

A democratic proposal for changing the city model: the case of Barcelona

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Noviembre 1996

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Abstract

Investment poured into Barcelona for the Olympics in 1992. There was so much construction and renovation that for the four year run up to the big event, tourists were not able to see many of the famous monuments. It could have been the perfect opportunity for Barcelona to select and promote environmentally friendly urban planning. Here we analyse the situation leading up to the occasion, exploring the reasons why this was not to be. We go on to look at how the community has succeeded in demanding that environmental issues be taken on board actively in city planning policy in the light of Local Agenda 21. We see how cooperation between unions, residents associations, Non Governmental Organisations (NGO's) and the council have managed to approach and tackle serious environmental issues in a kind of partnership which could serve as an example for future challenges towards a new democratic model of active participation.

Barcelona: A development model

Before 1992, the year when Barcelona really hit the headlines internationally due to its hosting of the Olympics, consideration for Barcelona's environmental problems was absent from both the political and social scene. Not even the main construction projects for the Olympics took any such 'green' factors into account. They were a far cry from the plans for the Olympic Games in Sydney in 2000 which promise to be a new ecologically sound urban development [1].

One major reason for such a lack of consideration of environmental problems can be attributed to the fact that in the Barcelona Olympics construction projects were the result of deals being struck up between public figures and large private investors. Due to the economic squeeze experienced by Spanish councils in the pre-Olympic era, a massive operation like the Games could only be made possible by the joining together of forces of the big private investors and the public administrative bodies [2]. In fact this partnership between private and public entities was recognised by the mayor at the time and called 'urbanismo concertado'. The idea was to carry out small individual planning projects rather than one integral city plan [3], making up a kind of patchwork quilt of construction projects by means of public and

private partners working together. These were rarely new plans. Much of the construction, particularly on the sea front (with the idea of cleaning up the graveyard left by old industry which had either closed down or relocated) and the city ring roads, with motorway proportions, had been designed in the sixties and seventies, during Franco's time. The two main ring roads for example had been designed by Porcioles, the mayor of Barcelona from 1957-73.

The facelift given to the maritime façade now known as the Villa Olímpica is a huge success, probably accounting for one of the most popular weekend haunts for thousands of Barcelona's citizens. It is though a typical example of buildings which were built for the Olympic Games, in that the emphasis on design is on the external image. While the outside of the new buildings is impressive, the internal layout has failed to meet present day ecofriendly requirements. For example, new flats were built with the intention of eliminating the unsightly rubbish bins kept on the street by replacing them with internal pneumatic suction shoots. These shoots do not separate waste to enable recycling and/or reuse of domestic waste. Indeed it can be said that there was no ecologically aware waste programme in operation before 1992 (except in the case of glass bottle banks) unlike in several other European countries.

Many of the new buildings have huge proportions. The so-called Olympic 'Village' has buildings 34 floors high and it even towers over the cathedral some way away. Impressive it may be, in keeping, it is not. The same can be said for the clinical, minimalistic design of some squares and other public places, where the elderly can be seen sitting on large, modern slabs of marble which were back lit by lights shining through glass tiles, broken within days and never repaired.

The Olympics was not only a missed opportunity to initiate an ecologically sustainable city model but, in addition, the ordinary citizen was very much left out in the cold. The partnership of public figures and private investors meant that apart from their right to vote, the only way citizens could participate in any further developments was merely as consumer or spectator. Participation was really only for those few technicians and intellectuals who knew how to win over the city government, made up of a coalition of social democrats (PSC) and a minority of the left wing party (Iniciativa per Catalunya), alias the old communist party.

So a technocratic urban planning process has left its stamp. Only in a few instances did the old sterile plans get slightly softened. Probably the most important example of this was when the residents association in a district called Nueve Barrios, managed to get their part of Ronda de Dalt (a seven lane ring road) covered over to absorb sound, by mounting strong and well organised protests. In the original plan this ring road was only to be covered in the wealthier parts of town, such as in Sarrià and Pedralbes, but not in the more working class districts like Nueve Barrios. The end result is a ring road with high noise levels, ducking in and out of tunnels depending on the district's wealth and/or its sense of community spirit-whether it was active and organised [4].

There were a few isolated stories of successes where the community managed to get their say but the general trend in investment was to concentrate on infrastructure for the private vehicle, while the demands of various neighbourhoods to extend the underground were left unattended [5]. Bus and tube fares were increased and passenger use decreased. The motorized vehicle continued to account for 60% of the public road space [6] and 77% of city atmospheric pollution (average statistics for 1990). Nothing was done to promote journeys on bicycle or foot.

The build up to the Games brought about further impact on the city fabric, not least because it led to a massive increase in speculation on land values, and housing prices soared. There was a substantial growth in the number of properties available, which contrasted drastically with a birth rate at a record low, not to mention its negative migratory balance. Despite these facts nothing held down the rise in property prices for both home ownership and rent [7]. Ironically, while the city cleaned up its visual image, the population continued to leave, frequently forced to look beyond the city boundary in order to buy a more affordable home. From 1981-1995, Barcelona lost 138,000 people, of whom, 29,000 left in the latter four years. The young and low income households were forced to leave for financial reasons, whilst the middle and upper classes decided to leave behind the congestion of the city and find purpose built family homes of high quality in quieter satellite towns which were rapidly becoming small cities themselves. The results have been an increase in social segregation, high forced mobility and an increase in private vehicle miles [8] as well as an expansion of urbanised land on the periphery. In the period 1991-1996 twenty-three out of a total of twenty-four towns surrounding Barcelona gained population, seven gained more than 25%.

There are many other environmental problems to be addressed in Barcelona, for example waste. The decrease in population already discussed has not been accompanied by a fall in domestic waste. Indeed the opposite has occurred. In 1980, 250 kg of rubbish were produced per person per year, compared with more than 375 kg twelve years later, representing an increase of 50%. What is worse, the trend continues. This alarming situation is even more worrying when one learns that the landfill site for dumping the city's domestic rubbish is practically full and the high land prices impede the task of finding a new site.

We will look at the subject of waste again in the second section, when we analyse what has been done to try to tackle such issues in the post Olympic era. There is not enough space here to list all the environmental issues at stake, nor is this the main objective. The point here is to underline the fact that none of these issues were tackled before 1992.

After 1992

The Olympic Games in Barcelona took place just after the **Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro**. This summit helped to plant the topic of the environment in everybody's mind. One of the main Earth Summit documents, **Agenda 21**, also had a chapter on the responsibilities of municipal authorities, offering them the opportunity to draw up local programmes.

The city council sent the Director of Environmental Programmes to international forums, to sign a number of declarations and commitments of **Local Agenda 21** and in the hangover following the Olympic Games in Barcelona citizen awareness of the importance of urban environmental issues started to take root.

A Civic Platform was formed that autumn as a response to a change in mood and perspective following the Olympics and Rio. It was called **Barcelona Estalvia Energía (BEE)** meaning Barcelona Save Energy. The platform was the idea of Acció Ecologista, a young environmental NGO. The group had initially set itself up to work on energy problems. Its principal objective in the beginning had been to fight against nuclear power (80% of Catalan electricity consumption is nuclear, making it one of the most nuclear energy reliant countries in the world [editor's note: it must be understood "Autonomous Commonwealth or Region" when reading "country"]) by proposing energy saving measures and the introduction of renewable energy. The idea of the platform then was to cover a much broader range of proposals regarding the city of Barcelona. The platform's priorities were to address the environmental concerns of the city of Barcelona and to draw up proposals to try to remedy these. It was formed by a whole range of community

and voluntary organisations.

Rules and regulations regarding the participation of a citizens initiative state that 10.000 signatures are needed to back a civic entity which wishes to present a motion to the city council and therefore participate in any council decision making/influencing process. In order to achieve this figure **BEE** included voluntary environmental organisations, but also joined forces with the Federation of Neighbourhood or Residents Associations ('Federación de Asociaciones de Vecinos de Barcelona', FAVB) and also by the trade union of Comisiones Obreras (USCOB) which alone has 58,000 members.

The setting up of the platform therefore can be seen as the *first integrated and democratic* local step towards developing a **Local Agenda 21** process involving community groups, trade unions and eventually the council. The platform set about drawing up what eventually consisted of 28 concrete proposals regarding waste, energy, transport, planning and taxation reform. These ideas were presented in a motion in november 1992, with over 100,000 members backing it, multiplying by ten the minimum number of signatures [9].

A public assembly took place in april 1993 and the city council listened to the proposals and demands. There was significant press attention as it was the first time that urban ecology had been discussed with a view to city politics and policy.

Following this, the council committed itself to the drawing up of the first ever "**Environmental Programme**", as a direct answer to the presentation of the proposals. The Councillor for Highways promised to hold a referendum on traffic which was to hit the headlines the next day. The council also agreed to discuss issues with **BEE** during the drawing up of this Programme as well as allowing the presence of **BEE** in its presentation at a council "municipal plenary meeting", (although in the end it was accepted that only one person from the city council could read a declaration of the platform **BEE**.)

This work not only lead to the development of working relationships between the council and voluntary organisations, but also between environmental and non-environmental groups. This type of partnership was very different to that of 'urbanismo concertado' of previous times. In the speech made by the platform, they said that the sheer fact that the council was holding a public assembly on such issues was a profound democratic step and especially that it contrasted with and challenged those private bodies which put the pressure on the local government from the shadows. The platform went on to say that they could now recognise that it was not only the the citizen body that would enable the advance towards an environmentally sustainable Barcelona, but that it could be a joint effort [10].

The ultimate consequence of the council's commitment to the programme was in increasing the Director of Environmental Programmes' role to include the coordination of environmental issues within (or shared by) other city council departments. Although job titles and approved budgets have not been changed, and the programme did not introduce fixed targets, it was nonetheless decisive in that it resulted in increased cooperation and interaction between various council departments. It was the first time that urban ecology was considered explicitly as an objective in council activities. For the first time it was recognised that environmental performance affected the majority of local authority departments.

Following the historic public assembly in 1993, and the consequent publication of the First Environmental Programme, various initiatives based on the idea of partnerships between community and council were set up to tackle the issues that were raised. The extent of council and community group interaction has varied from topic to topic. We shall look at the situation regarding energy, transport, waste and valuable

ecosystems under threat and the relative levels of democratic participation involved in each issue.

Transport

The Programme stated that the council would negotiate with environmental groups and community associations on the subject of transport.

The **Civic Commission for the Bicycle** was established. It is made up of the representatives of the city council who are responsible for traffic management along with the NGO, 'Friends of the Bike' ('Amics de la Bici'), which was also a founder member of BEE. This commission set up plans for the first cycle routes in the city, which led to the integration of Barcelona into the '**Cities for Cyclists**' and the consequent nomination that Barcelona should be the city to host the forthcoming congress 'VeloCity-97' in 1997. The agreement was based on the principle that the city will create a further 200 km of bicycle lanes by the year 2000. The first 50 km were in action just before the elections in May 1995.

Such a programme in support of the bicycle met with objection by some car supporters who actually initiated a campaign to try to stop the bicycle threatening the car culture. There were also objections because in some cases the bicycle route took up pedestrian space on pavements, a feature that has been rejected by the entire platform. The platform's call for reduced traffic speed in certain parts of the city to 15 and 30 kmph would mean that the bicycle would not need to have so many separate cycle lanes.

A further result of the Programme was the introduction of pilot projects to reduce traffic, such as in the Ribera district (in Barcelona's Gothic quarter) where residents associations, backed by European Union finance, fought for the limitation of access to drivers (who now need a magnetic coded card), a speed limit of 10 kmph and priority to pedestrians and cyclists. The Programme states that the council should negotiate with residents and environmental NGO's to develop these ideas in other areas, although little more has been established. In fact efforts to widen pavements and pedestrianise the main street of Sarrià have met local commercial opposition. It appears in fact that many of Barcelona's inhabitants and the media wish to even hide the fact that the city belongs to the club entitled, '**Car Free Cities**'.

The Programme said that public transport should be given priority over private transport, although current investment policy continues largely to be directed at private transport infrastructure, with little for public transport. The opening of more ring roads and an increase in fares has led to an increase in private transport (*Naredo y Sánchez Ortiz, 1994*). The various local authorities also managed for years to block the idea of integrating the different public transport companies (the local trains of the state railways RENFE, those of the regional government FFCC, the city underground and bus companies offering routes within the city boundary) as well as new investment ventures. Agreement was finally reached on the integration of services to take effect from the end of 1997-98.

Around the time of the 1995 council elections, a small section of metro was opened twenty years after beginning construction. This only happened after long protests mounted by local communities which were stranded without access to the metro.

The public transport system has managed to get itself into considerable debt [11], mainly due to local authorities failing to support it. Fares were drastically increased and in 1995 a day of protest was organised by the **BEE** platform and the trade union, when 150,000 passengers opted to enter buses and metro without paying. Since that date, fare increases have been much less drastic and it has turned into an important political issue in election campaigning [12].

Energy

The Programme also led to the creation of a **Round Table for Energy** in march 1995, which involves various council departments and one invited representative of **BEE**. Positive steps have been taken in the field of energy conservation since then, particularly in trying to calculate the city's energy consumption which is a requirement of the '**Cities for Climate Protection**' **Charter of Amsterdam**, which Barcelona signed. There are also requirements to calculate the city's contribution to the greenhouse effect and to propose energy saving and renewable energy programmes.

Studies have been begun to evaluate the main origins of greenhouse gas emissions in Barcelona, municipal energy auditing has been initiated and some attempt has been made to introduce solar energy in municipal sports centres and nurseries. The round table have started to look at the use of natural gas as the fuel for city buses. There are subsidies and tax relief for building renovation, which now has been broadened to include thermal and sound proofing. Nevertheless poor advertising of this programme has led to poor take up rates. Lastly, the controlling council group after the 1995 elections said in their four yearly municipal action plan that they commit themselves to elaborating a global energy policy for the city.

The platform's calls for new laws, and for legal standards to include heat insulation and introduction of the use of renewable energy in new buildings, have however not been addressed.

Waste

A state of consensus and conflict is most noticeable in matters concerning waste. Things have moved much more slowly, although the distribution of separate waste containers can be seen around the city as a consequence of the recent Catalan Waste Law.

The council decided on a large scale incinerator of domestic rubbish as an answer to the waste crisis (discussed earlier), at a time when scientific research reveals increasing evidence of the danger to human health caused by the highly toxic gases of furans and dioxins created by burning rubbish. The proposal in 1994 for an incinerator to burn 750,000 tonnes p.a. of domestic waste remained a conflictive issue. Many local protests followed especially in the district of Zona Franca, where the incinerator is to be. This area is not served by the metro, and the protests included banners saying, 'metro si, incineradora no.' In the Plenary meeting with BEE of march 1994 the political parties argued over the necessary size.

Negotiation still has not managed to eradicate the idea of incineration although the current proposal is for an incinerator which would handle 350,000 tonnes of domestic waste a year. Environmental NGO's, the residents associations (FAVB), the consumer association (OCUC), joined by a group of medical experts, have got together to strengthen the fight against the incinerator's construction by forming another platform (called '**La Plataforma Cívica para la Reducción de Residuos**', an initiative of '**Col·lectiu d'Ecologia i Projectes Alternatius**' [CEPA]), this time specialising in waste and waste reduction. The platform aims to challenge the municipal ten year waste plan, which proposes to incinerate as much as 55% of domestic rubbish. The municipal plan was approved in principle by the **Metropolitan Environmental Agency** (Entidad Metropolitana de Medio Ambiente, otherwise known as the **EMMA**) on 10th october 1996 and the platform presented theirs in november 1996.

Not all parties have come out in favour of incineration, in fact it appears that there is considerable conflict between the political parties themselves now. (Some of the political parties remember all too well the scale of protest mounted in opposition to an earlier plan for Catalunya on industrial waste, which would have meant considerable incineration. They were forced to withdraw that plan and now prefer to keep out of this highly political debate).

While aspects of the plan approved by the EMMA appear to go against all that the platform and local protesters in Zona Franca have been calling for, it is also true that the plan does detail some positive characteristics. In the last elections a member of the green party (Els Verds), Josep Puig, was elected as councillor and with his help the city government has accepted the idea of three biogas plants. Nevertheless the other parties have insisted on the need for an incinerator, although no solution is given to the problem of what to do with the highly toxic ashes and residues of the incinerator, particularly as the landfill site is full and due to close.

Since 1992 some waste recycling has started up. Separate waste containers have been distributed by the city council to some but not all parts of the city. They are particularly lacking in the districts where street space is at a premium. These containers, blue for paper, green for glass and yellow for plastic, drink cartons and aluminium cans plus other types of packaging of similar material (usually of high volume and low weight), have been put in place without launching any citizen participation programme. The containers are there to comply with the Catalan Waste Law of the Catalan Autonomous Government, yet use made of the containers by the public is rather piecemeal. In addition, the city council's first '**Clean Waste Programmes**' have not been set up with the involvement of either the citizen platform BEE or that of the Civic Platform for the Reduction of Waste. Quite the contrary, they were created with the financial backing of such companies as ERRA, a major (drink) carton manufacturer (known as Tetrapak). There has been no attempt to try to reduce the quantity of packaging produced at origin in a city where public markets still work with a tight network of suppliers. These deliver a significant proportion of fresh goods to market retailers, which could in theory facilitate the introduction of standardised containers. Nor has there been an effort to develop markets of second hand products, thus favouring re-use not recycling, the more costly option. Composting organic waste is practically non-existent, pending the construction of the biogas plants. Finally the council has only just begun to provide for the separate collection of more toxic and voluminous waste products, despite the Catalan Waste Law stipulating that it should have done so for some time.

Valuable Ecosystems on the City Periphery

The surrounding city area is under pressure too. Of particular concern is Collserola Park. The present mayor, Pasqual Maragall, has called it Barcelona's answer to Central Park. It is easily accessible by road and by FFCC trains (with trains running every 10 minutes, only a 20 minutes ride from the city centre). It is seen by politicians as an area for recreation, in a city where four wheel drive vehicles are very much the fashion accessory. However the platform **BEE** believes this should be an area for the conservation of wildlife and that the huge erosive pressure of 3 million neighbouring inhabitants should be controlled.

Further more the Platform strongly believes that more free space for recreation within the city boundary should be a priority. Despite an increase in the number of parks in the city, in 1996 there are only five square metres of urban green space per inhabitant, only half the figure recommended for European cities. The recently published municipal four year plan ('**Programa d' Actuació Municipal, 1996-1999**') states that it hopes to promote and respect the diversity of species, triple park space per inhabitant and have one

tree per five inhabitants by the year 1999. As a result of the platform's work the trade union of 'Parks and Gardens', a municipal company, has asked to have a representative member of BEE on their governing too but this request still remains unanswered. It appears that some members wish to block this request.

The mayor (mayors in Spain have a far more active role in politics than in some countries) is also a supporter of a massive development plan on the outskirts of the city near the international airport. Politicians are very concerned that Barcelona should compete with other foreign cities and so such a development is considered by them to be indispensable [13]. It is the most ambitious development plan in the foreseeable future, designed to make Barcelona the connecting hub of southern Europe. It has also been highly criticised for its severe environmental impact. The area is considered to be ecologically valuable marshland [14] which surrounds the airport. The principal idea is to expand the latter, as well as the industrial end of the port and to divert the River Llobregat in its last phase (on the highly fertile delta plain which is already highly industrialised or exploited for important market gardening) before meeting the sea. This water source happens to supply the city's main aquifer. The platform has opposed the project and has worked intensively with the help of one NGO which has concentrated specifically on the problem, in order to provide more environmentally sensitive alternatives to the plan [15]. In november 1996, it appeared that the central government, which is to put up some of the money, could not agree if there should be a global environmental impact analysis carried out or not, with the new Environmental Ministry arguing against the (Spanish) Secretary of State for Infrastructure. The local authority of El Prat is also making its own demands as to where the diversion should begin.

New versus old

The panorama of the last four years presents us with a complex balance. Significant advances have been achieved thanks to agreements reached between local government, unions, residents associations and NGO's on the platform **BEE**. These advances were documented in the first **Spanish 'Good Practice Guide' of 'Cities for a Sustainable Future'**, written for the United Nations world conference of **Habitat II**, which took place in june 1996. The platform, BEE, was recognised for its work on energy issues and for its specific contributions to the development of citizen participation. Nevertheless many points of conflict continue to exist, as the majority of the coalition (which is made up by local government along with its realm of advisors and technical teams), have reached a point where they accept the growing globalisation of environmental problems, without reassessing in depth the traditional city model which they are used to.

Urban ecology has undoubtedly become a high profile issue but economic growth, distinguished by traditional economic indicators and competition, to attract investment, still dictates priorities. It is significant that the '**Barcelona Strategic Plan**' (a plan which tries to envisage how the city should develop in the foreseeable future) still does not include the environment as a fundamental part of its objectives. Neither has it made any effort to involve representatives of the environmental movement in its decision making process.

The imbalance between the declarations made on environmental matters like that of the Aalborg Charter and the inertia of the old city development model is increasing [16]. The future hangs on this conflict between old and new. It depends on the degree to which a red-green coalition can incorporate the new councillor for Els Verds who has introduced a new concept into the old council body, '**The Sustainable City**'. To what extent can this new concept help to direct a coherent policy in a fresh direction? The Aalborg Charter signed in may 1994 by eighty cities, of which Barcelona was one, states that those who

sign are committed to drawing up long term programmes on Sustainable Development. Those who signed agreed that the maximum possible should be done to this end by the second conference held in October 1996 in Lisbon, emphasising that each local authority should build up a dialogue between citizens, local organisations and commerce. However two years after signing Barcelona has not shown any sign of writing their Local Agenda policy. In October 1996 Josep Vegara councillor for the **Department of Environmental Services** of the city council, stated that 'at no time was it an aim to make the Local Agenda 21 available by the time of the Lisbon conference'.

The Charter states that democratic participation and consensus should be at the root of the Local Agenda document. Thus the member of the city council for the Greens agreed with the BEE on the idea of '**The Municipal Council for a Sustainable City**'. Members representing the various sectors of the community as mentioned in the Charter would meet to discuss the issues that they considered relevant to Local Agenda 21. They were equally involved in the writing of the framework document to set it up. One month following completion of the framework document the city council denies any intention to establish such a commission. The council, according to Mr Vegara (in November 1996) claims that the possibility of such a commission 'is to be studied'. Indeed it appears that the local council is keen to quash initiatives made by the Greens in the council. Local government has been justly criticised for being too slow on this issue for various reasons, including pressure behind closed doors from other government bodies to maintain the status quo. It appears that the peak of council activity to be seen by the platform was when it published its first programme in 1994.

Backing a new participatory democratic model

In the Public Assembly the platform said,

'For the first time diverse social groups, each with their own stories to tell regarding the city in which we live, have got together to draw up the proposals contained in the motion Barcelona Save Energy. As workers, as neighbours, as consumers of services all people living in the city suffer the same problems....we all need a healthy, positive environment in which to live. For this reason it is important to look at the city from different angles. Ecosystems are made up of closed cycles: if one part malfunctions, the whole suffers.

The result of acting linearly in the city is the amputation of the citizen itself. This is why we are driven -not without contradictions- to face up to social and economic problems from an environmental perspective, integrating from the unions work aspects and from residents associations aspects of quality of life. Therefore today we are initiating a citizen debate on urban ecology with an emphasis on integration, focusing on the needs of us all.'

When six platform members were sent to the conference in Manchester on '**Cities and Sustainable Development**' it was realized that its way of working was unusual in northern countries, but not in southern ones. In northern Europe groups often work alone, focusing on their own objectives in order to establish a dialogue and if it gets that far, it develops into a partnership with authorities and other interested parties. While the advantage of single issue lobby groups may be to gain access to important government departments or such bodies as the European Union, the group could find that it has left the community behind to fight alone on even more immediate issues. Nor can the city's environmental problems be easily compartmentalised, because the vast themes which make up the environment are heavily interlinked. It is artificial to deal with themes one by one [17]. In addition, having just one focus only makes it easier for authorities to concentrate their efforts in order to oppose a group's views. The

outcome of negotiations does not necessarily depend on the relative importance of the issue either, but on the power of the lobby, not to mention the bias of the politicians making up the government as arbitrator at any one time. It is necessary to have a broad background of people to challenge the authorities, as well as the political manoeuvring behind the scene. The alternative to a technocratic management model acting behind closed doors is a democratic participatory model. Success depends on the cohesion of the environmental NGOs, residents associations and unions and their ability to work to the best of their ability and intelligence, whether or not they come up against conflict.

With such a diverse background it is clear that **BEE** is not a lobbying body working alone. It might be looked upon as a coalition of groups acting as a common lobby, but their work is not focused on one singular motivating issue, instead it tries to provide a guide towards a just and sustainable city, while contemplating the multi-dimensional urban phenomenon. The platform's proposals aim to use every existing mechanism of direct democratic action that it can, such as referendums, public assemblies and so on, as well as looking to create new spaces for participation and co-management.

Information about the platform's work has reached households via the media. Through increased cooperation between neighbourhood organisations, local voluntary groups and the unions, information regarding the platform's work has reached a wide range of people. In november 1996 the environmental organisations in Catalonia launched a new network to enable more efficient dissemination of information. The unions, FAVB and USCOP have monthly magazines which between them reach 102,000 households. This means that knowledge of its work spreads far beyond just environmental circles. As a result the aims of the platform have broadened to take on board other social realities previously unconsidered or unappreciated. At the same time it has to be said that the work has not been easy and at times is far from being conflict free. To increase participation and broaden the spectrum of those participating, the **BEE** has decentralised this work into districts who negotiate with the council on subjects like traffic speed, increase of pedestrian space, waste selection and so on to open up more space for participation of district groups and organisations.

Other priorities, other indicators

While work started by the platform has evolved steadily over the last few years, putting pressure on local government to include urban environmental issues in city policy, a new separate entity has been set up, which aims to measure the overall environmental health of the city. Up until now economic and political decision making has been based on traditional economic indicators with an obsession with Gross Domestic Product, as if this were an indicator of well-being. Yet almost all public figures have admitted to the existence of serious environmental problems.

"The Civic Forum for a Sustainable Barcelona" (FCBS) (formed in the summer of 1995) aims to draw up a list of new indicators to measure the environmental performance of the city in very much the same way as was done in Seattle, USA [18] and later in the UK by local authorities [19]. It has however studied various other examples of Local Agenda for reference. The objective is to establish criteria which will allow us to be better informed about the impact of decisions on the city environment, whether taken by council, individuals, business or otherwise.

In the true spirit of **Local Agenda 21**, **FCBS** unites individuals from an even wider spectrum of the community than the Platform BEE, in a working forum, making decisions by consensus only. It was felt that it would have been too demanding on the platform to take on this project and that the platform

experienced enough conflicts as it was, when sometimes only partial consensus could be achieved. The basis of consensus is much broader in the forum, always strictly maintaining the principle that every individual represents him or herself only and not their company, council, school, cooperative, NGO or any other body.

The project began in June 1995. Not only has it produced some interesting work and managed to receive local authority funding to organise a conference to help it along, but the way of working appears to be successful. For a year the forum worked in 3 separate groups entitled Ecology, Economy and Society as these were thought to be a more efficient way of drawing up criteria. Then there was the difficult task of reducing the list of more than 200 indicators, before distributing this information to a wider range of community groups along with a locally adapted interpretation of the concept of "**sustainability**" for Barcelona city.

The next step is to measure and analyse the indicators chosen. Then the results will be published so that the public will be able to acknowledge and understand the importance of the project. It is hoped that the results of the work will be integrated into future council decision making, either directly from publishing the work or possibly by means of further public pressure. With this aim it is hoped that decisions can be taken based on environmental criteria not just on a political or economic basis.

Conflict, consensus, partnership and democracy

Section 28 of the approved Rio document entitled 'Bases for Action' refers to the role of local governments and citizen participation. Sub-section three states that,

'...The participative process must reinforce in every household, the awareness of the problems that sustainable development implies. The programmes, policies, laws and regulations of local authorities in order to achieve the objectives of Agenda 21 must be established and modified, adapting from local processes.

The Charter as well as the European Union's fifth programme of Environmental Action incorporate and develop these statements in favour of democratic participation to guide work towards sustainability. The question arises whether the Union, or local authorities for that matter, are using inflated rhetoric or if they are truly talking about a real change in the city model. While economic globalisation and internationalization of today's problems has been seen to have the effect of putting true decision making centres further and further from the reach of citizens, at the same time the sheer size of environmental and social challenges, combined with the profound transformations that they demand, casts a doubt over those very centres and their associated forms of traditional governing.

As has been seen in many of the issues discussed here, it is possible to fall into the trap of floating aimlessly on a cloud of rhetoric. If the schizophrenia between what we say and what we do carries on uninterrupted, the credibility of the process towards sustainable development could be called into question, leaving even less to be proud of in front of our children and our children's children. When the neoliberal reaction is to sing the praises of the perfection of the market and takes for dead and buried any plans which are not those of a multinational company, the tasks underlying the central message of **Local Agenda 21** and the need for democratic planning of resources and economy are absolutely clear. Likewise when neoliberalism at the end of this century promotes, without conscience, the empty promises of our representative parliamentary democracy, the real advance of the processes initiated in the **Earth Summit** depends increasingly on the ability of the individual, through rediscovery of true democratic participation.

The world's environmental movement must realise it is the initiator of a new economic-environmental democracy for the twenty-first century, which must open up the old 'liberal' relationship between public figures and the private market in the same way that the feminist suffragette movement was the carrier of democracy into the twentieth century.

The world's great environmental charters and treaties call on the environmental movement to both demand and develop in depth procedures for consultation, partnership and consensus of democratic participation. At the same time a lesson to learn is that where there is no conflict, there will not be any great social transformation. It is extremely important that the green movement should explore the political culture of non-violence, developing the logic of conflict and pact as two forms of one transformation process. Hopefully this small and incipient experience of **Barcelona Estalvia Energia** makes a contribution towards this task.

November, 1996

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Edita: Instituto Juan de Herrera. Av. Juan de Herrera 4. 28040 MADRID. ESPAÑA. ISSN: 1578-097X