

The Royal Gold Medal 1999: the City of Barcelona

The Royal Institute of British Architects since 1848 has advised the Monarch on the award of the Royal Gold Medal to individuals for distinguished services to architecture. In 1999 precedent was broken to award the Royal Gold Medal to the City of Barcelona. The *Journal of Architecture* is celebrating this award by publishing the 'Jury Citation' and 'Notes accompanying the Jury's Citation', followed by the texts of three of the speeches which preceded and followed the presentation: 'Award of the Royal Gold Medal to Barcelona' by Robert Maxwell; 'Architecture and City in an Open World' by Pasqual Maragall i Mira (Mayor in 1982, 1983, 1987, 1991, 1995 and 1997); and 'Ten points on an Urbanistic Methodology' by Oriol Bohigas (who, as architect, served Barcelona City Council as Delegate for Urban Affairs 1979–1983, Co-ordinator for Urban Affairs 1983–4, Urbanism Special Advisor 1984–1991 and elected Councillor for Culture 1991–4). The example of Barcelona as revealed through these texts provides insights, and evidence of a collective inspiration, to be emulated wherever urban regeneration forms part of a political and social agenda shared by city authorities, business interests, designers and citizens.

Jury Citation

In 1999, precedent has been broken to award the Royal Gold Medal to a city: to Barcelona (Fig. 1), its government, its citizens and design professionals of all sorts. Inspired city leadership, pursuing an ambitious yet pragmatic urban strategy and the highest design standards, has transformed the city's public realm, immensely expanded its amenities and regenerated its economy, providing pride in its inhabitants and delight in its visitors. All cities, especially London, for too long without directing influences, can learn much from this example, which many already follow.

Both the process and results of Barcelona's rebirth are exemplary. Though always with city-wide goals in mind, initial interventions were local and low budget, yet big in impact – not least

because their design flair drew international plaudits. From creating parks and plazas wherever opportunities arose, this strategy snowballed, gathering enthusiasm and finance – adding schools, health-care and cultural facilities and attracting all sorts of public/private partnerships – all the way up to realising very major infrastructural projects. Hosting the Olympics was only a part of this larger, still continuing strategy of up-grading the whole city.

Barcelona is now more whole in every way, its fabric healed yet threaded through with new open spaces, its historic buildings refurbished yet its facilities expanded and brought up-to-the-minute. Past and present, work and play are happily inter-meshed in a new totality that is more than its often splendid parts, and is better connected even to sea and

Figure 1. View of Barcelona looking east (Agència Metropolitana de Desenvolupament Urbanistic i d'Infraestructures S.A.).



mountains. And yet the character of Barcelona, though changed, is more distinct than ever and ready for the global age in which cities as much as nations are in direct competition for jobs and investment.

Many people at all levels of administration, in the city's business and cultural communities as well as its architects and designers, played large parts in this resurgence. The process was set in motion by Narcís Serra, the first democratic mayor, and Oriol Bohigas, the Co-ordinator for Urbanism from 1980–4. But most of the transformation was

achieved by Pasqual Maragall, mayor from 1982–1997 and Josep Acebillo, Director of Urban Projects from 1980–8 and Director for the Municipal Institute for Urbanistic Promotions from 1988–1993. It continues today under Joan Clos, Maragall's deputy and now successor as Mayor with Acebillo in charge of infrastructural projects as Director of Barcelona Regional. Under the guidance of these men, architects, urban designers, landscape architects and road engineers have fused their disciplines to create the new Barcelona.

The Award is intended to celebrate the achievements of Barcelona and Catalonia, yet also of Spain, the many excellent architects who remained relatively unknown during the Franco era, as well as the current resurgence of architecture and design. The quality of so many contemporary Spanish buildings and urban spaces, of products and architectural design publishing is outstanding. Probably nowhere else in the world are there so many recent examples, in cities and small towns, of a benign and appropriate attitude towards creating a civic setting for the next century.

Notes accompanying the Jury's Citation

Hemmed between mountains and sea, Barcelona is a compact city, its 1.7 million inhabitants crowded into less than 100 square kilometres. Still displaying parts of its Roman walls, it is a city famous for architecture: Gothic ecclesiastical buildings, palaces and shipyards; the grid of its nineteenth-century extension planned by the engineer Idelfons Cerdà; exuberant Modernista architecture of Gaudí, Domenech y Muntaner and Puig y Cadafalque; and the Modern architecture of José Luis Sert and José Antonio Coderch, as well as the (now reconstructed) German Pavilion of Mies van der Rohe. Now, since democracy came to Spain in 1975, the city has flowered further, both architecturally and in every other way, so as to be unrivalled as a destination for pilgrimages and all other enthusiasts for civilised city life.

Decades of Franco dictatorship left Barcelona with its historic fabric largely intact. But, besides being edged by dismal new housing, it was desperately run down and short of civic amenities. It was

also in economic doldrums. Urgent action was required – and initiated immediately by Narcís Serra, who became Mayor following the first democratic municipal elections in 1979 and Oriol Bohigas, his delegate for Urban Affairs. They recognised that many proposals of an already existing, city-wide plan for Barcelona – such as construction of a motorway ring around it – were sound, but impossible to implement. So they inverted the normal planning process and, instead of working from the large scale downwards, they started at the local level with the immediate needs of the ten neighbourhoods into which they had divided the city. But, though the initial focus was on small and easily-implemented projects, the ultimate goal was always to transform the whole city. Although this strategy had already been set in motion, those who oversaw most of its implementation were Pascal Maragall, Serra's deputy who took over as Mayor in 1982 (when Serra was promoted to Minister of Defence in the Spanish government), and Josep Acebillo, the Director of Urban Projects.

The first projects were parks and squares, which were relatively cheap yet highly visible. Built wherever sites were available, these provided much-needed open space in the old city, and foci and definition in the amorphous new suburbs. Where possible, these now form chains of linked spaces that help tie the city together in a more varied yet intact entity. Early projects that brought immediate attention and acclaim include: the astringently avant garde Pla a del Països Catalans by Helio Piñón & Albert Viaplana with Enric Miralles outside Barcelona's main railway station (Fig. 2); nearby the playful Parc de l'Espanya Industrial by Luis Pe a

Figure 2. Pla a del Països Catalans – Helio Pi òn & Albert Viaplana with Enric Miralles (photo Cunningham).



Ganchegui and Francesc Ruis; and the Pla a de la Palmera, a collaboration between Pedro Barragán and Bernardo de Sola and the sculptor Richard Serra. Each of these realises very different yet complementary civic visions, as, for example do two slightly later parks in old quarries; the sombre monument of the Fossar de la Pedreera by Beth Galí and the family-oriented Parc de la Cruçada Coll by MBM.

Many of these plazas and parks, and the other local projects that followed, are designed in an uncompromisingly contemporary idiom; and the controversy this provoked was welcomed for bringing, along with lively debate, a sense of local involvement as well as international acclaim and investment. Soon the local projects included building such other much-needed facilities as schools, health facilities and libraries, and refurbishing many of Barcelona's most famous historic monuments. Exemplary schemes of the latter sort include the restoration of Gaudí's Parc Güell by José Antonia Martínez-Lapeña & Elias Torres, the conversion of a print works by Domenech y Muntaner

into the Fundació Tapies by Amadó & Domenech, the extension of Domenech y Muntaner's Palau Musica by Oscar Tusquets and the conversion of the Casa Caritat into a museum by Pi òn & Viaplana. Such undertakings encouraged the sprucing up of the whole city.

To accelerate the snow-balling momentum of the regenerative process, Barcelona seized the 1992 Olympic Games. Crucially, the funds drawn in were invested in projects that served not just the Olympics but were key parts of the City's long-term transformation. Besides leading to many fine buildings – including Velodrome and Badolona Sports Pavilion, both by Esteve Bonell and Francesc Ruis, the Archery Facilities by Enric Miralles and Carme Pinós and Collserola Telecommunications Tower by Foster and Partners – major urban design and infrastructural projects were realised. The most exemplary of these are the Nova Icaria Olympic Village, master planned by MBMP (Josep Martorell, Oriol Bohigas, Peter Mackay with Albert Puigdomènech) and the Cinturon motorway that now rings Barcelona.

Nova Icaria fuses the best of traditional and modern urban forms into a new hybrid that reconnects the city to the sea, and five kilometres of new beaches that are part of the many new leisure facilities that enhance the city's capacity for hedonism. The Cinturon is remarkable for the way skilful design has ensured that it brings together, rather than is a barrier between, the city and the surrounding mountains and sea. This is the result of an extraordinarily close collaboration between road engineers, landscape architects and urban designers brought about by Maragall and Acebillo.

Such intense collaboration is one of their greatest achievements, along with ensuring that private sector investment has been to the same high design standards as found in the public sector. In this last they have been aided by the fact that perhaps no other city has a comparable pool of architectural talent to draw from.

The Olympics was a climax to, but not the end of, Barcelona's transformation. As well as the construction of the controversial but very popular Port Vell leisure complex in the old harbour, new open spaces and public facilities are still being built. Several major infrastructural developments are planned or underway, most of which will serve not only Barcelona but also lead to the better balanced development of its metropolitan region. Such public/private joint ventures are drawing in yet more private investment and jobs that will help ensure that Barcelona should be a major player in the global future as well as one of the most civilised and enjoyable of all cities to live in and visit.

Award of the Royal Gold Medal to Barcelona

Robert Maxwell

I am honoured to have been asked to introduce to you the gifted individuals who have so notably contributed to the development of city planning in our time, so successfully indeed, that the city of Barcelona has been personified so that it can receive the Royal Gold Medal, through their joint efforts and dedication to an ideal city development.

City planning is a modern subject, about as old as modern architecture, about as old as Le Corbusier's concept of *urbanism*. But does this subject really exist? In spite of the success of Milton Keynes, it is the existing cities that remain the toughest problem. City planning was meant to be a science, but standards change as fast as the practical measures taken, so that evaluation becomes difficult. Analytical concepts may not last for very long, statistics have little effect on appearances.

There seems to be some unfortunate relation between the logistics of city growth, the economics of business, and the short life of political initiatives, that has made it difficult to pursue an evolutionary policy over a long enough time for results to show. Attempts to reshape existing cities like our own Birmingham, using analytical concepts like *motorway box*, *neighbourhood unit*, *tower block* have not been very successful. Appearances have been against them.

At the same time the growth of the tourist industry has provided an entirely different measure of what an urban environment can be. People on vacation flock not only to beaches, but to cities that are full of attractive buildings and spaces, that derive their distinctive character from patterns of use rather than from patterns of analysis. Tourists visit Clough Williams Ellis's Port Mereion and François Spoerry's Port Grimaud, both elegant fictions deriving from Camillo Sitte's largely fictional work 'City Planning According to Artistic Principles'.

Could it be that architecture has a role to play in filling the gap between abstract planning and lived experience, between what works logistically and what works socially, between necessity and

appearance? Could it be that city planners need to be more sensitive to what buildings can do to shape the city and give it meaning? Because this seems to have been the crucial idea that has resulted in the conspicuous success of Barcelona.

Barcelona is, perhaps, a fortunate place, being at one and the same time a city, a port and a beach. It is in the south, so it has sun. But it is also in the north, so it has energy. It has Antonio Gaudí, more familiar to ordinary families than Pablo Picasso. And it has Cerda, whose gridded plan of 1859 provided structure, but also freedom, providing sites for buildings and buildings for sites.

But this formula is still too ideal for our situation today. We have to deal with the city largely as it is, and look for growth more from economic management than from an ideal layout. In order to deal with the city more as an organism, we have had to re-conceptualise it in terms of its social value. And this, it seems to me, has been accomplished largely through the insights provided by the Italian architect Aldo Rossi, whose book 'L'Architettura della Città' appeared in 1996. Rossi was a visionary who saw the city as a repository of meaning, and who also saw the individual buildings as the catalyst which allowed social energy to flow into the city.

The reason why city planning is so difficult has nothing to do with the ideology of modern architecture. Radical interventions like Danny Libeskind's Victoria and Albert spiral or Richard Rogers's Lloyds take their meaning from the situation in which they are placed in the city, as much as from their unusual forms. Lord Rogers has been unequivocal in his defence of the inner city.

The order of the city exceeds the order of any one building and acts as a shared framework which provides meaning, at the same as it accepts each intervention as foreshadowing a change of meaning. To build in Barcelona, then, is analogous to writing in Catalan; the existing both accepts the new and is changed by it.

A single gifted individual can provide a crucial stimulus to cultural change, yet at the scale of the city their effort can be lost. To change the evolution of a whole city in a period of twenty years – Catalonia gained its political autonomy only in 1977 – is an outstanding achievement, and it needed more than one man. I give you then five men – three mayors in succession: Narcis Serra, Pasqual Maragall and Joan Clos; then Josep Acebillo, Director of Urban Projects from 1980–8, and Oriol Bohigas, the Co-ordinator for Urbanism from 1980–4.

In hailing this achievement in the names of the five wise men we salute not only individual efforts but their collective wisdom – their perception of the process by which the city grows, their patience in seeing growth as a way of giving shape, and their moral sagacity in co-operating with the spirit of the times.

Architecture and City in an Open World

Pasqual Maragall i Mira

If we look down upon Europe from a satellite we will see a constellation of points or specks of light. What we will not see are borders between states or regions. The constellations we see are our constructions, our physically existing cultures.

Simply by taking in this image we learn something useful about the world, something that the concept of global village doesn't tell us. The organisation of these specks of light, which are the reflection of our cities, traces certain paths, pointing out concentrations and revealing empty spaces. These are dense concentrations such as the Randstadt, the English South East, the Ruhr-Rhine valley, the Genoa-Turin-Milan triangle, or the high point of some coastal lines that look like a linear city, just as in Naples or in Barcelona and the northern Mediterranean coast of Spain up into the Gulf of León.

The only road that leads from the present world of states to the global world, to the open world, to the world without borders, is precisely this: it is a route that traverses the world of cities and the Europe of regions. The global world, this 'global city', this notion that my city no longer exists because my real city is the world, is not a very useful idea. It is a paralysing concept.

Global thought makes considerable mistakes. In 1974, it announced that oil reserves would last only twenty more years, and here we are in year twenty-five! Another mistake: we were told that the world population would stop growing in the year 2050, at some 15,000 million inhabitants. Now it seems it will reach its peak long before, in 2015/2020, and with many fewer inhabitants.

Fortunately, a good catchphrase emerged from the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit where global thinking was established. It said: 'Do locally everything that can be done locally', by way of saying: 'avoid the transportation of energy – whether pure or compact – whenever possible'.

Also the European Union establishes an 'ever-closer bond between people where everything will be done as close as possible to the citizenry'; in truth, this is a revolutionary proclamation that changes the constant tendency of ideas, since 1789, to adopt a naïve universality.

At this point, we must ask ourselves what the devil architecture has to do with all this?

What architecture has to do with it, is that architecture is the art of constructing cities, and the city is once again taking its place at the centre of the world's attention.

Today's globalisation is neither right nor definitive. It is just the latest of the waves of universalisation that have followed one another cyclically throughout history. At the end of the nineteenth century, both financiers and proletarians were internationalists as well as aristocrats like the Baron of Coubertin.

In this century, the lesson in humility that we ought to have derived from the audacity and stupidity of our collective pretensions is overwhelming.

We must therefore admit that, for the moment, the global world can only be constructed piece by piece, by regionalising its organisation, and we must understand that such regionalisation will be established at the level marked as the minimum economic size by the largest economy. The creation of the United States in 1776 sanctioned the necessary unification of Europe two centuries ago. How could we not have realised it?

The world is only a global world for a few, and within limits. It is above all a world of cities, of places where business and workers on the one

hand and public representatives on the other try to meet the demands and problems of the human species. The cities that make up this partially globalised world are the true scene of architecture. On this point, Narcís Serra, Joan Clos and I are only following the masters. The Renaissance masters, the Modernist masters, and the Masters of today, Oriol Bohigas, Richard Rogers and Renzo Piano, and we are obeying our own experience in doing so. In Barcelona, to construct houses in the crumbling Old City in the early 1980s was useless if not accompanied by health, safety and elementary urbanistic measures.

Just look. We came into government in 1979 with the mistaken notion that the low housing prices in the Old City were a blessing, and we began to make urban plans that increased the zoning for public structures to the maximum. This was a mistake. We thought we had to behave in such a way that the Old City dwellers would stay there thanks to the maintenance of low prices and the new offer of services. This was another mistake. We didn't realise that prices were low because people were leaving.

The population in the Old City decreased by 30 or 40 per cent. Those familiar places, freighted with meaning, were being deserted. The empty spaces began to be occupied, in part, and only in part, precisely by people lacking the means to maintain a minimum of commercial and public vitality in these neighbourhoods, people who tended to create defensive and ghetto codes of behaviour.

The theory of the skier was the solution: not just for urban planning, or public safety, but for both. Urbanism plus public safety, first one and – imme-

diately after – the other. Social services plus cleaning services. Commercial policy plus housing. Prevention before correction but, in every case, prevention plus correction. No dogmatics, no magic formula. Public investment plus private investment. Public action plus charity. Total war on poverty. This is what Narcís Serra had shown us, and what Joan Clos carried out as councilman.

At first, we lost. Only much later did we tie. And finally we began to win. And even as we were winning, the buried mines of old scandals or the hypocrisy of bean counters scandalised by the buying and selling of housing at different prices began to blow up around us. Just as, much earlier, charitable associations had been scandalised when the lines for food or shelter began to grow as we closed down the unhealthy pensions where elderly persons – unseen by and unknown to these associations – were dying on the cheap.

Governing the city, to be sure, often requires a certain glossing over or dissimulation of lacerating problems, so as to resolve them without offending public sensibility – how can we deny it? But in most cases, it requires revealing to the public hidden realities. The governor sets the mirror of its miseries before the city, miseries not unknown, but forgotten, covered up, hidden.

A new house in a dangerous neighbourhood is not a new house. That is the lesson we learned. That new house quickly grows old, like the faces of boys and girls who go to work too young.

The lesson to be learned is that both wealth and poverty colonise territory. Wealth by means of high prices (uptown) and minimum lot sizes (out of town), and when necessary by means of private

security forces, as in Caracas; poverty by means of an equally efficient weapon: the middle class fear of unsafe streets and unbridled diversity.

The truth is that in tolerant and liberal Barcelona, crime rates have dropped from 25 per cent to 15 per cent in ten years, that is, by almost half, while in ten years of law-and-order London it rose one and a half times. Tony Blair who made it one of his central campaign issues knows it well. Notice that the London School of Economics had shown that the radical puritanism of Mrs Thatcher's government condemned the destitute to remain entrenched in their destitution. This brings us to an interesting methodological observation. When a city has gone through years of non-doing and passivity, ideas about its future mature and can be transformed into a fruitful, forceful, and purposeful attitude when the necessary political conditions to take action come into play.

This, I believe, is the origin of the demanding optimism of Bohigas, Acebillo, Solà-Morales, Busquets, Llop, and de Lecea that began to overflow in 1980 onto the streets and squares of Barcelona. And this, I am convinced, is the moment London, and its politicians, architects, and social workers in general, is entering.

If there were such a thing as historical justice, it would consist of a kind of Solomonic distribution of grand projects throughout decades and territories, possibly with a slight preference for territories distant from the centre of the system of cities, to compensate for the fact that proximity to the centre brings with it a density of contacts that makes the external or instantaneous shock of grand initiatives unnecessary. (I say *slight* prefer-

ence in order not to relinquish methodological modesty with regard to public action which I imagine bold and energetic yet not substituting for the very same citizens you are supposed to serve.)

It is clear, however, that there is no such thing as distributive justice in history and, nevertheless, or for that very reason, we must lie in wait for the passing of the train of fortune and, if necessary, build fortune a shortcut. That is the purpose of grand events. At times they are nothing more than the announcement of a long-awaited era, excuses that history seizes to make a sudden, splendid appearance with a gift of dreams carried out.

Let us call architecture back to its date with history. The best news for the victims of terror in the Basque country, was the inauguration of the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao. The Gehry Museum and Foster's underground have broken the spell cast over a Basque city (and the Basque country) that had only been seen in the light of tragedy and death, and which can begin once again to be imagined as a site of life and construction, thus averting the obsession with fear that is the goal of the politics of terror.

The Lisbon Expo, the Barcelona Olympics, the high-speed train installed in Seville for the '92 Expo, all mark another series of moments in which the spark of the event seems to have put in motion the motor of evolution.

No one can survive merely by conservation. If there is no new construction, the city cannot stand; not even the old will endure. Each city must find its own formula for combining existing symbols with new ones. Without the latter, antiquity becomes mere repetition. And I assure you that the

future of nations will be played out in the efficacy of their systems of cities.

Our experience as mayors cannot be entirely explained without at least one confession. It is the emotion of seeing new symbols destined to last rise up in the city through the art of architecture and construction.

I am not referring so much to the function as to the value of those constructed artifacts. Squares or houses, trees planted in a certain place or a certain order, new monuments, or restored or displaced ones, more or less stable and resistant urban furnishings, schools, sidewalks and boulevards, communications towers, containing walls, dikes, theatres: all of these are the theatre of life, messages thrown more or less consciously like bottles into the sea of history's course, occasionally excessive references to our passage through the city, but in any case visible, corporeal, criticisable – action become object, which thousands of eyes will gaze on with respect or will pass over, which thousands of hands and feet will touch, trample, or alter, and which make of the city one of the few lasting concepts of our present and our future – one of the most universal concepts, for the experience we have of them is universal and common.

And so, if there is any profession that holds the key to their modification, it is architecture, which makes architects and the profession of architecture, one of the broadest dreams of youth, on a level with those makers of the immaterial, but magical, construction which is stage design. It was not by chance that the 1997 Congress of the UIA in Barcelona turned into a two-tiered ritual of masses and vedettes, all from the same profession.

I must say here that I am very grateful to Norman Foster and Kenneth Frampton for recognising at once what was happening, and for agreeing to convert the Plaza of the Angels, also known as the Plaza of Nations, against the white backdrop of the MACBA – the Museum of Contemporary Art of Barcelona – into the scenario of the best architectural debate. Perhaps no architectural congress from now on will be able to do without a debate staged on the hard stone of the city, in which the forum and the agora once again fulfill their old function.

The first President of the reinstated Generalitat, Josep Tarradellas, would often say half-ironically, half-sincerely, with his peasant's smile, so inscrutable and yet so seductive, that he would have liked to be mayor. 'Because you, Mr Mayor', he would say, 'can see your works, and can touch them, and the people come up to you on the street. But me, do you know what I do? All I do is sign decrees!'

In this way he expressed the bitterness – not lacking in majesty – of the representative of an abstract power, such as a nation, which is incorporeal, which exists – and often with what strength! – but only in people's heads, and in the false or unreal lines that separate one country from another on a map. An immense strength that has allowed for the greatest progress and caused the greatest catastrophes, but an ideal strength, not a tangible reality.

In Barcelona, after 40 years of dictatorship, we reached a moment, and not a fleeting or short one, of an ongoing euphoria of constructive explosion. Like a long-awaited spring, surprising in its intensity and beauty when it finally arrives, like those

gardenias that take so long to blossom, that never quite flower, but surpass the imagination in the number, fragrance, and purity of their petals when they finally do.

This occurred in Barcelona and it continues to occur. The feeling this produces is difficult to describe. In the last 20 years in Barcelona, we have come to equate 'city' with 'betterment'. The eye has become accustomed, not to certain forms, but to certain rhythms in the evolution of forms. Rhythms subjected to certain principles of quality occasionally violated, as with the fall of Chillida's cement hook, or with the rubble of stone from Montjuic in the Ensanche/Extension, or when the 'small' communications tower, that of the Telephone Company in Montjuic, was placed two hundred metres within an enclosure which it should, in any case, only have intersected from without, as a useful and respectful point of reference.

The other communications tower, Foster's tower, the result first of a careful process of social and professional acceptance, and then of the task of selection, carried out by Juli Esteban and Joan Busquets, is more in scale than it might appear (Fig. 3). A philosopher friend of mine commented that if you covered it over with your hand you restored the scale of the mountain and the equilibrium of the skyline, which otherwise is reduced to a miniature, shrunk by the overwhelming presence of the tower. And this is true: you can try it yourselves the next time you go to Barcelona.

However, in addition to its elegance and originality, the tower supersedes the excessive functionalism of the usual cement tower. It is made to



Figure 3. The Collserola Telecommunications Tower – Norman Foster and Partners (RIBA Press Office).

the scale of a different city, greater and more distant than the one you can see from this side of the mountain: it corresponds to the scale of the metropolitan city, the city of three to four million people that surrounds the mountain on both sides. Now, when we are on our way home from the mountains or the coast, the tower quickly orientates us, from afar. And, once we are home, it reminds us that the real city we inhabit is not exactly the same as the one we see.

I say this in spite of myself, because I am among those who believe that a city you cannot see is more difficult to govern. This is so true that I proposed to move the plenary council of the City Government to the last floor of the Novísimo Building, once three of its twelve stories had been eliminated and the skyline of the old city from the sea had been restored. I always felt that the danger of the towers, both the communications towers and the skyscrapers of the Olympic Village would be to initiate a contest of multiplication of those artifacts, of which every generation should construct only a few, a precious few, *cum grano*

salis. Manhattan and San Gimignano are not easily reproduced phenomena.

Unique architectural phenomena, when they occur in an environment characterised by mobility, are less dramatic; to put it another way, they are acts in a drama that doesn't stop there, a drama that is ongoing, whose irreversibility is not cause for concern.

The city's confidence in itself is immense in these cases. The credence in public action is almost infinite.

The accumulation of many positive emotions, like the gardens of Elias Torres in Villa Sicilia; or Beverly Pepper's park; the many new balconies over the city, like the portentous podium of Gae Aulenti over the western part of the city, or the Parc del Migdia a bit higher up, or even the lateral edges of Acebillo's beltway on the Ronda de Dalt, with unimagined views of the Barcelona plain and the mountain slopes that begin their ascent there; or the campaign to make sense of areas of the city that had no textual language, like General Moragues Square, next to the Calatrava bridge where people exploded with joy when Ellsworth Kelly the sculptor climbed up to greet them, leading him to exclaim: 'This is the first time a sculptor has received a musician's ovation!'

All these things have turned the city into a kaleidoscopic reality in less time than it usually takes to perform simple changes.

It has been and is an intoxicating time, in which the gods, the state, and the architects have bestowed on the city what we had sought tirelessly for decades, decades of silence, of frustration, of beginnings and quests that, still and all, served to crystallise the most precious jewel of

social engineering: a consensus on projects, on grand projects.

I only want you to know that this city, seen by so many as a model, this city of which Andrea Rinaldi has said with evident excess: 'a Barcellona il processo si inverte e le trasformazioni si originano prima al livello dello spazio pubblico e poi della forma architettonica' ('in Barcelona the process is inverted and the transformations originate at the level of public space and then go on to architectural form') . . . in this city nothing is guaranteed. And this is what makes it the same as any other, and a sister city to all.

I would add sister, little sister, of London above all. London has acted as a brilliant mirror in which Barcelona has encountered the way of telling its tale to the world.

I foresee a hard road for a world that will not be better if its cities do not improve, and I believe it is possible for them to improve. And I take a stand with Jaime Lerner, ex-mayor of Curitiba, Brazil, in asking universities and nations to stop telling a tale of urban tragedy and begin to write a new ending, which will be a positive one, mark my words.

Ten points on an Urbanistic Methodology

Oriol Bohigas

1. The city as a political phenomenon

The city is a political phenomenon, and as such it is loaded with ideology and with political praxis. It is the continuity of a common ideology and programmes by the three Socialist mayors – Serra,

Maragall and Clos – and their collaborators that have made the coherent transformation of Barcelona possible.

2. The city as domain of the commonality

These political and urban ideas are based on a radical statement: the city is the indispensable physical domain for the modern development of a coherent commonality. It is not the place of the individual, but the place of the individuals who together make up a community. Very different from what a famous British politician said, that there was no such thing as 'community', only individuals and the State. It is the relation between individuals that constantly weaves the threads of ideas and expanding information. The city offers the fullest guarantees for this information, for access to the product of that information and for the putting into effect of any socio-political programme based on that information. There can be no civilisation without these three factors.

The new voices of technology have recently tended to say that the traditional city is going to find itself replaced by a series of telematic networks which will constitute a city without a site. This is an anthropological and ecological nonsense. It is a vision put forward by certain political ideas which are opposed to giving priority to the collective and in favour of the privatisation of the public domain.

3. Tensions and chance as instruments of information

When I said that the city provides us with certain irreplaceable instruments of information I mean the enriching presence of tensions and of chance. It is

only with the potentially conflictive superimposition of singularities and differences and the unforeseen gifts of chance that progress can be made in the process of civilisation, with the move from the structure of the tribe to the civilising cohesion of the city.

The city is a centre of enriching conflicts which are only resolved in their affirmation as such or in the coexistence of other conflicts with different origins. It does seem to me that the great error made by the urbanism of the Athens Charter was the attempt to cancel out these conflicts. To eliminate them instead of resolving them with the recognition of other conflicts. Urban expressways, the 7V of Le Corbusier, functional zoning, directional centres, the great shopping areas: these have not served to resolve problems, but have instead destroyed the character and the function of many European cities.

4. The public space is the city

If we start out from the idea that the city is the physical domain for the modern development of the commonality, we have to accept that in physical terms the city is the conjunction of its public spaces. The public space is the city: here we have one of the basic principles of the urban theory of Barcelona's three Socialist mayors.

In order for the urban space to fulfil its allotted role it has to resolve two questions: identity and legibility.

5. Identity

The identity of a public space is tied up with the physical and social identity of its wider setting.

However, this identification is bound by limits of scale that are normally smaller than those of the city as a whole. This being so, if authentic collective identities are to be maintained and created it is necessary to understand the city not as a global, unitary system but as a number of relatively autonomous small systems. In the case of the reconstruction of the existing city, these autonomous systems may coincide with the traditional neighbourhood make-up. I believe that this understanding of the city as the sum of its neighbourhoods or identifiable fragments has also been one of the basic criteria in the reconstruction of Barcelona, with all its political significance and with the creation of the corresponding decentralised administrative instruments.

However, we are dealing here not simply with the identity of the neighbourhood, but with the particular representative identity of each fragment of the urban space; in other words, with the coherence of its form, its function, its image. The space of collective life must be not a residual space but a planned and meaningful space, designed in detail, to which the various public and private constructions must be subordinated. If this hierarchy is not established the city ceases to exist, as can be seen in so many suburbs and peripheral zones of European cities which have turned away from their urban values to become parodies of certain American or Asian cities.

6. Legibility

The designed form of the public space – that is, of the city – has to meet one other indispensable condition: to be easily readable, to be compre-

hensible. If this is not so, if the citizens do not have the sense of being carried along by spaces which communicate their identity and enable them to predict itineraries and convergences, the city loses a considerable part of its capacity in terms of information and accessibility. In other words, it ceases to be a stimulus to collective life.

In order to establish a comprehensible language it is necessary to reuse the semantics and the syntax that the citizen has already assimilated by means of the accumulation and superimposition of the terms of a traditional grammar. It is not a matter of simply reproducing the historical morphologies but of reinterpreting what is legible and anthropologically embodied in the street, the square, the garden, the monument, the city block, etc. No doubt with these ideas I will be accused by many supposedly innovative urbanists of being conservative, reactionary, antiquated. But I want to insist on the fact that the city has a language of its own which it is very difficult to escape. It is not a matter of reproducing Haussmann's boulevards, or the street grids of the nineteenth century, or baroque squares or the gardens of Le Nôtre. It is a matter of analysing, for example, what constitutes the centripetal values of these squares, what is the pluri-functional power of a street lined with shops, what are the dimensions that have permitted the establishment of the most frequent typologies. And it is a matter of being aware of how the abandoning of these canons results in the death of the city: the residual spaces of the periphery and the suburb, the vast shopping centres on the outskirts of the city, the urban expressways, the university campus at a considerable distance from the urban core, etc.

7. Architectural projects versus General Plans

All of the above considerations bring us to another very important conclusion which Barcelona has managed to apply: the urbanistic instruments for the reconstruction and the extension of a city cannot be limited to normative and quantitative General Plans. It is necessary to go further in terms of what is required of the design. It is necessary to give concrete definition to the urban forms. In other words, instead of utilising the General Plans as the sufficient document, a series of one-off Urban Projects have to be imposed. It is a matter of replacing Urbanism with Architecture. It is necessary to design the public space – that is, the city – point by point, area by area, in architectural terms. The General Plan may serve very well as a scheme of intentions but it will not be effective until it is the sum of these projects, plus the study of the large-scale general systems of the wider territory, plus the political definition of objectives and methods. During these last thirty years General Plans have justified all over Europe the dissolution of the city, its lack of physical and social continuity, its fragmentation into ghettos, and have paved the way for criminal speculation in non-development land. And they have, in addition, counterfeited a spirit of popular participation, whose criteria cannot logically be extended beyond the local neighbourhood dimension and beyond a comprehensible time span.

8. The continuity of the centralities

The controlling of the city on the basis of a series of urban projects rather than unformalised General Plans makes it possible to give a continuity to the

urban character, the continuity of relative centralities. This is one way of overcoming the acute social differences between historic centre and periphery.

I am aware that in these last few years many voices have spoken out in defence of the diffuse, informalised city of the peripheries as the desirable and foreseeable future of the modern city. The *ville éclatée*, the *terrain vague*. This position seems to me to be extremely mistaken.

The peripheries have not been built to satisfy the wishes of the users. They have appeared for two reasons, which correspond to the interests of the capital invested in public or private development and to conservative policy: to exploit through speculation the value of plots that were outside of the area scheduled for development, and to segregate from the main body of the community those social groups and activities regarded as problematic by the dominant classes. The urbanists who uphold the model of the periphery seem not to realise that all they are doing is putting themselves on the side of the market speculators, without adding any kind of ethical consideration. As certain neo-liberal politicians say, the market takes over from policy, without considering the economic and social damage suffered by the periphery and even by the suburb. In other words, without culture, without politics.

9. Architectural quality: between service and revolutionary prophecy

No urbanistic proposal will make any kind of sense if it does not rest on architectural quality. This is a difficult issue. If the city and architecture are to be at the service of society, they need to be accepted

and understood by society. But if architecture is an art, a cultural effort, it must be an act of innovation towards the future, in opposition to established customs. Good architecture cannot avoid being a prophecy, in conflict with actuality. On the one hand actual service in the here and now and on the other hand anti-establishment prophecy: this is the difficult dilemma which good architecture has to resolve.

10. Architecture as a project for the city

I do not want to conclude without referring to another architectural problem. It is evident that these days there is a great split in the diversity of architectural output. On the one hand there is the tightly rationed production of the great architects which is published in the magazines and shown in the exhibitions. On the other hand there is the superabundance of real architecture, that which is constructed in our horrible suburbs, along our holiday coasts, on the edges of our motorways, in our shopping centres. A very bad architecture, the worst in history, which destroys cities and landscapes.

There are many reasons which serve to explain this phenomenon, but the most evident ones are the typological peculiarity of the great projects and the commercialisation of vulgar architecture. The great Ivory Tower projects are no longer capable of putting forward methodological and stylistic models, and as a result the majority of vulgar architecture cannot even resort to the mannered copy.

Clearly we are not in any condition today to call for the creation of academic models, as has

occurred in the history of all styles. Perhaps the only possibility open to us is that of establishing a rule that is more methodological than stylistic: that architecture should be primordially a consequence of the form of the city and of the landscape and should participate in the new configuration of these. This would be a good instrument for a new order, in opposition to the self-satisfied lucubrations of good architecture and the lack of culture of vulgar architecture.

I began by saying that the city must be an architectural project and I have ended by saying that the solution to the present problems of architecture may be to design it as part of the city.

Conclusion

My intention was to give a simple informal speech of thanks for the medal. But I see that it has come out too academic and, as a result, boring and pedantic. And perhaps futile, too: I am afraid I have spoken of principles that are too simple and too familiar for such an important audience from the Olympus of the British architectural profession. Please forgive me. I could not resist the temptation of underlining these ten successive and inter-linked programmatic points, as a consequence of the initial fact of Barcelona's political approach to urbanism. If our mayors had been Thatcherites, the city today would be very different. These points and their methodological coherence would not have been possible without the political lines marked out by our three Socialist mayors, Serra, Maragall and Clos. The credit is theirs, and it is they who deserve our thanks.