

## **Mutations of Barcelona's Cultural Policy Model: Political change, local planning and political instrumentalization of culture in Barcelona**

Joaquim Rius-Ulldemolins

University of Valencia

joaquim.rius@uv.es

Marc Roig-Badia

University Ramon Llull

marcrb@blanquerna.url.edu

### **Abstract**

Barcelona has been a poster child for the entrepreneurial turn in cultural policy, with an approach based on seizing opportunities for promoting the city in the global arena. However, after the 2008 crisis and the ensuing public budget cuts, growing opposition to the model emerged. Criticism of the city's cultural model crystallized in the Leftist, activist candidacy of *Barcelona en Comú*, a new party that took power in 2015. Since then, pro-commons discourses on cultural policy have emerged that criticize the past model. The new pro-commons approach proposes a radical turn advocating policy as a tool for cultural democratization. Yet this Left-wing populist orientation has encountered great hurdles to changing the Barcelona Cultural Policy Model (which is based on artistic institutions, creative factories and the instrumentalization of culture for urban branding). Indeed, analysis of the structural cultural expenses of the City Council and the new local cultural plan reveals a continuation of the idea of the creative, entrepreneurial city, focusing once again on developing cultural facilities and fostering new urban and cultural clustering. Thus, rather than a radical change in cultural policy, we see great continuities with the previous Creative City Model.

**Keywords:** cultural policy, creative city, local government, political change, instrumentalization of culture, pro-commons.

## Introduction

Since the end of the 20th Century, Barcelona's urban strategy has been increasingly based on the development of an urban model that combines the 'Creative City' paradigm and the development of creative industries (Pareja-Eastaway et al. 2007, Zamorano and Rodríguez Morató 2015). Based on a considerable cultural and architectural heritage (Jones and Svejnova 2017), the new local government that emerged from Spain's transition to democracy in the late 1980s developed a local strategy in which culture became ever more central (McNeill 2003, Mascarell 2007). In this context, the so-called 'Barcelona Model' took shape, one of its pillars being cultural policy — one that was increasingly questioned (Blanco 2009, Delgado 2007).

Barcelona provides a case that is both singular and that also sheds light on a general trend — namely the ever more central role played by cultural policy and the way that policy has been increasingly captured by instrumental objectives (Rius-Ulldemolins and Sánchez 2015, Feenstra and Tormey 2021). These culture-led urban plans have faced growing opposition to their goals given their gentrifying or mechanizing effects on urban space (Gray 2008, Rius-Ulldemolins, Flor Moreno, and Hernández 2017). This is the case of the large Spanish cities. The crisis started in 2008, with outrage over public spending cuts and the growing social inequality. This led to a wave of mass-protests and mobilizations, followed by citizen political candidacies developing a critique of culture from a Left-wing populist standpoint (Rubio-Arostegui and Rius-Ulldemolins 2022, Jansma 2019). In this context, several authors have raised the scenario in Barcelona of a paradigm shift in cultural policy and the urban model, to make common goods and cultural rights as tools for opposing market and State policies (Salazar, Bianchi, and Blanco 2019, Barbieri 2018). Thus, cultural policy and the new digital tools have been proposed for criticizing the elite and social inequality. Moreover, cultural public action is being used to create a new model of the city that embraces an innovative pattern of relationship between citizens, The State and market in an egalitarian and democratizing sense, being described as a "constituent policy" (Zamorano 2018, Sánchez Belando and Zarlenga 2022).

These analyses use local political leaders' rationales or discourses (Fina 2021), the case study of singular cultural centers (Pradel-Miquel 2021, Eizaguirre and Parés 2019) and the deployment of new digital technologies (Fuster Morell and Senabre Hidalgo 2020) to support their claims, as if trends could constitute a paradigmatic action or change the overall cultural system and its relations with The State and cultural industries. However, our thesis is that since 2015, with the constitution of the new government of *Barcelona en Comú* (BEC), we have witnessed the renewal of the discourse on cultural policy. Yet instead of a radical transformation or clear rupture with the past model, what we see is metamorphosis of the earlier 'Creative City Model'.

These analyses are based on local political leaders' rationales and discourses (Fina 2021), the study of specific cases of singular cultural centers (Pradel-Miquel 2021, Eizaguirre and Parés 2019), and the roll-out of new technologies (Fuster Morell and Senabre Hidalgo 2020) to support their claims, as if this could rise to paradigmatic action or change the cultural system and its relations with The State and cultural industries. However, the thesis of this paper is that since the new BEC local government taking power in 2015, we have witnessed a renewal of the discourse on cultural policy and a metamorphosis of the Creative City Model rather than a break with it.

Hence, we started by examining the data on long-term urban cultural planning and the structural programs of cultural policies. Here, we considered representative actions, eschewing purely discursive analysis (as in the aforementioned studies) or singular cases that cannot be extrapolated. Thus, the choice of case studies was based on selecting the most relevant actions of *Barcelona en Comú* ('Barcelona in Common', hereafter BEC or *comuns*). Therefore, we have chosen Central Action Plans such as *Fem Cultura* ('Let's Make Culture' in Catalan) and the Barcelona Cultural Rights Plan (2021-2023).

This paper is part of the results of a project funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science and carried out between 2019 and 2023. The project was directed by the authors and sought to map and evaluate the new post-creative city paradigm and the transformations in urban cultural policy in Spain (anonymized reference). The following sources were consulted to analyze the

budget and cultural policy actions: (a) Official Local Gazette (1980-1994), (b) Reports of the Barcelona Institute of Culture (1995-2010), (c) Settled Budgets of the Barcelona City Council (Ajuntament de Barcelona 1980-2021). In relation to the Cultural Rights Plan, the general document was analyzed as well as the specific documents for each measure in the plan (Barcelona City Council 2021). Finally, various interviews were carried out with those responsible for cultural policy such as Sergi Diaz (Head of the Network of Civic Centers) and Daniel Granados (Chief of Department of Cultural Rights).

### **Cultural policy in Barcelona: mutations of the City and culture model (1980-2022)**

Since the restoration of democracy in 1978, Barcelona has had governments of various political persuasions. However, during the first democratic public administrations, the City Council was dominated by the Catalan Socialist Party (*Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya*, henceforth PSC), which governed from 1979 onwards, and with absolute majorities between 1982 and 2011 (McNeill 2003). It was then that the internationally famed 'City Model' was drawn up, combining outstanding leadership in transforming Barcelona from an industrial city to one of services and tourism (Pareja-Eastaway et al. 2007). The model also fostered urban projects in which architecture and public art stood out for their quality and innovation (Jones and Svejnova 2017, Subirós 1999). Under Mayor Maragall, urban renewal projects were carried out in the old city, with reorganization and inclusive urbanism in the periphery and the building of cultural clusters in Montjuïc, les Glòries and Raval districts (Zarlenga, Rius-Ulldemolins, and Rodríguez 2016).

This modernizing impulse opposed both the legacy of the dictatorship and the Conservative nationalist governments of the Generalitat (Maragall 1986, McNeill 2001). Successive Socialist City Councils initially drew up political initiatives that were of a Social-Democratic nature in the 1980s, and were more Social-Liberal in the 1990s and 2000s (Marshall 2000), and that were increasingly slated for their elitist drift (Degen and García 2012, Fernández

González 2014). This cycle of Socialist rule formed the basis of the development model, which was interrupted in 2011 with the victory of *Convergència i Unió* (CiU), a Conservative right-wing coalition. However, this stage did not last long and in the 2015 elections, the party led by Leftist activist Ada Colau, *Barcelona en Comú* (henceforth BEC), won the most seats. It has governed the City Council since 2016 in coalition with the PSC.

In cultural policies, the so-called 'Barcelona Model' is defined by the following five aspects:

(a) The local government's exceptional leadership in the fields of culture, town planning, and architectural heritage (especially, Ildefons Cerda and Antoni Gaudí) to forge a singular identity for Barcelona (Jones and Svejnova 2017, Rius-Ulldemolins 2014),

(b) The instrumentalization of culture in the urban renewal of blighted central districts such as Raval or in de-industrializing districts such as Poblenou (Mansilla and Milano 2019), or as an opportunity to develop new urban creative and cultural clusters such as Montjuïc and Glòries (Maddah, Arauzo-Carod, and López 2021),

(c) The use of key global sports and cultural events such as the 1992 Olympics, The 2004 Forum of Cultures (Subirós 1998, García 2004), thematic years and UNESCO creative city labels (Patricio Mulero and Rius-Ulldemolins 2017) to foster the city's cultural image and to highlight and spread Barcelona's cultural urban brand (Zamorano and Rodríguez Morató 2015),

(d) The growing importance of culture in planning local strategy and in drawing up strategic cultural plans that forge public-private cooperation and develop cultural sectors as a whole (Rius-Ulldemolins and Sánchez 2015),

(e) The institutionalization of citizen participation in culture with the Local Culture Council and the co-management of local facilities, especially community centers (called *centres cívics* in Barcelona) and public libraries (Sánchez 2015).

The importance given to culture in local government has been reflected in earmarking a sizeable chunk of the budget to culture (see Figures 1 and 2).

Figure 1 - Cultural spending trends in Barcelona (1980-2020). Euros

Figure 2 – Percentage of Barcelona City Council spending on culture (1980-2022)

On the other hand, the large cultural facilities show how the local government cultural policy model lets them play a leading role within the multilevel governance system jointly set with the Catalan Government's Department of Culture and the Spanish Ministry of Culture (Rius-Ulldemolins 2014). An example of how this works in practice is the fact that Barcelona City Council funds almost half of the overall expenses of cultural facilities and programs developed in the city despite being under no obligation to do so from higher tiers of government (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2022b). Hence, this institutional configuration places the Barcelona Local Government in a key position when it comes to the cultural governance of institutions yet also gives it a lot of control and influence over local and regional cultural policy (Rius-Ulldemolins 2014). In addition, the inflationary dynamics of cultural policy — in which goals and facilities tend to wax rather than wane (Dubois 2016) — can be seen in Barcelona where total spending has generally grown since 2010 (see Figure 3). This trend continued under the BEC local government, with spending rising from €38.5 m to €42.2 m even though the new City Council was initially chary of enhancing large cultural facilities (cf. Sureda 2015).

Figure 3 – Funding of Barcelona City Council consortia and foundations (2010-2020). Euros \*

The forms of cultural management and financing often reveal the orientations and priorities of cultural policy more reliably than discourses and rationales given that the latter are often more linked to ideological principles than the measures that are carried out (Menger 2017). Notwithstanding the political changes, analyzing Barcelona's cultural policy organization chart

shows strong consistency and continuity. An underlying trend is The Barcelona Institute of Culture's (ICUB) steady incorporation of greater powers to make culture permeate every aspect of Barcelona City Council's policies. Since the ICUB's foundation in the mid-1990s, it has incorporated the various cultural competencies of the City Council that in many other local governments make up autonomous departments, such as Festivals and Heritage (incorporated in 1995), Strategic Cultural Projects (Barcelona Forum of Cultures 2004 or the Candidacy for City of Literature in 2012-2016). In 2011, it also took over management of the Civic Centers program (57 community centers spread throughout the city). While the organizational chart changed several times between 1997 and 2011, it basically stayed true to a holistic notion of cultural management spanning heritage culture, contemporary creation, community culture, traditional festivities, and large cultural institutions. In fact, when *Convergència i Unió* (Nationalist Right-wing Party) took control of the City Council, there were no major changes with the sole exception of the creation of a Creativity and Innovation Department. In other words, policy continued to follow the logic of the Creative City Model consistent with an entrepreneurial perspective of culture shared by both Social Democrats and those on the Liberal Right (Hesmondhalgh et al. 2015).

This stability is confirmed by cultural spending priorities. On the one hand, one can see the crucial importance of spending on large cultural facilities (consortiums and foundations) fostering 'High Culture'. In 2001, cultural facilities made up €23.3 m of the public budget (25.8%), in 2010 this funding rose to €32.3 m (28.2% of the total), and then to €37.2 m in 2014 (28.1% of the total) during the Conservative Right's spell in office but that did not drop in the succeeding *Barcelona en Comú* period, when a new record of €42.2 m was chalked up (24.8% of the total).

Figure 4 - Cultural expenditure by program type (2014-2020) (figures in Euros)

This shows that when it comes to spending on 'High Culture' institutions, there is little to choose between 'Liberal Right' and 'New Left' governments given that in practice both treat this kind of spending as a priority. Against this background of stability and inertia, there is a slight change in the make-up the funding of cultural programs. Here, Figure 5 shows a fall in percentage terms (though not in absolute figures) of public funding of consortia and foundations (which dropped from 26.6% to 24.3%).

Figure 5 - Percentage of public cultural spending by programs in Barcelona, 2004-2020

One can see growth in community culture programs, which are more akin to the 'Cultural Democracy' approach taken by Nordic-style Social Democracy and anti-authoritarian Leftism (Urfalino 1996, Dubois 2015). That said, the changes are fairly slight: since 2010, spending on the Civic Centers program was over €11.5 m and peaked in 2017 at €15.2 m. A trend emerges if we compare the percentage of the total budget spent by Barcelona's local government over several administrations. This figure was 8.6% in the last PSC period (2010-2011), 9.7% in the CiU one (2012-2015), and 10.8% in the BEC period (2016-2020). Thus, there was a slight rise over the whole period, being more marked under the BEC government. Yet the level of relative spending on culture is remarkably similar among all administrations, whether Right-Wing, Left-Wing, or 'New Left'. One can therefore say that there is a great deal of consensus among the parties on the culture's importance in Barcelona's programs.

*Change of government, political instability and changes in the Barcelona urban and cultural model*

The victory of the activist Ada Colau sparked great expectations of change in the local model of the city and also in its instrumentalizing relationship with culture, to the point where some authors



described it as a "constituent moment" (Zamorano 2018) or a challenge to market-centric policies (Sánchez Belando and Zarlenga 2022). The incoming administration featured many activists with lots of ideas but with little experience of public management. Some radical changes were considered, such as splitting cultural management into two fields: (1) One bringing together the management of cultural promotion and large cultural facilities and (2) A new field fostering cultural participation and closer to BEC's 'cultural democracy' (Barcelona en Comú 2015). The idea of splitting cultural management into these two areas (each under a separate manager) was bitterly criticized by some cultural sectors and the plan was quickly scrapped (Barranco, Chavaría, and Sesé 2015).

The city's large cultural institutions and industries thus viewed the new local government with great concern (Vila-Sanjuán and Molina 2015), fearing major cuts in funding for 'High Culture'. This fear was hardly surprising given the criticisms levelled at such spending by the culture nucleus of the new *Barcelona en Comú* party. BEC criticized The Barcelona Model as elitist and neo-Liberal and opted for a common culture conception of cultural management (Rowan 2016), materialized in: (a) Support of social movement centers; (b) The transformation of civic centers from public to bottom-up self-managed entities; (c) The improvement of working conditions in cultural facilities for creators; (d) The transformation of the local culture council into a decision-making and policy-managing body, "in which social and educational workers and activists will play active roles, breaking with a model in which the body is merely of a consultative nature and run by the cultural elite (Barcelona en Comú 2015). Within this critical campaign, sectors of the citizen elite and major local media sectors opposed these reforms (Cf. Barranco, Chavaría, and Sesé 2015), leading to concern and paralysis in the new government, which needed to drum up support given that it only commanded a minority of seats (Montañés 2017). The upshot was an initial period of great uncertainty lasting over three months, with the post of Cultural Manager remaining vacant. Berta Sureda ended up being appointed as Special Commissioner (but not City Councilor, that is, without being a member of the government). However, Sureda had held various posts in the cultural world, most notably as the manager of CCCB (Barcelona Centre

for Contemporary Culture) during the Socialist mandate. This appointment was considered as a first renunciation of radical change in cultural policy and it was against this unsettled background that Sureda began a timid program of changes in local cultural management. Yet she was dismissed from her post in July 2016 — just a year after starting the project and before it had had time to bear fruits. This ended the first mandate of the commons in culture (2015-2016).

The main reason for this dismissal stemmed from the need to reach government pacts with other parties, in this case, the PSC. However, this change also reflects the difficulty of moving from theory to practice in the context of political weakness and the inertia of the Barcelona urban and cultural model (Montañés 2017). It also reflects the importance given to culture by other political sectors such as the Socialists as an integral part of their city model. It was not by chance that the new Deputy Mayor and leader of the Socialist ranks, Jaume Collboni, sought to personally assume responsibility for culture, restoring its City Councilor rank (lost during the brief commons mandate) and including it in his Business and Innovation portfolio and announcement of 34 “key measures” for culture. Finally, Collboni decreed that the new manager of the ICUB (and, therefore Executive Head in the cultural area) would be Xavier Marcé, former head of the Regional Institute of Cultural Industries during the Socialist mandate and later senior manager of one of the biggest cultural industry companies in the city and President of the Catalan Performing Arts Association, ADETCA (1).

However, "times had changed" and this appointment sparked a great deal of unease in *Barcelona en Comú* and the cultural sectors that had supported the candidacy, who denounced the pro-business character of the appointee and his conflicts of interest. They argued that he typified the ‘revolving door’ between private and public sectors, and the way private cultural industries and their interests held sway over the public management of culture (Trelladors/es independents de la cultura 2016). Faced with these protests, the PSC supposedly suspended Marcé's appointment as Director of the ICUB but in reality, he was selected months later as Special Advisor to the Mayor — that is, the person running the cultural area and attending meetings on behalf of the City Council (ICUB 2017). In other words, the cultural sectors with

greatest economic and political weight had managed to retake control of the public cultural agenda by stealth.

### **The definition of commons cultural policy: politicization as a priority?**

Ada Colau's first term as Mayor heading *Barcelona en Comú* was a turn to the Left, especially in terms of discourse and style of government. Yet it was characterized by its weakness and instability within the framework of Catalonia's bid for independence from Spain, which led to breaking the government pact with the Socialist Party in 2017 (Dowling 2018). Part of the fallout was a succession of three heads of culture in three years and the virtual paralysis of government action in this area. However, the appointment in 2017 of Joan Subirats for the post and his re-appointment in 2019 with the new elections marked a turn towards community culture. Subirats sought to turn cultural policy into an instrument of social transformation and politicization of debates on the City (2). During this period, the Cultural Councilor showed considerable skill in conducting negotiations and reaching consensus. In performing his duties, he stressed the link culture and education and tried to imprint a political character on culture (Fina 2021). His mandate revealed a shift to a discursive approach to the Cultural Rights Plan, as we shall see below. His term of office was also marked by strong continuity in the management of large facilities and the management of libraries and civic centers (Fina 2021).

Subirats left office in October 2021 and months later, in December 2021, was appointed as Spanish Minister of Universities. Then, the former Socialist Councilor and City Manager, Jordi Martí, took over the post of Cultural Councilor (3). During this period, the policy of major cultural events pursued over the previous twenty years was ditched (Rius-Ulldemolins and Sánchez 2015) and progress was made in fostering greater transparency in public grants allocations, which are now published for all to see (Observatori dades culturals 2017). On the other hand, some new initiatives during this period had an entrepreneurial Creative City streak, as we shall discuss

below: (a) One of the greatest successes has been the UNESCO City of Literature, an initiative that emerged from the University of Barcelona, started during the CiU mandate, and was continued by the commons and renewed again during the Socialist mandate (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2015, Patricio Mulero and Rius-Ulldemolins 2017). (b) One of the star actions was the development of ‘Creation Factories’, which were in fact the product of the last stage of the Socialist government (ICUB 2006), were continued by CiU (Nationalist Right) and also promoted by the *comuns* (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2017) in a program on which over €2 m a year was spent between 2016 and 2022 (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2022b).

Figure 6 - Cultural expenditure by grant type (2014-2020)

### **The Cultural Rights Plan (PDC): a push towards cultural democracy or a hotch-potch of cross-cutting cultural initiatives?**

The Cultural Rights Plan (*Pla de Drets Culturals*, hereafter PDC) is BEC's most notable effort in the cultural policy field. Presented in the second half of the second term, it synthesizes some of the main cultural priorities and actions. However, as we will see below, more than a government plan in the classic sense of the word, it is an instrumentalizing vision of culture as a political tool. The introduction to the PDC states that rather than constituting a cultural plan catering to cultural industries and artists, and creation *per se*, it seeks to use culture as a tool for social democratization and political transformation — a thread that runs through all the PDC's goals. Thus, in the introduction to the plan, the opening paragraph states that "If during the 20th Century the right to Health and Education were the key policies contributing to equality and social democratization, in the 21st Century, cultural policies are also central to deepening this democratization, lessening inequalities and expanding the rights and opportunities of citizenship" (2021: 2). As we shall see, the PDC's discourse poses major challenges in setting cultural policy priorities. Yet the low level

of plan implementation highlights the gap between high-flown ideas and their practical application.

The application framework is part of various background and regulatory programs that had been drawn up earlier:

(a) In September 2016, the *Cultural Plan for Deprived Barcelona Neighborhoods 2016-2020* (2016) was approved with an allocation of €150 m concentrated in the 16 neighborhoods with the worst socio-economic indicators in the city. In its preamble, the plan states that cultural policies can be a key factor in the fight against social inequalities. The plan had three main goals: 1.- Stable circuit of scenic, musical and media arts from a network of cultural centers in each of city's districts. 2.- Creation of communities and networks of spectators in a self-managed and bottom-up way. 3.- Fostering an artistic apprenticeship program.

(b) In October 2017, a new initiative to foster the Creation Factories in Barcelona was approved (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2017). In the introduction to this measure, a positive light is shed on the Creation Factories program as a way to support artistic creativity and to nurture cultural production system, with creation being based on the “New Accents” Strategic Culture Plan (ICUB 2006). That cultural plan was drawn up by the Socialist local government and it is therefore a legacy of the Creative City Model that then morphed into BEC's cultural plan. This plan sees Creation Factories as the keystone to revitalizing the cultural industry and cultural markets through support for creativity within a Creative City approach.

(c) In April 2019, the government measure “Towards a Public Policy on Culture and Education” was approved (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2019). In this new measure promoted by Joan Subirats of the *comuns*, we can see a big gap between the pro-commons radical change discourses and the policy continuities in day-to-day management. The aforementioned measure was presented as far-reaching insofar as it laid the foundations for joint action in the areas of education and culture, stressed the social and educational value of cultural policies, and opened the door to the creation of a joint management body covering culture and education. Based on

these approaches, the measure established 43 specific actions, the implementation of which was very patchy. Furthermore, little progress has been made in coordinating the three agencies (Institute of Culture, Institute of Education, and the Regional and Municipal Education Consortium) with a view to forging a cross-cutting education and cultural policy (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2019).

(d) The PDC is part of the implementation framework for the 2030 Agenda. In that agenda, Barcelona stresses the ‘cultural democracy’ paradigm (based on equality of participation, appreciation of diversity, rejection of a divisive ‘High Culture’ based solely on excellence — an approach taken at the very inception of cultural policy (Urfalino 1996) (4)). The new paradigm can be seen in its initial goals such as: (1) Cultural identities; (2) Diversity; (3) expression and creation; (4) Education and training; (5) Information and communication”. However, the plan incorporates the new instrumentalizing formulation of culture that began in the 1980s with the entrepreneurial ‘Creative Cities’ turn, while shifting towards sustainable urban and social development and its social impact (Belfiore and Bennett 2007, Kagan and Hahn 2011). This shift is reflected in the following goals: (6) Urban planning, sustainability and environment, (7) Work culture and economic resources, and (8) Cooperation and governance (2021). Based on the logic of cultural democracy, the plan rejects previous cultural policy, as ‘elite culture’: "This idea involves building the legitimacy of policies on the rights of people and not on aspects that used to guide cultural policies, such as their impact on the economy or (...) the promotion/dissemination of cultural goods and services that are divorced from citizens’ interests, and that render the populace powerless to shape culture in the public sphere.” As we can see, this engenders an attitude close to Left-wing populism that defends “a culture of citizenship as opposed to a culture unrelated to citizens’ lives” (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2021).

In this regard, the PDC is not a standard cultural strategic plan — at least in Barcelona terms (Rius-Ulldemolins and Sánchez 2015) — but rather a make-over of the actions carried out by the Socialists and the *comuns* but within the framework of the cultural rights paradigm. In the first place, unlike the strategic plans of the regional or local government drawn up earlier in the

21st Century (ICUB 2006, Martinez and Rius 2010), the latest plan contains no SWOT analysis, no general and specific goals, planned actions, calendar or budget. Yet it seeks to implement no fewer than nine Government Measures of various sizes and complexities between 2021 and 2023. These measures cover a host of initiatives for fostering community creation, cross-cutting public policies dimensions such as gender diversity, urban decentralization, cooperation between education and the arts, greater sensitivity shown by the great cultural institutions, the local culture council, and by funding calls. The plan certainly aims to reform and re-orient the administration's own action towards the objectives of the *comuns* and their Left-wing populist logic (Rubio-Arostegui and Rius-Ulldemolins 2022). However, the plan barely develops new lines of cultural activity and leaves most of the city's professional cultural sector and creative industries out of the discussion.

Second, PDC does not provide a path from its goals to the actions needed to achieve them in terms of funding, human resources, and timeline. The calendar is left vague and, in fact, the actions The calendar is left vague and, in fact, the actions consisted of a government statement of intent followed by a Press Conference. In any case, most of the measures were already under way, such as creation grants and scholarships (€3 million) or the co-ordination of the *Fàbriques de la Creació* [Creation Factories] (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2022a). Furthermore, some were programs carried out by other government departments (Feminism, Urbanism) or other non-cultural organizations such as *Barcelona Activa* (business promotion agency) (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2022b). (6)

Third, the PDC plan includes a theoretical global budget of €69 m over 3 years, but as the plan itself recognizes, only €17.1 m are new resources specifically allocated for the plan's application (€5.7 m per year). The presentation report that fails to set out how much is earmarked to this new cultural scheme. In any case, if we compare the PDC budget with the general cultural budget of the local city government — €163.8 m in 2021— it is only 3.4% of the total. However, if we analyze the component measures, we can see huge differences among them (see Figure 7).

Table 1 - Budget analysis of the *Pla de Drets Culturals* (PDC) (2021-2023)

The salient points arising from our analysis of the budgets of the nine measures (see Table 1) are:

(a) Although the overall sum is similar to that presented by the City Council (€61.2 m compared to the €69 m stated) the plan's new actions (rather than those falling under previous actions or developed by other departments) fall well short of the €17 m stated (they actually only come €11.3 m). (6).

(b) The plan presents a very unbalanced budget, in Measure 1 (Culture in the Neighborhoods) 23% of the budget for the Plan's own actions has already been spent, in Measure 2 (Base Culture) 72% spent, the two items making up 94% of the total. Planned spending on various measures is either not reported or only gives a vague estimate of expenditure, which leads one to think that they are governance and/or management measures that have not been thought out.

(c) Most of the planned spending is for the building of a new cultural facility stemming from work to El Molino (variety theater/music hall) which accounts for a whopping €7.1 m (62% of the whole plan).

Figure 7 –*Arnau* Theatre and *El Molino* of Barcelona (2022)

The historic *El Molino* theater is part of the city's cultural heritage. It is not only of historical cultural interest but there are also plans to turn it into a 'Performing Arts Cluster' on Barcelona's *Paral·lel* city boulevard. However, the building does not have a defined objective but according to the local government's Head of Culture, the variety theater "will keep its 'maverick' nature, and has said that it may have room for a small-format theater, experimental theater, gastronomic culture and media" (La Vanguardia 2022). In this case, the theater site is in a central, commercial



district of the city and seems less aimed at serving citizens' cultural rights than beefing up the music and leisure scene in an area long known for its music halls and variety acts. No information is provided on either the form management of the new center will take or the kind of public guardianship to be exercised over it. Likewise, no light is cast on how the scheme will help realize the plan's goals—an omission not found in other 'Creation Factories' or the *Arnau* Theater (a performing arts center still pending reform and that was bought by the City Council in 2011. The *Arnau* Theatre has a self-managed cultural project but is still awaiting conversion (Forés Juliana 2021). In short, there is no real attempt to tie the proposed actions in with the plan's goals of fostering basic culture that is of a participatory, critical nature (Table 1).

## Conclusions

Barcelona branded itself in the 1980s and 1990s as a successful city model in terms of urban policies and use of culture as a modernization tool (Muntaner 2007). However, in the 2000s the model seemed exhausted and the use of a 'sustainability' discourse to legitimize major events such as The Forum of Cultures clearly failed (Sánchez, Rius-Ulldemolins, and Zarlenga 2013). After the brief period of Conservative government and its business turn in which the tourist and instrumentalizing approach was deepened (2011-2015), the victory of the activist Ada Colau expressed the tiredness of both the citizenry and the most marginalized cultural segments with this commercial (and often property speculation) instrumentalization of culture. Colau's election victory evinced a will to change the Barcelona cultural policy model (Montañés 2017).

As we have seen, the new stage undertaken in 2015 and especially in the second term that began in 2019 has changed the debates and approaches to culture in the city in a remarkable way. Likewise, the transformation of Barcelona's cultural policy has brought new agents (linked to social work and education) to the scene and new methodologies affecting the cross-cutting nature of cultural policies such as social inclusion, the educational dimension, equality, and gender. The

local government has thrown itself into generating reports, plans and working groups on these aspects, as can be seen in the Cultural Rights Plan (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2021). If we take these plans as indicators of the change in cultural policy, we will find a new approach differing from those taken in the past, stressing grassroots cultural access, community creation, and the promotion of artistic activism as a tool for social change. The approach can be termed Left-wing populism insofar as it leaves aside the promotion of established artists, the great cultural institutions in their traditional role of promoting 'High Culture', material cultural heritage, and traditional culture — a paradigm that sees culture as far removed from the daily lives of common folk (Barcelona en Comú 2015, Ajuntament de Barcelona 2022a).

However, less evidence of the structural transformation of cultural policy is found in the data, which reveal: (a) Great continuity in terms of absolute spending, with a growth in funding as recovery from the 2008 Global Financial Crisis gathered pace; (b) A slight change in priorities which has had little impact on the spending patterns established in the 1990s: consortiums and foundations, civic centers and libraries; (c) Difficulty in drawing up new lines of cultural activity and a weakness in planning and executing a network of appropriate self-managed centers or re-orienting cultural facilities (consortiums and foundations but also civic centers). Thus, small, singular experiences such as *Can Batlló* and other self-managed cultural centers to showcase the BEC's politicized cultural policy do not reflect a general trend — as some authors argue (Pradel-Miquel 2021, García, Eizaguirre, and Pradel 2015, Sánchez Belando 2017) — but rather the exception to the great inertia of The Barcelona Model that makes changes hard. Here, we might wonder to what extent the cultural policy of Barcelona at this stage can be characterized as a "paper tiger" insofar as it creates a host of reports and speeches but is pretty ineffective at transforming the organizational and institutional base of cultural policy (7).

It is clear that enthusiasm has slowly waned for the transformational power of culture and exploiting the *comuns* movement to achieve democratic renewal. While actions have been drawn up at the social and urban level to transform citizens' experience of culture, the goal of achieving radical changes to cultural institutions and trying new forms of citizen participation has not been

achieved. The results of almost two BEC mandates (2015-2019, 2019-2023) shows the difficulties this party have had in coming up with practical ways to make cultural policy a key tool for democratizing and rethinking the city's institutions. The first two years of the 'commons' in power were ones of political uncertainty, rendering policy chaotic and ineffective. The government's agreement with the Socialist Party (PSC) paralyzed action. It was not until Joan Subirats became Commissioner of Culture at the end of 2017 that a policy began to take shape for fostering public access to culture.

In the light of the data analyzed here, the claim of a "constituent" cultural policy (Zamorano 2018) says more about wishes than reality. We found that in general and with few exceptions, the relationship between citizenship, politics and culture has not changed nor has it spawned new forms of participation in cultural management. On the contrary, the analysis of priorities and spending structure, as well as the organization chart and those in charge reveal things have stayed much the same for the last twenty years, notwithstanding political and discursive changes. Furthermore, the idea of a cultural policy for Barcelona that defies the market (Sánchez Belando and Zarlenga 2022) seems even more based on ideological discourse than the real world of cultural policy. On the one hand, local cultural policies in Barcelona have been (since their foundation in the eighties) mainly based on supporting large facilities, civic centers and libraries (Rius-Ulldemolins and Klein 2020), with over half of their budgets going to provide a public service but not to challenge the private sector. On the other hand, the lion's share of resources are earmarked to small and medium-sized cultural industries, which in Menger's words can be characterized as constituting an "administered cultural market" (Menger 1991), which though largely subsidized, is not an alternative to a pro-commons system.

Finally, we saw that cultural policy spawns imaginaries and political discourses, and in this *Barcelona en Comú* has stood out in its ability to use culture for this purpose in what may be a pioneering trend in local left-wing governments. One wonders what will remain of these events, plans or activism centers if there is a change of government. Although the new form of cultural instrumentalization arose to combat the 'Creative City' paradigm, it basically shares several

features of this entrepreneurial city model. One of them is to move the arts and creators away from the center of cultural policies, thus developing a cultural policy "without culture" or in any case, one in which The Arts play second fiddle to the goals of political activism. It seems to us much more appropriate to see the relationship between the political change occurring in 2015 as engendering a mutation in Barcelona's cultural policy model rather than as ushering in a radical departure from the existing model. Here, it more fitting to speak of a 'Neo-Creative City Model' than of a post-creative one.

## Notes

(1) Association of Theatre Companies of Catalonia (ADETCA).

(2) Joan Subirats was appointed as culture commissioner after the municipal government crisis of 2017 in which *Barcelona en Comú* broke with the Socialist Party and decided to govern alone with 11 city councilors. Subirats, Full Professor of Political Science at the Autonomous University of Barcelona, was one of the promoters of the *Guanyem* citizen platform, which later became *Barcelona en Comú*. In the following elections of 2019, Subirats was positioned as second in the electoral lists and would later hold the position of Deputy Mayor for Culture, Education, Science and Community until his appointment as Minister of Universities in December 2021.

(3) It is very significant that the Head of Culture is Jordi Martí, who was manager of the ICUB (1999-2013) and Culture Delegate with the Socialist Party (2007-2011) and author of its latest strategic plan (ICUB 2006). Yet the continuities do not end here and in fact Cultural Management has been headed by Marta Clarí since 2019, a senior position, and who was Manager of the Institute of Culture during the CiU mandate (2010-2015), this being a political appointment.

(4) A year earlier, the Mayor of Barcelona, Ada Colau, signed the "Rome Charter 2020. The right to participate freely and fully in cultural life is vital for our cities and communities". This letter is part of a broad movement of cities sponsored by the international organization United Cities and Local Governments, (UCLG) in which Latin American cities such as Mexico City, Medellín, Bogotá, and in Europe Lisbon, Berlin, and Rome stand out. The approval of the Cultural Rights Plan for Barcelona became a chance for the city to put itself at the forefront of international pioneering cities in the application of cultural policies focusing on cultural rights, active participation in cultural life, and the use of space public, and in turn reinforced the action principles of the 2030 Agenda.

(5) This is the case of low-cost 'social' rents to help creators and cultural intermediaries (€1 m). The program is not specific given that it forms part of a more general program for the general revitalization of the commercial fabric hurt by digitization and COVID.

(6) We understand that usual expenses such as subsidies, festivals, etc. should be ruled out. As well as actions not contributing to or developed by Culture such as the EQUICOM program or the Neighborhood Plan drawn up by Social Services and Urban Planning, respectively

(7) Barcelona City Council, within the framework of *Cultura Viva* [Living Culture] has carried out research and published up to twelve reports on Community Arts and Cultural Participation during this period (2015-2022): 1. Cooperative culture in Barcelona. Practical guide for cultural cooperatives. 2. Community management of culture in Barcelona. Values, challenges and proposals. 3. A new economy for a new culture. Transformative cultural and economic innovations in the city of Barcelona. 4. Study of live music venues in Barcelona. 5. Good practices for musical. 5. contracting. 6. RadioLab. Mapping and research on the future of radio. 7. Mapping of memory communities. 8. State of the art on public and community digital collections in Barcelona. 9. Culture and feminisms: Measures to advance in the introduction of the feminist perspective in the field of culture in Barcelona. 10. Community Arts Table prototype. How to strengthen community arts in the city of Barcelona? 11. We strengthen community arts. An exploratory analysis of community arts practices in the city of Barcelona. 12. Report on the state of vulnerability and needs of the basic culture of the city of Barcelona.

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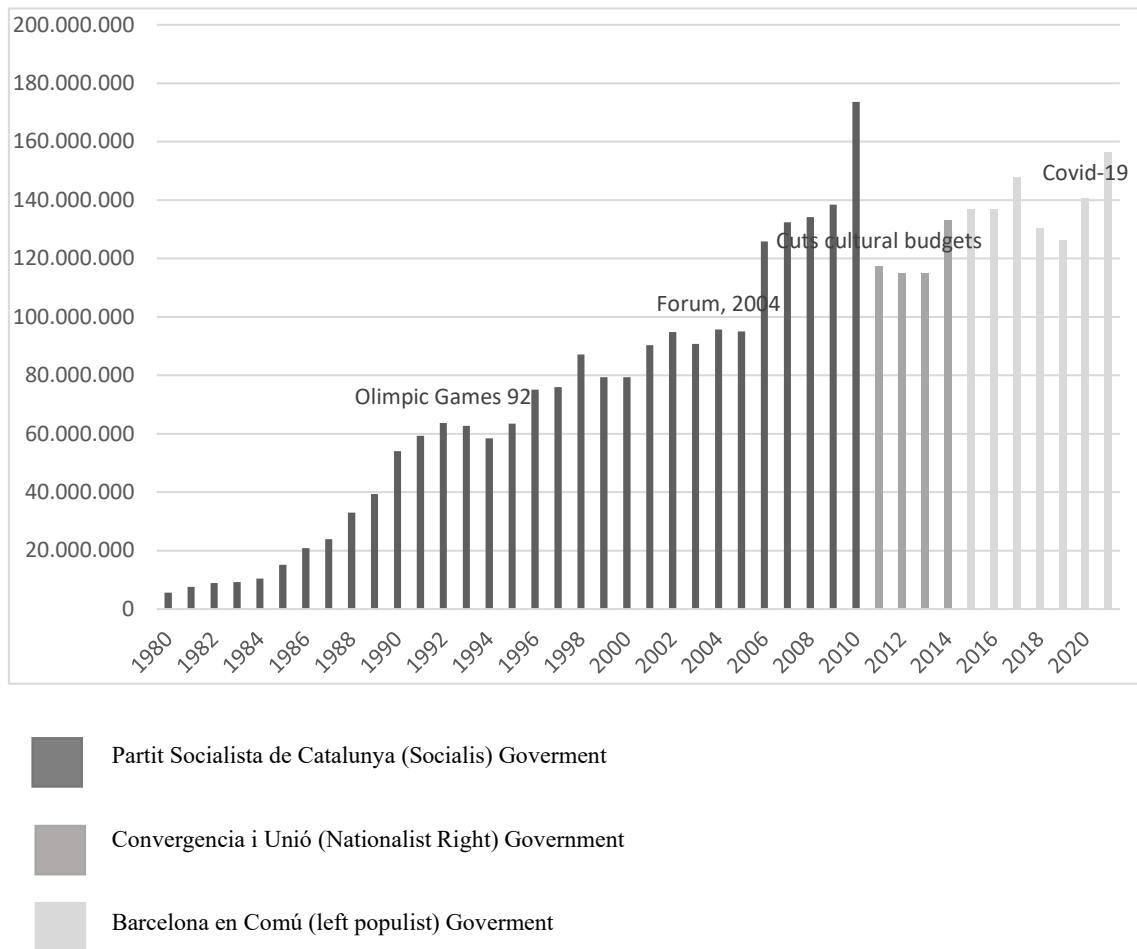
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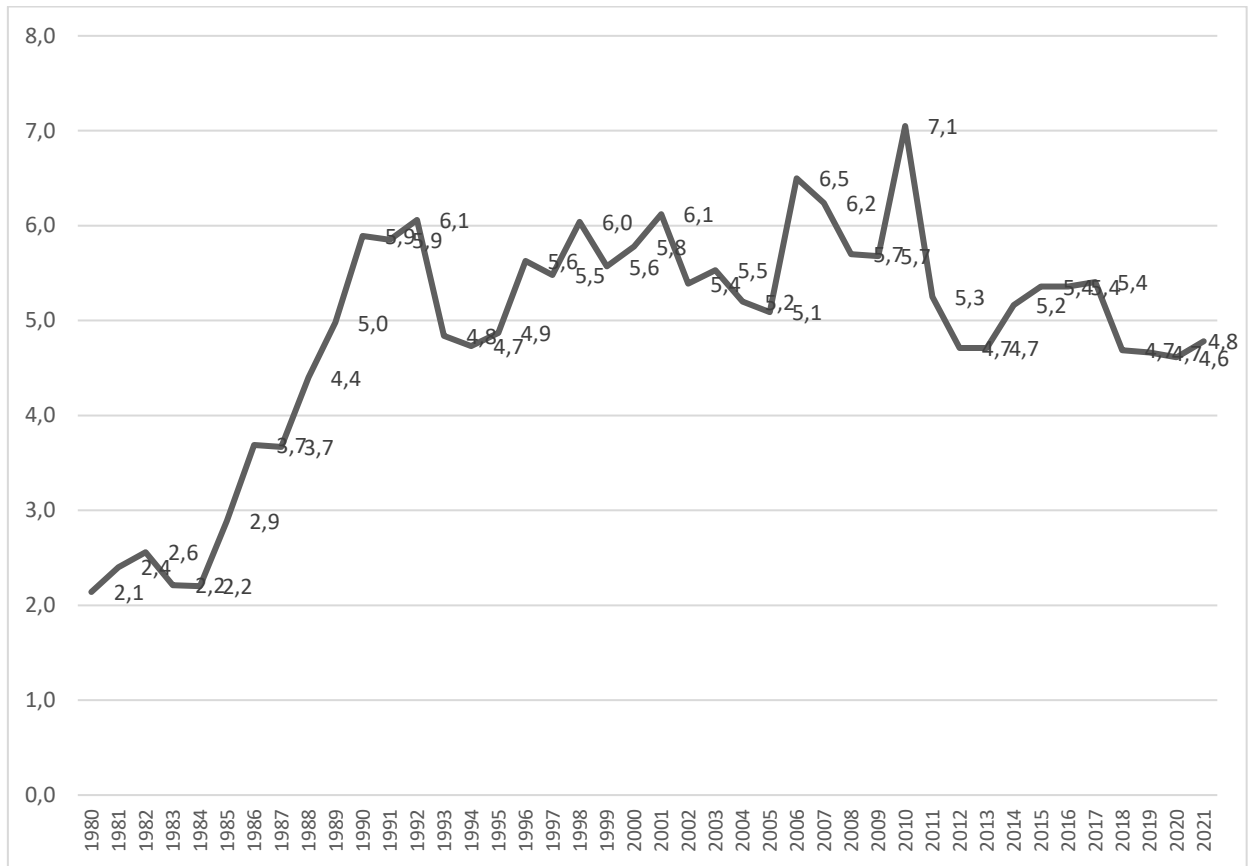
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Figure 1 - Evolution of cultural expenditure in Barcelona (1980-2020). Euros



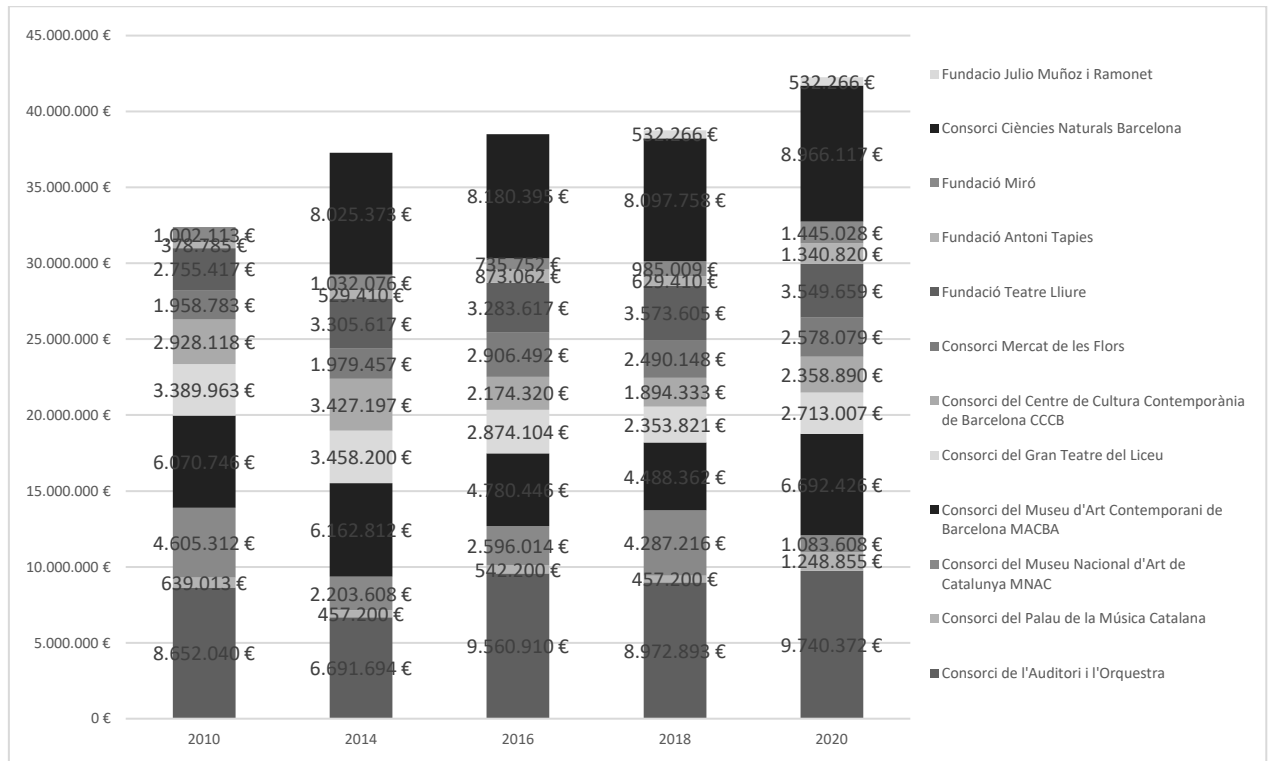
Source: the authors from City Council of Barcelona (Ajuntament de Barcelona 1980-2021).

Figure 2 – Percentage of Barcelona City Council expenditure dedicated to culture (1980-2022)



Source: the authors from City Council of Barcelona (Ajuntament de Barcelona 1980-2021).

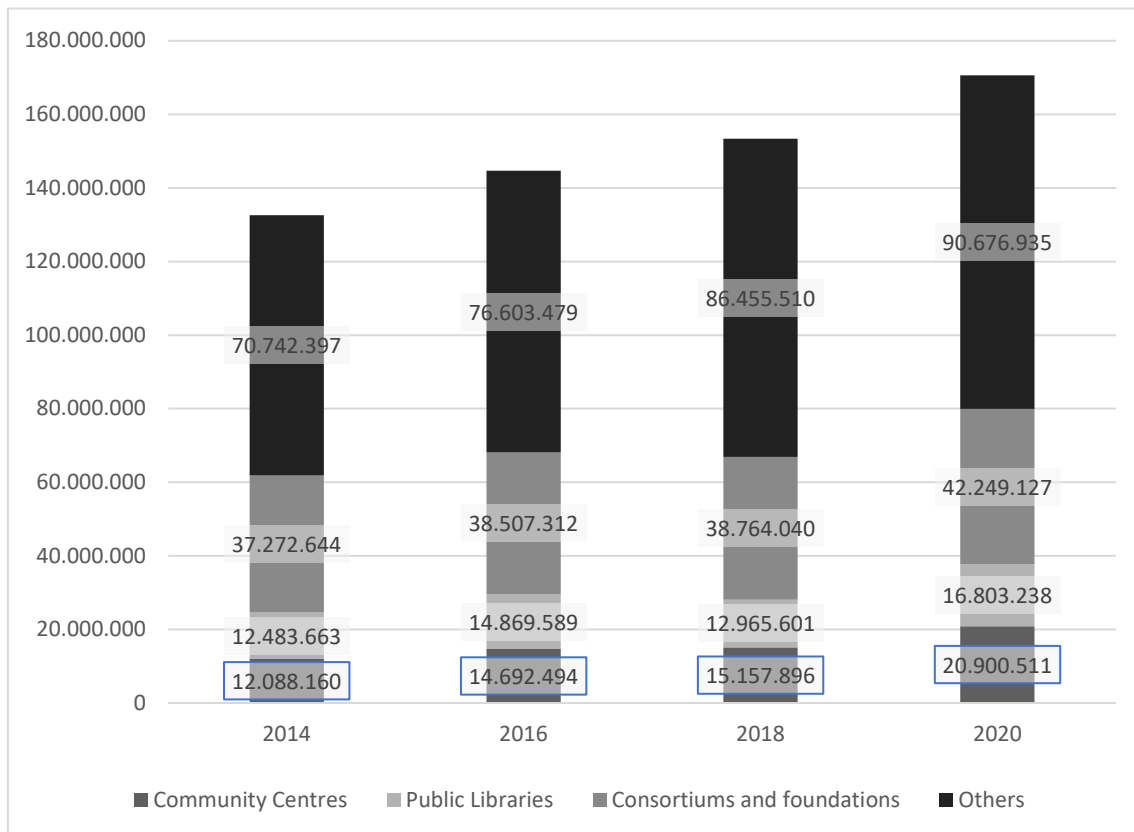
Figure 3 – Financing to cultural consortia and foundations of the Barcelona City Council (2010-2020). Euros \*



Source: the authors from City Council of Barcelona (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2022b, Institut de Cultura de Barcelona 2011).

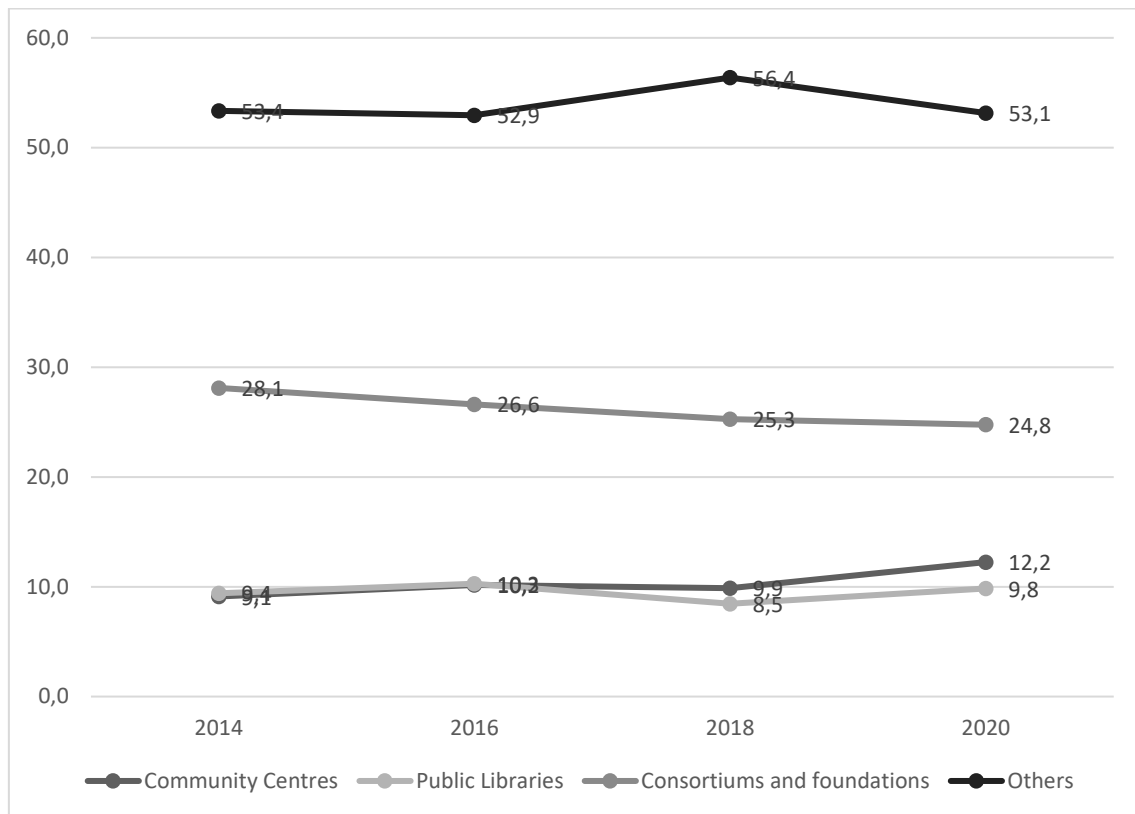
\* The Consortium of Public Libraries and the Picasso Museum have not been included in the list of consortia in this case, since in 2010 and 2014 they were not considered in this chapter IV (transferences) but in chapter II (own organization expenses).

Figure 4 - Cultural expenditure settled by type of program (2014-2020). Euros



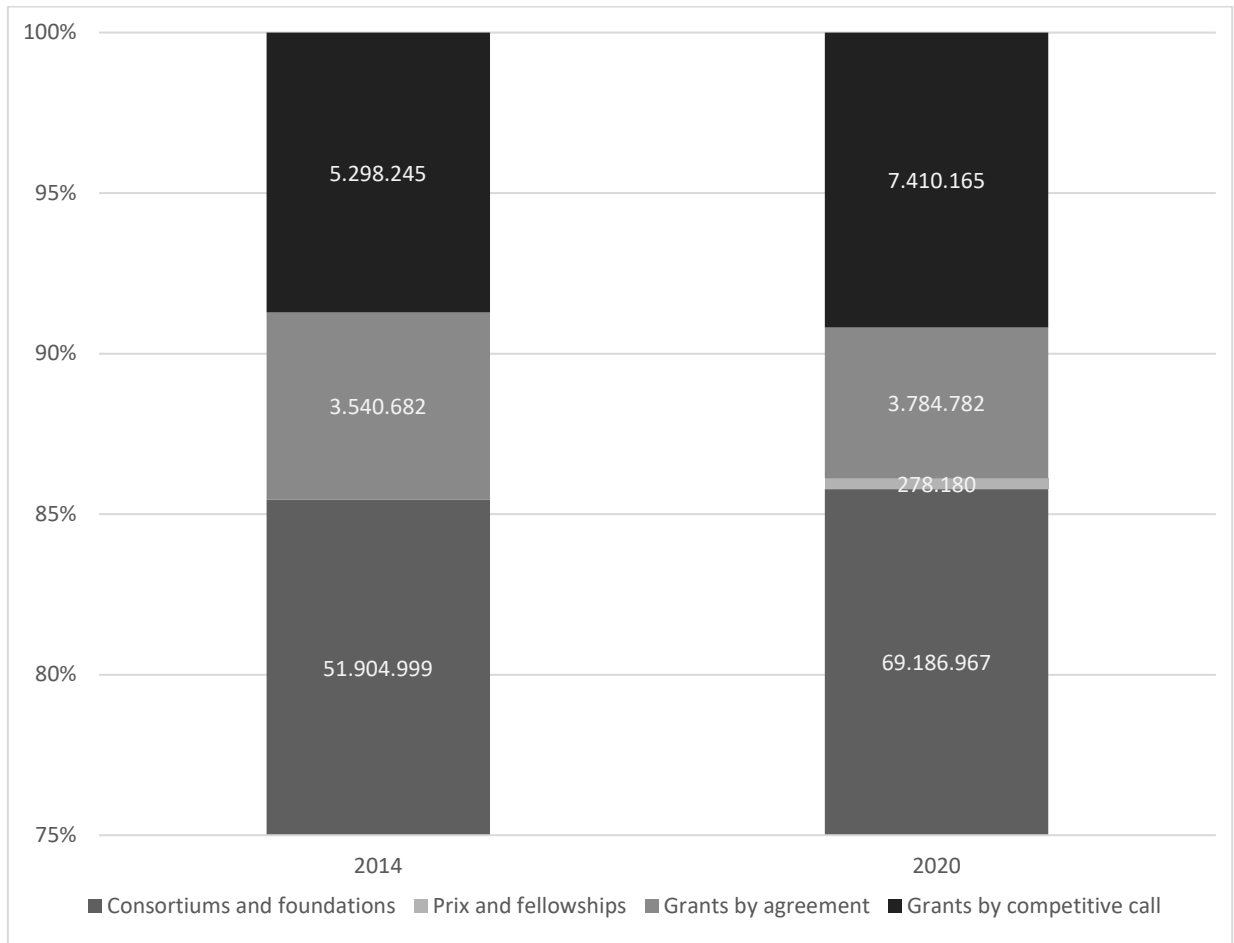
Source: the authors from City Council of Barcelona (2006-2021).

Figure 5 - Percentage of public cultural spending by programs in Barcelona, 2004-2020



Source: the authors from City Council of Barcelona (2006-2021).

Figure 6 - Cultural expenditure settled by type of grant (2014-2020)



Source: the authors from City Council of Barcelona (2006-2021).

Figure 7 –Arnau Theatre and *El Molino* of Barcelona (2022)



Photo 1: Teatro Arnau in 2022, to be renovated, 2021. Photo 2: Facade of El Molino in 2022.

Source: the authors.



Table 1 - Budget analysis of the Pla Fem Cultura (2021-2023)

	New action	Belongs to Culture programme	Annual budget	Total budget	Inversion	Total general (budget and inversion)	Total Plan
<b>Action #1 - Culture in deprived neighbourhoods and community action: right to cultural practices and new centralities</b>							
Community Centres Plan	No	Yes	1.236,5	3.709,5	250,0	3.959,5	
Cultura viva (Young Performance Culture)	Yes	Yes	676,0	2.028,0		2.028,0	2.028,0
EQUICOM (Community Action)	Yes	No (Services socials)	90,0	270,0		270,0	
Deprived Neighbourhoods Plan	No	No (Urbanism)		1.000,0		1.000,0	
Artistic creativity of communities	Yes	Yes	186,7	560,1		560,1	560,1
Connexions (Primary Schools)	No	No (Education)			2.350,0	2.350,0	
Decentralization of Mercè (Local festivity)	No	Yes	4.614,0	13.842,0		13.842,0	
<i>Subtotal</i>						24.009,6	2.588,1
<b>Action #2 - Community based culture and cultural sectors: right to creation, experimentation, research and cultural production</b>							
Grants Barcelona Create	No	Yes		3.060,0		3.060,0	
Creative Factories Coordination	Yes	Yes		173,8		173,8	173,8
Creative Residency Fellowship	Yes	Yes		240,0		240,0	240,0
Cultural Grants Reformation	No	Yes		15.618,0	2.310,0	17.928,0	
Social clauses agreements	Yes	Yes				Uninformed	
REC Cultural (social currency)	Yes	Yes		350,0		350,0	350,0
Cultural BPO	Yes	Yes			1.000,0	1.000,0	
Cultural Information to Citizens	No	Yes		1.200,0	80,0	1.280,0	
Spaces for Living Performance Culture	Yes	Yes		15,0		15,0	
Diffusion Circuits Enlargement	Yes	Yes				Uninformed	

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Houses of Culture Barcelona (Paral.lel)	Yes	Yes			7.150,0	7.150,0	7.150,0
Biennale Art Manifesta 2024	No	Yes	5.211,5			5.211,5	
Arts City Council Reformulation	Yes	Yes		231,8		231,8	231,8
<i>Subtotal</i>						<i>36.640,1</i>	<i>8.145,6</i>
<b>Action #3 - Popular cultures: right to popular and traditional practices as spaces for participation and social cohesion</b>							
Coordination Popular and Traditional culture	Yes	Yes				Uninformed	
Assessment System	Yes	Yes				Uninformed	
Festivity Houses Model	Yes	Yes				Uninformed	
Diversity in Popular Culture	Yes	Yes				Uninformed	
Other actions	Yes	Yes				Uninformed	
<i>Subtotal</i>						<i>177,0</i>	<i>177,0</i>
<b>Action #4 - Culture and education: right to cultural participation and artistic education and practice throughout life</b>							
Deprived Neighbourhoods Educative Tools	Yes	Yes				Uninformed	
Time for arts in educative centres	Yes	Yes				Uninformed	
Artistic creation in Secondary Schools	Yes	Yes				Uninformed	
Assessment in Artistic Degrees Secondary Schools	Yes	Yes				Uninformed	
Other actions	Yes	Yes				Uninformed	
<i>Subtotal</i>							
<b>Action #5 - Feminist culture: right to a diverse and equitable culture</b>							
Creation of Area Gender Perspective in Culture Unit	Yes	Yes				Uninformed	
Educative Program Gender Perspective in culture	Yes	Yes				Uninformed	
Gender Perspective Programme in Financial Grants	Yes	Yes				Uninformed	
Other actions	Yes	Yes				Uninformed	
<i>Subtotal</i>						<i>190,0</i>	<i>190,0</i>
<b>Action #6 - Culture and public space: right to access and cultural participation in the street</b>							
Urban Art Programme	Yes	Yes				Uninformed	
Cultural Public Spaces	Yes	Yes				Uninformed	
Cultural Ramblas	Yes	Yes				Uninformed	

Cultural institutions "overflow"	Yes	Yes				Uninformed	
Other actions	Yes	Yes				Uninformed	
<i>Subtotal</i>						280,0	280,0
<b>Action #7 - Culture and digital rights: instruments and policies for access to knowledge, transparency and digital innovation la transparencies y la innovation digital</b>							
Citizen laboratory Canodrom	No	Yes				Uninformed	
Artistic and research collaborations	Yes	Yes				Uninformed	
Cultural Open Data	Yes	Yes				Uninformed	
Digital pedagogical research	Yes	Yes				Uninformed	
Other actions	Yes	Yes				Uninformed	
<i>Subtotal</i>							
<b>Action #8 - City museums: innovation, education and the right to participate in Barcelona's cultural heritage</b>							
Table education and museums consolidation	No	No				Uninformed	
Schools and museums stable programs	No	No				Uninformed	
Cultural mediation services promotion	Yes	Yes				Uninformed	
Plan Gender and Museums	Yes	Yes				Uninformed	
Other actions	Yes	Yes				Uninformed	
<i>Subtotal</i>							
<b>TOTAL</b>						<b>61.296,7</b>	<b>11.380,7</b>

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Source: the authors from City Council of Barcelona (2021).