place in Barcelona (García et al., 2015), as well as in other contexts. In different western cities social movements and the so called “creative class” are contesting creative policies (McLean, 2014; Novy & Colomb, 2013) and art activists are fostering alternative initiatives to the neoliberal articulation (Cossu & d'Ovidio, 2016) and the unsustainability of the creative city (Kirchberg & Kagan, 2016). These are reactions that connect with the claim for the right to the city (Lefebvre, [1968]1969).

### Framing Social innovation (SI)

Classical sociologists referred to inventions and innovations regarding social change and technological evolution<sup>2</sup>. However, since the '30s Schumpeter's thesis of innovation has achieved a hegemonic position in the academic and the policy-making field. The emphasis on the figure of an entrepreneur in the post-Fordist economic discourse is an example (Oosterlynck et al., 2013, p. 10). Even though Schumpeter's approach integrated a sociological vision to explain economic development (Hillier et al., 2009, p. 12), the focalization in the role of the entrepreneur as the central agent of economic development, represents a limit to the broadening of the role of entrepreneurs to other types of actors in the social, political and cultural spheres (Fontan et al., 2013, p. 19).

Debate on innovation has been revitalized in the '70s with the contributions of Coleman (1970) and Chambon et al. (1982). Following Weber, Coleman, named inventions to new social forms or new uses of existing forms for new purposes (organizations as labour unions) that involved changes in social relations (Coleman, 1970, p. 163). Chambon et al. (1982) associate SI with social crisis contexts and distinguish between SI as a collective initiative addressed to a particular aim and SI as a form to take sides in a process of social change. They also define different aspects of SI. The first concerns SI as a locally bottom-up social initiative aimed to develop a non-standard solution to a social need. Second, SI involves social and power relations changes, whereby social participation is a key question. Third, SI is based on interdisciplinary practices and solidarity relations. Finally, SI implies a learning and empowerment process that leads to autonomy. These aspects are crucial to the economic livelihood, spread and continuity of SI and shape relations with state institutions (Chambon et al., 1982, p. 11-34).

Previous works (Drewe et al., 2008; Moulaert et al., 2010; Moulaert & Sekia, 2010; Andrew et al., 2010; Moulaert et al., 2013) identify different approaches on SI within contemporary social sciences. We summarize these in order to expose the stance we take regarding SI.

There is a strand of literature on SI inspired by the Schumpeterian notion of entrepreneur. Within this scope we find management and business administration studies which define SI as a means for business strategy, competitiveness and organizational efficiency, that involves changes in human and institutional dimensions or in social capital in the profit and the non-profit sector. The work of the “Stanford Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society” fits with this line as well as the “Business and Society Programme” of Aspen Institute which combines management with social and environmental concerns. Also the line developed by the Young Foundation that proclaims SI as a way to meet socially recognised needs (Mulgan et al., 2007) is in tune with this

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<sup>2</sup> For an historical evolution of SI see: Fontan et al., 2013; Godin, 2012; Moulaert et al., 2013.

entrepreneurial vision. Even though this contribution recognises social aspects of SI, because of its theoretic roots, an economic, individualistic and stripped of context perspective on SI prevails (Defourney & Nyssens, p. 42). Unlike the management approach, arts and creativity studies represent a broader perspective since they are not restricted to organizational and economics concerns (Moulaert, 2009). In this field, Mumford has defined SI as the genesis and implementation of new ideas about social interaction and social organization working towards meeting common goals (Mumford, 2002) by examining macro and micro innovations of social, economic and political order.

We can say that in the last 20 years the vision for SI has taken an institutionalist turn. Mainly researchers concerned with social economy (Andrew & Klein, 2010; Fontan et al., 2013, Klein et al., 2013; Moulaert & Ailenei, 2005) and urban planning (Moulaert et al., 2013) are involved due to this shift to a socio-historic, cultural and territorial embedded approach on SI. This approach has emerged as a multidisciplinary analytical tool that seeks to balance the influence of the economics (Andrew & Klein, 2010:15) and the mainstream discourse of the New Urban Policy agenda in the '90s in the SI thinking (Moulaert et al., 2007, p. 195). Influenced by the economic institutionalism of Karl Polanyi (Polanyi, [1944] 1957), the legacy of the regulation theory (Aglietta, [1976] 1979; Boyer, 1990; Jessop, 1990), and the seminal work of Chambon et al. (1982), this optic has developed a path-dependency and a non-market centered view of SI (Fontan et al., 2013; Moulaert et al., 2013). These lines led by Juan-Luis Klein (CRISES- Québec) and Frank Moulaert in SINGOCOM (2003-2005) and Katarsis (2006-2009) share research foci, such as social economy, social exclusion, local and community based development, and the role of civil society organizations in the governance and the provision of welfare services.

Within this approach, this paper understands SI as a socio-historic and territorial embedded process that involves three interlinked dimensions. Firstly, the content-production, which refers to the satisfaction of human needs that are not satisfied either by the market or the state. Secondly, the process dimension, which involves changes in social relations, especially with regards to governance, enabling the satisfaction of human needs but also increasing the level of social participation. Lastly, the empowerment dimension, which involves increasing socio-political potential and access to the resources needed to enhance rights to satisfy human needs and to facilitate participation (Moulaert et al., 2005, p. 1976). SI refers to changes in agendas, agency, social relations, and institutions mobilised from below that lead to social inclusion in various spheres of society and at different spatial scales (Moulaert et al., 2005, p. 1978; Moulaert et al., 2013, p. 2).

We are particularly concerned with two aspects of SI. First, is SI as a practice that seeks to counterbalance and foster alternatives to market-driven urban policies (in our case creative city policies) and, second, is SI as a process of democratization of governance structures (in our case the governance of the socio-cultural field through community-based management). Regarding this second aspect, we take as a main reference the work of Martinelli on the SI in the field of social services (Martinelli, 2013, p. 347-349). The author groups SI in according to different types of needs<sup>3</sup>: initiatives addressing basic material needs (employment, housing, social services), existential needs (recognition, self-realisation, citizenship), or the achievement of more democratic governance processes and structures (less authoritarian decision-making processes, less bureaucratic and standardised delivery of social services). Even though in CB all these needs converge in the initiative, as we will show that we consider CB to be especially relevant as

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<sup>3</sup> As Martinelli points out, this differentiation is difficult to maintain since needs are strongly interlinked, nowadays, more than ever, due to the retrenchment of welfare policies. Therefore, we use it as a tool to underscore the presence of these types of needs, but we develop the analysis considering it as mutually related.

an initiative aimed at governance democratization on two levels: the management model and the socio-cultural field.

### Methodology

The paper is based on the analysis of primary and secondary sources. We have collected data using various qualitative techniques. Between 2012 and 2014 we conducted in-depth interviews (30). The sample (determined through the snowball sampling method) includes policy makers, managers and politicians of the City Council (14), key actors from neighbors civic-associations, grassroots organisations in the socio-cultural field and members from CB (16). In the same period we carried out observations through regular visits to the centre, attending events and meetings organised by CB and by other grassroots organisations in the neighborhood. We have also analysed documentary sources such as reports, municipal budgets and regulations, and documents published by the CB and the local and national press.

The article is structured as follows: In the first section we situate the case in order to, firstly, make visible the importance of socio-historic and territorial factors in the emergence and in the nature of CB, and second, to outline the process that led to the emergence of CB in the context of social, economic and political changes linked to start of the crisis from 2008. In the second section, we organize the analysis following the multidimensional approach of SI explained above. Nevertheless, according to Martinelli (2013), we pay special attention to practices oriented to achieve more democratic relations of participation deepening within the governance of CB and the governance of the socio-cultural field, constricted under market-centered urban cultural affairs. Finally, we discuss the capacity of SInI to counterbalance this rationality by creating alternatives aimed at challenging and influencing local policy.

### CAN BATLLÓ AS A SOCIO-HISTORIC AND TERRITORIAL EMBEDDED PROCESS

Social, economic and political factors are involved on different levels in the emergence of SInI in Barcelona. In the introduction we see market rationality shift in urban cultural affairs -a local manifestation of a macro-level change- as one of these factors. In this section we outline the historical and territorial roots that shape the nature of the case and the socio-political process that led to the materialization of CB.

#### The legacy of a neighborhood's cooperative tradition

CB is an industrial textile complex built in 1879 and located in La Bordeta neighbourhood (Sants-Montjuic district<sup>4</sup>). In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, industrial activity in the area attracted a working class population that fostered social protection actions (Polanyi, 1957) in order to improve living conditions. Workers' organisations, mostly linked to anarchism, created associations, mutual aid organizations, and cooperatives that provided several services, and *Ateneos*<sup>5</sup>(Dalmau Torvà, Miró i Acedo, & Marín, 2010). This historical trajectory brought important political events to the neighborhood in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. During the transition to democracy this involved the re-establishment of trade unions and the re-emergence and consolidation of a network of grassroots organisations(Huertas et al., 1998)<sup>6</sup>. The social economy tradition in Sants is rooted in the cooperative movement that developed between the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century up until the fall of the Second Republic (1931-1939). In 1931, the Republic enacted the first law on cooperatives that

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<sup>4</sup> Districts are decentralized territorial and administrative units of Barcelona City Council.

<sup>5</sup> Ateneos were in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> the principal cultural and educational institutions managed by working class organisations, mostly linked to anarchism.

<sup>6</sup> In 1964, the trade union Comisiones Obreras (linked to the Communist Party – PCE) was founded in Sants. The anarcho-sindicalist CNT (National Labour Confederation) proscribed during Franco's dictatorship was re-established in 1976.

contributed to consolidating the sector. In this framework, diverse social and cultural services for cooperative workers were launched. Among others, the 'Communal Services' aimed to offer educational and artistic activities (Aymerich Cruells, 2008, p. 28, 116).

Despite the interruption to the expansion of the cooperative movement imposed by the dictatorship, Sants became a benchmark in the social economy field. In the last two decades, the development of several projects intended for spreading cooperativism in consumer and productive areas demonstrate this reality. The establishment in the neighborhood of technical, advisory, training, and financial services to support social economy projects are all well-known examples at the local and national level.<sup>7</sup>

### Setting the scene of the emergence of Can Batlló

Demands for CB date back to the period between the late 1970s and early 1980s when Barcelona was a hub of neighborhood actions demanding welfare policies<sup>8</sup>. Since the mid-1990s, urban social movements and social organisations have shifted the focus to actions aimed at confronting the commodification of urban space through culture. The actions of the squatting movement (Martinez López, 2001) and the boycott of the Universal Forum of Cultures in 2004 (Espai en Blanc, 2004) were in this line.

In Barcelona and other Spanish and European cities, since the crisis in 2008, social claims have focused in welfare cutbacks and commodification of diverse dimensions of welfare, such as housing. In 2011, the Spanish *Indignados* movement (15M)<sup>9</sup> broadened the range of demands and opened up a process of politicization of everyday life and the re-appropriation of public space (Castañeda, 2012). In this context, the nationalist conservative coalition *Convergència i Unió* (CiU) won local elections (May 2011) and the Catalan Socialist Party local left the City Council after 32 years in the local power.

Activists leading the 'CB is for the neighborhood' Platform, created in 2009, have been demanding to City Council, without success, that the industrial complex becomes for community use since 1976. This therefore means 35 years of campaigns and actions and, since 2009, negotiations with the main owner of CB<sup>10</sup>, an important real state enterprise (Gaudir Group).

In 1976, the General Metropolitan Plan<sup>11</sup> assigned part of the industrial complex in order to create public houses, facilities, and green areas (Plataforma CB, 2011). Between 1976 and 2008, CB was the subject of various failed private real estate projects. Firstly, because of a lawsuit (Cia, 2012) between the City Council and the property owner and, secondly, because the current crisis paralyzed private and public investment. In 2009, 'CB is for the neighborhood' launched the campaign 'Tic-Tac CB' that set 11<sup>th</sup> June 2011 as a deadline for the City Council to meet their demands. Otherwise, neighbours would have decided to squat the complex. Political elites have considered squatting as a risky issue in a pre-electoral context<sup>12</sup>.

Data<sup>13</sup> indicates that the social, economic, and political events that have taken place at different territorial levels (local, state, global) established the conditions for the materialization of CB. In the

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<sup>7</sup> Such as Aracooop (a Catalan public-private advisory services program), Coop 57 (an ethical financial services cooperative), Barri Cooperatiu (a project of documentation of cooperativism led by the Catalan Federation of Worker Cooperatives and a cooperative bookshop), Coopolis (a training and technical services project based in CB with the support of the City Council).

<sup>8</sup> Interviews in CB and FAVB. See also Andreu, 2010; Borja, 1977.

<sup>9</sup> Also known as the 15M Movement. The name emerged as Puerta del Sol (Madrid) and Plaça de Catalunya (Barcelona) were occupied at the end of the demonstrations that took place on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2011.

<sup>10</sup> The CB area covers 81,000 meters squared (Huertas et al., 1998) in a well-located part of Barcelona.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.numamb.cat/>

<sup>12</sup> Interviews in CB and CCS

<sup>13</sup> Secondary sources and interviews in CB and with managers and politicians of City Council.

local context, the political change in the City Council, the economic crisis, and the increase in mobilizations have represented a lack of power for local government and a time of empowerment for the Platform. The Catalan Socialist Party three weeks before leaving the local government, decided to meet the neighbors' demands. CB was opened on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2011.

In October 2011, the legal representatives of the Platform (from the La Bordeta Neighborhood Association and the Sants Social Centre) signed a provisional agreement (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2011a, 2011b) granting the use of a 1500-m<sup>2</sup> area<sup>14</sup>. Since then, the Platform has been meeting with the local government to continue the project's development and to negotiate new needs.

### Can Batlló in the governance of the socio-cultural field

Territorial decentralization in Barcelona was implemented in the political and management dimensions (Amorós, 1996). In this dual scheme, participation of social organizations is concerned with the execution of local policies and not with political decision-making in local governance (Blakeley, 2005). Therefore, governance of the socio-cultural field tends to be impermeable for civil society since participation mechanisms (non-binding) reproduces this restrictive perspective.

The entrepreneurial local shift alongside actions geared towards the creative city displaced socio-cultural policies from the City Council's priorities. Since 1992, the increase in management outsourcing and the uneven distribution of the cultural budget<sup>15</sup> reveal the marginality of decentralized socio-cultural policies. Furthermore, the local administration does not have a definitive agreement about the regulation on the specific features of social organisations in public bids.<sup>16</sup> In practice, this promotes an unbalanced map of management models<sup>17</sup> where the main actors in the governance of socio-cultural field are enterprises (Sánchez Belando, 2015).

Nevertheless, we found cases of public-civil society partnerships where social organizations have a meaningful role in decision-making. The centre of circus arts Ateneo Popular Nou Barris (AP9B) and the Cotxeres de Sants Civic Centre (CCCS) have demonstrated<sup>18</sup> a more balanced distribution of power between the administration and the social organisations involved, as well as a stronger commitment to the needs of the territorial context (Sánchez Belando, 2015). In these cases the socio-historical and territorial context are key factors to explain the durability and the capacity to interact with local administration. AP9B is an outcome of struggles for the provision of public goods and services in the late 1970s and CCCS has led to the resistance of social organisations against outsourcing in the early 1990s. Both are located in working class neighborhoods with a dense social organization network and a tradition of activism.

Although there are points in common between these Centres and CB regarding the processes that led them to public-civil society partnerships (the role of Neighborhood Movement and the articulation of the claim with a dense social organization network), we have observed that in the case of CB other elements shape the relations and agreements with local government as well as the nature and the role of the initiative in the governance of the socio-cultural field: the current

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<sup>14</sup> Interviews in CB

<sup>15</sup> According to local public cultural budgets from 1992 to 2000, expenditure on neighbourhood cultural promotion remained between 5.5 and 5.7. From 2008 to 2014 it decreased from 5 per cent to 1 per cent.

<sup>16</sup> In 2015 this question is under discussion. Interview with members of the Platform for Civic Management" (PGC) which has been demanding regulations addressing social organisations' involvement in public service supply since 2009.

<sup>17</sup> Between 1998 (38 Civic Centres) and 2014 (51 Civic Centres), outsourcing increased from 8 per cent to 63 per cent while public management decreased from 79 per cent to 21 per cent. In 2014 public-civil society partnership management represents 4 per cent (Institut de Cultura Barcelona, 2012).

<sup>18</sup> Interviews with members of grassroots organization "Secretariado de Asociaciones de Sants"; Civic Centre managers and public managers from the cultural administration of Barcelona (ICUB).

context of welfare retrenchment; the learning acquired from urban activism in recent years (the 15M); the social capital generated throughout a long trajectory of collective action (Diani, 2001) but also the knowledge (cultural capital in the sense of Bourdieu) of its leading members in different fields (arts, architecture, social economy, education, sociology), and the previous activist<sup>19</sup> experiences of its members.

These factors have provided favourable conditions for achieving the objectives of the Platform and for establishing a fluid and non-conflictive relationship during the negotiation of central issues with the City Council: firstly, the agreement to use the space (with the PSC leaving power); secondly, public support for basic maintenance and services and the autonomy to develop the project (with CiU in power). Indeed, the skills of the members in negotiating and planning the future of CB have favoured the agreement, but also the fact that City Council did not have economic resources<sup>20</sup> or any plan for CB. With the victory of CiU the relationship continues in the same vein since the claim for autonomy (translated into less economic commitment from the City Council), fits well with the coalition's conservative programme. The incorporation of actors as CB in the governance of the socio-cultural field introduces a new balance between social, market and state actors that call to think to what extent a laissez-faire approach on autonomy could lead to a deepening of the state neglect of the socio-cultural field.

### CAN BATLLÓ AS A MEANS TO SATISFY SOCIAL NEEDS, CHANGE SOCIAL RELATIONS, AND BOOST EMPOWERMENT

#### Satisfying needs

We explore this dimension focusing on the socio-cultural activities<sup>21</sup> of CB. Cultural practices are intended to cover different types of needs (material, existential and more democratic governance relations as a political need) in different levels of commitment. Since these needs are strongly interlinked in practices we have grouped activities according to the predominant need that seek to satisfy, even paying attention to other dimensions of need.

#### *Promoting alternative creativity and socio-cultural discourses and practices*

The first group encompasses activities mainly geared towards material needs. This category includes projects of training and employment (woodwork, electro-mechanic repair workshop) that provide internal and external repair and maintenance services of infrastructures and mobility means (bikes, wheelchairs, motorcycles). Based on mutual help and solidarity networks, these practices integrate welfare and social inclusion aspects and a vocation of environmental sustainability.

Although Barcelona has a large net of municipal libraries<sup>22</sup>, La Bordeta was excluded from this service. Because of this, the library was the first objective of neighbors, becoming the starting motor of CB and a key project to achieve and maintain community engagement. The Library, similar to others, organizes reading groups, workshops, book presentations, offers computers for public use, a children's zone and study spaces. Unlike others, it is the result of the debate of neighbors about context territorial needs and community wishes regarding services, library funds and use of the space. According to this, it has a particular interest in the field of collective memory (e.g. the creation of a fund dedicated to the Neighbors Movement and the history of the territory

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<sup>19</sup> In squatting, feminist, or anti-globalisation movements (interviews in CB).

<sup>20</sup> The City Council does not have a fixed annual budget for CB. Public economic support is flexible and depends on negotiations (interview with the politicians responsible for the District of Sants and with members of the CB).

<sup>21</sup> Data of activities were collected through observation and interviews in activity commissions. Another source is the database where we have compiled the activities published in CB's web between 2011 and 2013.

<sup>22</sup> <http://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/biblioteques/ca>

that complements the collection of the Social Movements Documentation Centre located in CB<sup>23</sup>) and space and furniture distribution allows sociability and intergenerational coexistence. Considering the tasks unfolded in the Library we can say that these go beyond material needs to satisfy self-realization, visibility and political needs.

Another project involved with material needs is *Arcadia* School (an education cooperative that will open in 2018). *Arcadia* is engaged with the achievement of a more democratic model in the educational field since it aims to develop a non-standard educational service (person-centered and participative) with existential needs (recognition of an educational option that neither the state nor the market is able to cover).

Creativity and artistic practices mainly attend to existential needs (self-realization, recognition and visibility of diversity dimensions) but are also widely involved with basic needs and political practices. Here we include the audio-visual lab, the spaces for performing arts, circus and musical creation, the visual arts, printing and serigraphy workshops. To a large extent creativity is practiced as a means to claim welfare needs (mainly housing policies), economic and political democratization or urban space issues. Thus, these creative labs and workshops contribute – producing contents, designing, printing, filming and performing - with collective action of several organizations and movements around these questions. This broad and inclusive use of creativity blurs the boundaries between production and consumption as well as the boundaries between professional and amateur artists.

Finally, we have found initiatives more clearly geared to political needs like governance democratization, equality relations in decision-making processes or the creation of less bureaucratic and standardized public goods and services. These practices are aimed at promoting debate, human interaction, collective organisation and fostering solidarity between social movements and organizations. These consist of performances, exhibitions, workshops, conferences, seminars, 'barter' markets, meetings, and popular celebrations and events to give economic support or visibility to other collective actors. Issues addressed in these activities are about grassroot organizations and movements, the social economy or the role of the community in public policies. The Green Zone (vegetable garden), the Intergenerational Meeting Point (bar, leisure, and meeting space), and the Conference Room (a multipurpose space) are the spaces to unfold this strand of the socio-cultural programme.

We can say that CB has become a provider of alternative or non-standard socio-cultural services and spaces of participation and sociability since it covers a gap in the satisfaction of needs that the City Council was unable to provide through the municipal socio-cultural facilities. The participatory process involved in the design of activities as well as the content included, suggests that culture operates as a social and daily practice as well as a dimension of social agency (Williams, 1981, 1992; Willis, 1990), and that creativity is more of a socially transformative process than the outcome of competitive relations and individual work (Borén & Young, 2013; André et al., 2009).

### Changing social relations

With respect to the case study, the process dimension involves changes in social and power relations at the level of the governance model, i.e. the organisational structure and decision-making processes in CB.

### *Governance model and decision-making*

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<sup>23</sup> Managed by a cooperative Bookshop of the neighborhood.



CB's governance model<sup>24</sup> is influenced by the cooperative tradition of the neighborhood and by organisational and decision-making practices from the social movements, especially in the recent history of urban activism (Castañeda, 2012; Mayer, 2013), but also by the lessons learned regarding the limits of an institutional participation system. The accumulation of these experiences has resulted in a model that mixes mechanisms that promote participation from both individuals and associations as well as different levels of commitment (Asamblea CB, 2012; Plataforma CB, 2013).

The main deliberative and decision-making organism is the Assembly, which has regular meetings scheduled. In addition, each activity, space, or project has a specific commission or group of collaborators that have a flexible and collectively negotiated schedule. The distribution of participatory channels at different scales of the organizational structure allows for better adjustment between the requirements to participate and the available resources of participants to meet this commitment. Finally, the Coordination Commission is a transversal mechanism aimed at promoting the interplay between decision-making and executive functions.

This participatory architecture is geared towards counterbalancing the uneven conditions of participants so they can be effectively involved in the decision-making processes at different levels. At the same time, the model seeks to balance power relations between the collective actors and individuals as well as to avoid divorcing decision making from executive tasks, something which prevails in the institutional participation system.

Another manifestation of democratic governance is that it takes place at the dimension of Socio-economic relations of CB. Regarding funding, the Centre defends a self-managed economy model in order to preserve autonomy from the state<sup>25</sup> and to promote a balance of power in the relations with the public sector. This means putting into practice a 'livelihood economy' based on dynamics of redistribution and reciprocity (Polanyi et al., [1957],1976). This in turn involves two dimensions of cooperative relations to sustain CB. The first is between the spaces of knowledge production, products and services within the Centre that shared and interchanges resources. The second involves the cooperation between CB and other similar initiatives (mainly in terms of learning interchange and voluntary work). It is still early to know to what extent these socio-economic practices based on principles of autarchy (Ibidem) can foster a significant change in social relations. Nevertheless, we can say that CB is operating as a small laboratory and a think-tank regarding social economy (Moulaert & Ailenei, 2005)

### Boosting empowerment

The empowerment dimension involves increasing socio-political potential and access to the resources needed to enhance rights to satisfy needs and to facilitate participation. Regarding CB, we consider empowerment as enhancing the capability of groups to act through knowledge, recognition, and "voice" or power (Martinelli, 2013). Following this, we focus, firstly, on the initial phase of CB (the period of mobilisation) and its impact on spurring other socially innovative initiatives. Secondly, we will look at the potential and limits of the case when it comes to encourage other collective actors to confront and creatively overcome market-oriented cultural policies.

During the mobilisation phase (2009-2011), the CB Platform implemented the "Tic-Tac" campaign, which consisted of awareness-raising around the issue and civil society engagement. The occupation of public space with banners with the slogan 'On 11 June 2011 we enter CB' and

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<sup>24</sup> Observation and interviews (members of commissions and neighbours with a regular presence in the Assembly).

<sup>25</sup> Regarding the support from the state, CB receives financial resources for infrastructure maintenance, basic services (water, electricity), all other activities are possible thanks to voluntary work and social economy strategies.

the campaign's presence in counter-information networks and mass media<sup>26</sup> were due to the involvement of diverse collective actors from Sants (squatters, neighborhood and cooperative movements, and 'artists'). These solidarity networks and social and cultural resources of the Platform have helped it to gain increasing social legitimacy and to develop its own original voice. This has come about through the mobilisation of collective creativity and popular cultural icons during the final countdown and in the last large-scale demonstration<sup>27</sup> on CB's entry on 11<sup>th</sup> June.<sup>28</sup> The Tic-Tac campaign was taken as a repertoire of collective action (Tilly, 1995) by other organisations with similar objectives, such as Ateneo L'Harmonia (2014) and La Flor de Maig (2012).

The socially innovative strategies used by CB have enhanced its ability to act in its immediate context as well in other neighborhoods of the city: firstly, by opening negotiations with the City Council in order to obtain spaces for community use (empty lots and other not used infrastructures or buildings); secondly, by providing knowledge and information to social organisations about relevant technical and legal aspects during these negotiations as well as about the construction of the management model regarding daily challenges<sup>29</sup>.

In terms of empowerment a significant outcome of the process of CB was to encourage the articulation of the voices of other social organisations and platforms to negotiate with the City Council on the modification of the regulation of participatory management, although the results of the negotiations have not fully met the claims of social organisations who have considered responses to be merely cosmetic<sup>30</sup>. With regard to this, the interviews<sup>31</sup> reflect an ambiguous position of local government in relation to community-management. On the one hand, politicians reject the principles of autonomy of community-management in the political sphere and, on the other hand, encourage autonomy in the economic sphere. Local government rather than talking about community management prefers to talk about 'civic management', which in practice means a model of outsourcing to social organisations based on voluntary work and the restrictive regulation of the political dimension of participation. This is a difficult question to solve, because ambiguity is also presented among the members of CB and affects their socio-political capability. On the one hand autonomy is defended but on the other hand the increasing efforts of participants to keep the project alive erodes the engagement of those members who do not dispose of enough resources to participate unconditionally.

## CONCLUSIONS

By analyzing the case of CB we set out to understand to what extent SInI developed in the socio-cultural field are capable of counterbalancing and creating alternatives to the market rationality that underpin creative city policies. We have found that SInI such as CB confront the creative city policies rationality; first, by introducing forms of organization and decision making geared to democratize governance relations with respect to the institutional field and, second, by creating narratives and practices of culture and creativity that question the market-centered vision on these regards. We have seen that the democratization question is transversal to the dimensions of social innovation and it is mainly visible in the social and economic relations that underpin the management model as well as in the collective creation of the socio-cultural agenda.

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<sup>26</sup> From 1999 to 2011, national and local newspapers and magazines published several articles about CB, many of them by recognised experts in urban planning.

<sup>27</sup> See Eroles Palacios (2011).

<sup>28</sup> Interviews in CB and exploration of the Centre's documentary sources.

<sup>29</sup> Many social and educational organisations visit CB to learn about its model.

<sup>30</sup> Last April 2015, the City Council, after many negotiations, approved a provisional regulation in this field. Interviews in AP9B, PGC, and with the responsible for the City Council's Department for Participation.

<sup>31</sup> Interviews with political leaders of the Districts of Sants, Sant Andreu, and Sant Martí, all governed by CiU.

Regarding the satisfaction of needs we highlight the role of SInI in the *reintroduction* into the cultural dynamic of the city, a social-centered, participative and territorial embedded approach on culture and creativity. This approach is challenging from the bottom-up the mainstream cultural offer and creative policies recipes. We say *reintroduction* since collective action and social initiatives regarding socio-cultural services in the late 70s understood and claimed culture in this sense. Therefore, CB can be considered as a continuity of these actions under new conditions. Through the case we have observed the strength of socio-historical factors in the contents dimension (claimed needs) and in the organizational strategies geared to social innovation. Alongside the legacies of urban social movements, the historic cooperative movement exerts a strong influence in the dimension of social changes and empowerment.

Regarding the governance model CB is based on relations of redistribution and reciprocity, and solidarity networks are capital means for support and continuity. Another aspect to stress concerns the participatory architecture. It is noteworthy that the multilevel and flexible configuration of the participation model has been designed considering contextual conditions of the members as a means of facilitating an effective involvement and maintaining power-balance relations. In this sense the case shows innovative outcomes in participative governance that could help to improve failed initiatives, like those of the institutional field.

The assessment of the place of CB in the governance of the socio-cultural field of the city offers an approximation to the possibilities of a spread and institutionalization of SInI. The analysis reveals that the role of the case study in this regards is limited at this moment. Limits are linked to the political and economic frame where the agreement between social organizations and City Council was achieved. Welfare cutbacks and socio-political changes were the main features of this context. These factors have condemned the agreement to precariousness and fuzzy conditions. The same has occurred with other similar initiatives in the city that have emerged in this paradoxical context. Local government has seen community use of infrastructure and urban wasteland as a short-term and low cost solution.

The principle of autonomy of social innovative initiatives supposes a challenge regarding consolidation and durability. First, because it can become instrumental to conservative political forces since a *laissez-faire* approach on autonomy could lead to a deepening of the state neglect of socio-cultural field. Second, because the lack of a material support involves an increasing dedication of participants that could erode the engagement of those who do not dispose of enough resources to participate unconditionally.

Therefore, is important to follow the evolution of community-management initiatives in order to study their capacity to last without sacrificing their autonomy and ensuring equality principles. In this sense, community-management could be a double-edged sword for the social justice and democratic deepening that these initiatives defend.

Finally, the power of initiatives such as CB to change the balance between the social-centered and the market-centered perspective on urban cultural affairs must be assessed considering the constellation of socially innovative practices that have recently emerged. Through the case study we have seen how social capital and networks between social organizations and movements are fundamental for empowerment. Considering this, CB has demonstrated capacity to articulate social voices and enhance the mobilization, organization, and actions of other social organizations in order to demand and negotiate with the City Council for more democratic conditions in the governance of the socio-cultural field. In this sense, we can say that CB is an influential actor. The arrival of the left-wing platform "Barcelona En Comú" to local government in 2015 brought a new scenario for SInI. The platform is a friendly disposition towards community

management and defends a state-centered view of the welfare model, opening up new questions in the relation between state and SINl that could be explored in the future.

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