



Urban Planning and Regeneration in Barcelona

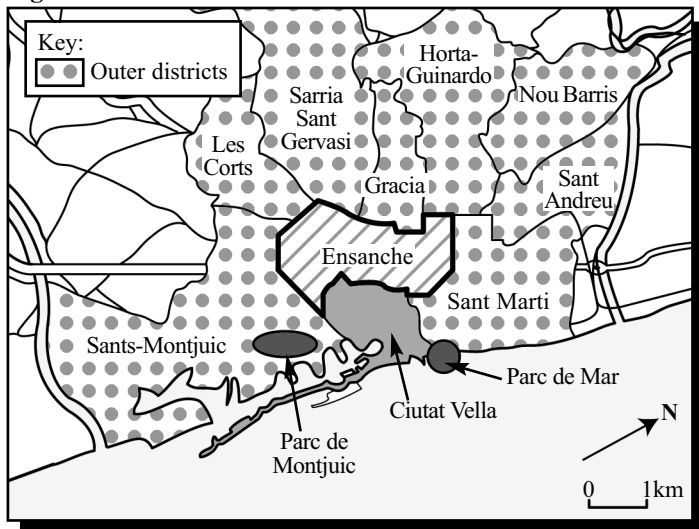
The majority of major European cities have a long history of planning. Often this involved the planning ‘dreams’ of a few individuals in the 19th Century. In more recent decades attentions has turned to regenerating areas run-down by deindustrialisation and depopulation.

Introduction

Barcelona is a major European city with a population of 1.6 million. The wider metropolitan region of Barcelona has a population of 4.3 million. It is the capital of Catalonia, and has a culture all of its own. In 1992 Barcelona hosted the Olympic Games and Seville held the World Fair and this thrust Catalonia and Spain on to the world stage. In preparation for these two events, Spain spent upwards of US\$ 3.5 billion on infrastructure and regeneration projects.

This Factsheet examines the impact of urban regeneration projects associated with the Olympics, as well as how Barcelona has dealt with urban problems since. Firstly though, it examines some of the history of urban planning in Barcelona. As Fig. 1 shows, Barcelona consists of ten districts, centred on Ciutat Vella – the historic core area. As the city urbanised in the 19th Century a major extension, or ‘enlargement’ called Eixample was added. Newer, more suburban districts have spread out into the countryside of Catalonia. Barcelona is a major port. The coastal part of Sants-Montjuic has extensive port facilities and a major industrial area (the Zona Franca) lies to the south of this.

Fig. 1 Barcelona’s urban structure.



Exam Hint: As you read through this Factsheet, locate urban processes – like ‘gentrification’ and ‘suburbanisation’ on Fig. 1, together with named locations. Simplify the map to make your own sketch map.

Planning

In the 19th Century planning meant large-scale development. Usually it was the vision or ‘dream’ of one individual who persuaded city authorities that their ideal view of the city should prevail. The urban horrors of the industrial revolution, slum housing, outbreaks of disease like the Cholera epidemic in London in 1831 and fears of urban unrest persuaded many people of the need for ‘model’ or ‘utopian’ urban areas. The boulevards of Paris were set out by Baron Haussman and Vienna’s medieval walls and glacis (undeveloped area beyond the walls) were transformed into the sweeping Ringstrasse.

Barcelona did not escape the fashion for great urban projects. The problem of how to house thousands of people in a rapidly expanding industrial city was dealt with by Ildefons Cerda in 1860. Cerda extended Barcelona from its medieval core creating a gridiron road pattern (see Case Study 1) which allowed the city to grow.

Case Study 1: The Eixample

The Eixample is a fabulous example of major urban planning built between 1860 and 1890. Its designer, Ildefons Cerda, planned to enlarge Barcelona using a gridiron plan. On the surface this would seem to produce a very boring city of square blocks and little variety. Cerda’s grid is clever, as it is actually three grids superimposed (Fig. 2). The blocks themselves also have unusual features (Fig. 3).

Fig. 2 The street plan for Eixample.

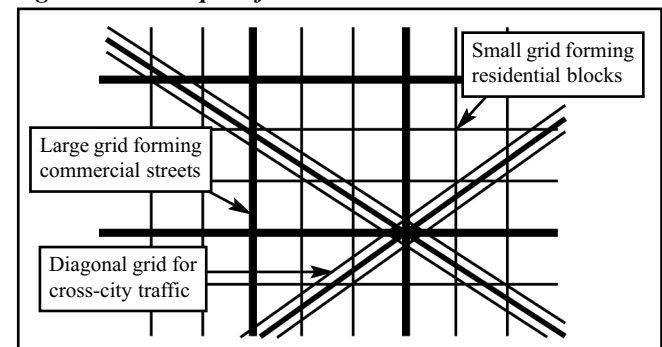
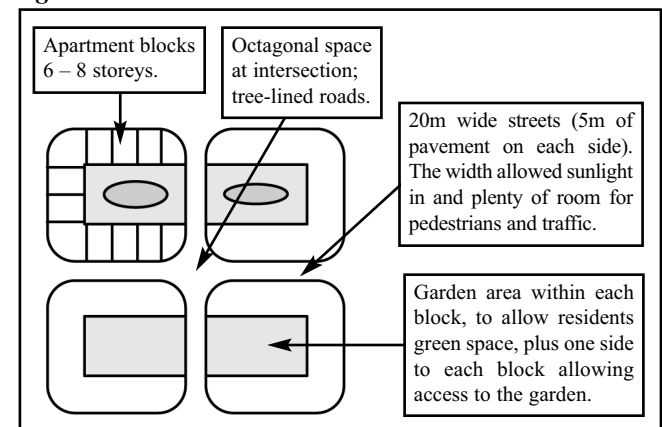


Fig. 3 Blocks in Eixample

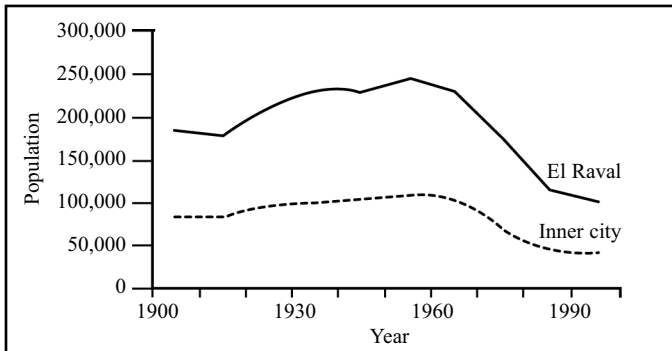


Cerda’s plan created an open, tree-lined district with a feeling of space. In subsequent years virtually all of the garden areas and open sides of the blocks have been filled in – rents are high in this desirable part of the city. Perhaps Cerda’s masterstroke was to create a city in 1860 that can still cope with the traffic of 2002. Population density in Eixample is 33,000 people per square kilometre, the highest of any district, and double the Barcelona average of 15,000.

Case Study 2: El Raval

El Raval is part of Barcelona's inner city. The historic and cultural core of Barcelona is the Ciutat Vella (old city). Within Ciutat Vella are 4 districts, El Raval, Casc Antic, Barceloneta and Barri Gotic. El Raval is immediately to the south of 'La Rambla' – Barcelona's main street. El Raval consists of a maze of narrow streets and 4 – 6 storey apartment blocks and commercial premises. El Raval's population expanded in the early 20th Century as workers building the underground system lived near their work in the neighbourhood. As Spain continued to industrialise after WWII the population swelled even further due to a high internal birth rate and rural-urban migration. Starting around 1960 however, population began to decline sharply. By 1990 El Raval, and Barcelona's inner city, had lost well over 50% of its population.

Fig. 4 Population change in El Raval and Ciutat Vella (inner-city).



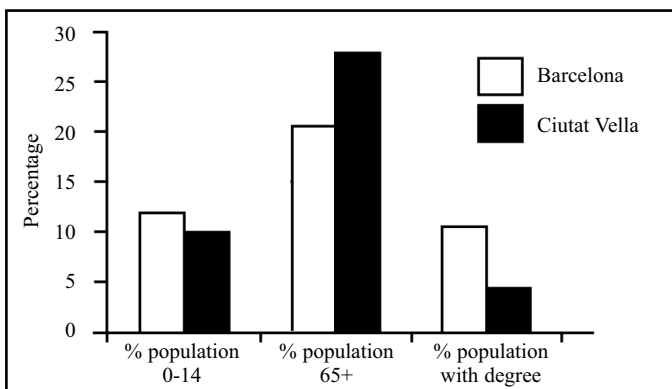
Exam Hint: Make your own copy of Fig. 4 and annotate it to explain the trends in population. You could quickly sketch a diagram like this in an exam.

It is worth comparing social data for Ciutat Vella and Barcelona as a whole (Table 1). This shows the extent of the areas problems. Life expectancy at birth is considerably lower in Ciutat Vella compared to other areas.

Table 1 Life expectancy at birth.

	Total	Male	Female
Barcelona	78.6	74.7	82.7
Ciutat Vella	74.7	69.7	80.0
Ensanche	80.1	76.4	83.2
Les Corts	80.1	77.2	82.7

Fig. 5 Three social indicators for Barcelona and Ciutat Vella, 1996.



The reasons for El Raval's decline were:

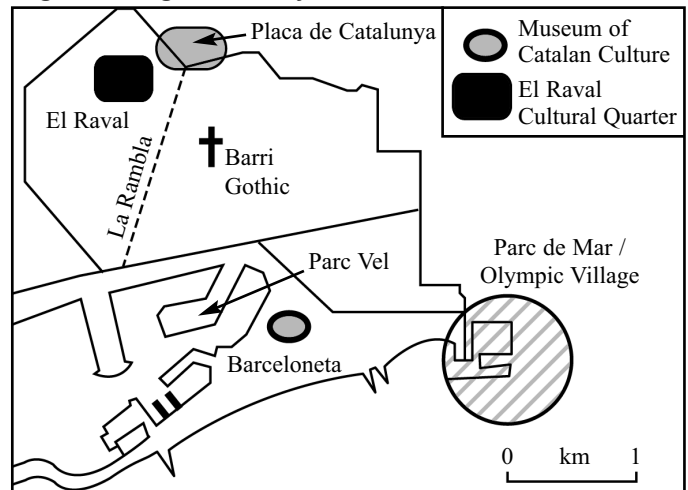
- **Physical decay** – many old 19th Century buildings became run-down and neglected.
- **Filtering** – as working class incomes improved, they increasingly moved out to suburban areas.
- **Sectoral shift** – secondary employment declined, and tertiary employment increased. Higher wages in the service sector meant many people could afford rents in better parts of the city.
- **Social problems** – by the late 1970s El Raval was known mainly for its drug and prostitution problems.

By the mid 1980s the population in El Raval had become residual – in many cases old, unemployed with involvement in crime. Effectively it has become a 'zone of discard' – part of the CDB, which many people would not even enter.

As the Olympics loomed, the city acted. In 1986 the Ciutat Vella was designated an area of **Integrated Rehabilitation**. The mechanism used to regenerate the inner city is called a Special Plan of Inner Reform (PERI). This is similar to an Enterprise Zone in the UK, and in Spain is a powerful planning tool, which allows for compulsory purchase of buildings. A public-private partnership PROCIVESA was set up to manage regeneration. This is 51% owned by the Municipality, with other stakeholders including the University, Barcelona Harbour Company and private companies. PROCIVESA has the broad aims of:

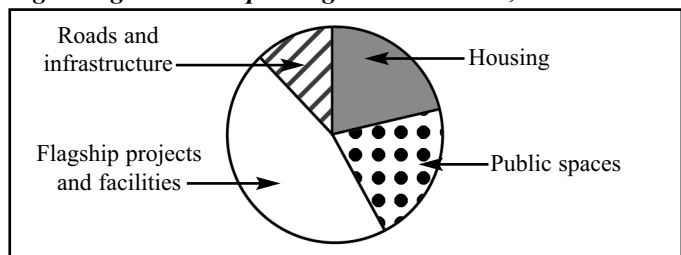
- Regeneration of housing rehabilitating old apartments, and converting old industrial buildings into housing.
- Improving sanitation – by demolishing some housing blocks completely.
- Improving social conditions and safety – by creating open spaces.
- Promoting major public investment in flagship projects.

Fig. 6 The regeneration of Ciutat Vella.



The total cost of regeneration 1988-99 was US\$806 million. Fig. 7 shows how the money was spent.

Fig. 7 Regeneration spending on Ciutat Vella, 1988-99.



Case Study 2: El Raval (continued)

Central to the regeneration of El Raval are three major new flagship cultural projects:

1. La Casa de Caritat – a cultural centre in a renewed industrial building. This cost US\$26 million and is designed to create a centre for the arts and culture to attract people back into El Raval.
2. Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA) – this brand new, imposing building is one of the centrepieces of the regenerated Raval.
3. Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona (CCCB).

Huge regeneration has also taken place in the old port area (Port Vell) and Barceloneta (see Fig. 6), including the conversion of an old warehouse into the Museum of Catalan Culture. The area now contains numerous bars, an IMAX cinema and a large marina.

As well as major projects, Ciutat Vella has seen wider regeneration:

- 2000 new homes constructed, mostly for rent from the Council.
- 22,400 refurbished homes
- 25,000 metres squared of new public space, including 26 plazas and 2 new parks.
- 45km of new pavements
- 4,000 trees planted
- 400 shops rehabilitated, and 1,300 new shops constructed.

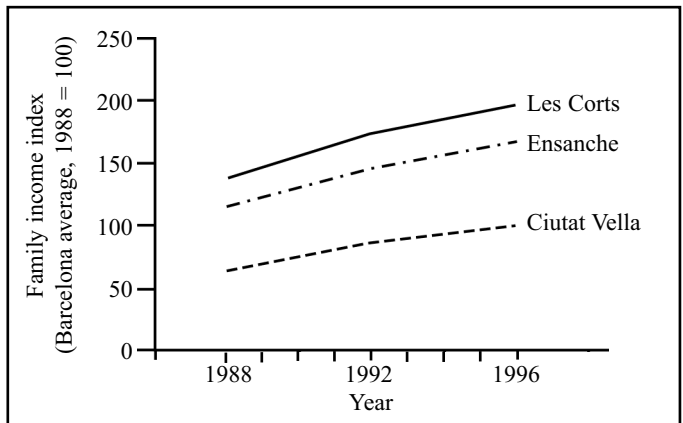
El Raval and the wider area of Ciutat Vella are classic examples of gentrification (or reurbanisation). This urban process has been seen in many MEDC cities, as a response to the inner city decline resulting from deindustrialisation and loss of population to the suburbs and the countryside. It can occur 'naturally' as young affluent people ('yuppies') buy and renovate property in inner cities. More often it is 'forced' – in El Raval the cultural and physical infrastructure has been put in place in the hope of attracting affluent, middle-class residents in the area.

Spending on this scale should yield results, but has it? The regeneration has been criticised on a number of grounds:

- Demolition of homes meant that people had to be moved and temporarily rehoused.
- The original population may not use the major flagship projects.
- Some of the original character of the area has gone forever.

Economic data from the Ajuntament de Barcelona (City Council) suggest some success. Fig. 8 shows an index of family income 1998-96 for Barcelona as a whole, Ciutat Vella and Les Corts.

Fig. 8 Family income in Barcelona.



As can be seen, family income levels have grown in Ciutat Vella, but not as quickly as in other areas. This may suggest that Ciutat Vella, and Raval, can expect to fall further behind the rest of Barcelona in the future.

Case Study 3: The Olympic City

Cerda's gridiron plan, drawn up in 1859-60, remained the official plan for Barcelona until the 1950s. In 1976 the General Metropolitan Plan (PGM) was approved. Within this plan is the idea of 10 'Areas of New Centrality'. These are nodal points, often at the intersection of major roads, which are seen as key development sites for offices, retail and housing. Much of the planning focuses on decentralising functions from the very overcrowded and constrained CBD, to allow for future economic growth. The 4 Olympic sites are located on Fig. 9.

Were the Olympics worth it?

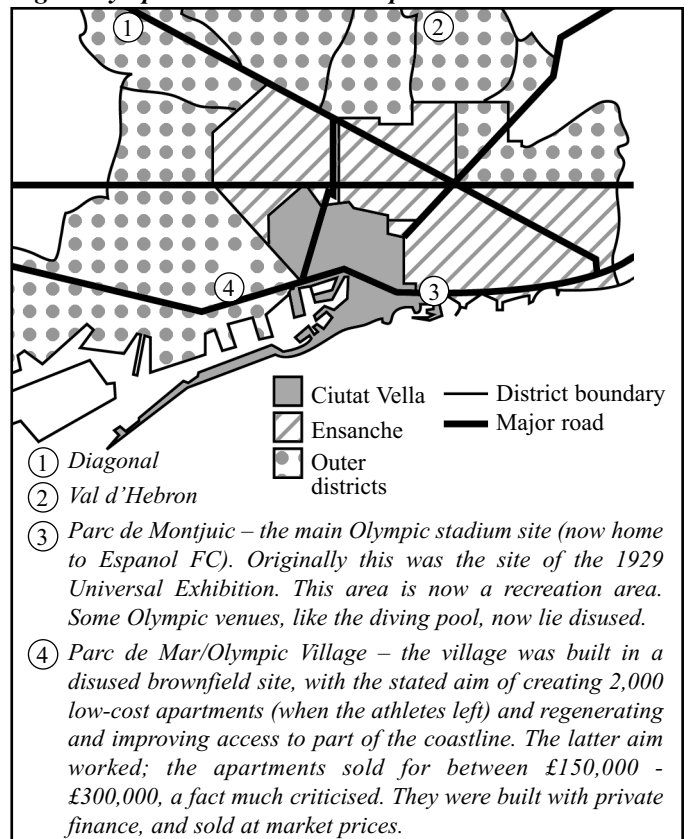
The Olympics cost Barcelona somewhere in the region of US\$1.5 – 2 billion. Some aspects of the project are open to criticism:

- The Olympic village housing was bought by the wealthy, so did little to help Barcelona's housing shortage.
- Areas of Montjuic were left unused until long after the event.

On the positive side, the Olympics proved to be a driving force for further change:

- Rundown areas such as Raval and the wider Ciutat Vella were regenerated.
- Much of the coastline (Port Vell, Barceloneta, Parc de Mar) was cleared of run-down industry and opened up for people to enjoy.
- Other projects, long on the drawing board, were given a kick-start allowing the city to grow economically.

Fig. 9 Olympic and current development areas in Barcelona.



Conclusion

Barcelona in 2002 is a thriving, crowded, vibrant city where there is almost too much to do. Many urban problems remain, but development continues to try and improve things. Three major initiatives are occurring:

- **Ciutat Vella** – regeneration is not yet complete but is continuing at an accelerated pace.
- **Project 22@** - aims to regenerate the neighbourhood of Poblenou, in the north of the city.
- **Forum 2004** – the last stage of regenerating the coastal strip, a process begun by the Olympics.

Exam Questions

- a. Define the term ‘regeneration’. (4 marks)
- b. Describe and explain some of the factors, that cause inner city areas to decline. (8 marks)
- c. Explain how you could use fieldwork techniques to identify an area of decline. (8 marks)
- d. Referring to a regeneration project you have studied, evaluate its impact on people and the environment. (10 marks)

Answers

- a. Regeneration is the term used to describe planned improvements to the physical fabric of the area (such as housing, roads, older infrastructure and commercial buildings). Usually it is an integrated strategy dealing with social, economic and environmental problems.
- b. Areas which decline often have specific local factors, so referring to an example allows you to be specific and quote facts and figures. Broadly, reasons would be social (declining population, due to out-migration and/or low birth rate – as in Ciutat Vella; overcrowded and decaying housing), economic (poor access and infrastructure – which causes businesses to relocate or fail) and environmental (lack of open space, noise or air pollution – which makes an area unappealing to new residents or businesses). Good answers would link factors together with the idea of a ‘spiral of decline’ – a negative multiplier effect.
- c. References could be made to a variety of fieldwork techniques. You may have done some yourself, and you should refer to your own work:
 - Environmental Quality Surveys (EQS) – aspects of the urban environment such as pavement quality, litter and graffiti are graded using a bi-polar (+/-) scale. Low scores indicate a poorly maintained area.
 - Land Use Survey – detailed mapping of shop types (chain stores v. charity shops), derelict/vacant plots can often indicate if businesses and people are moving out of an area.
 - Questionnaires – a good answer would recognise the difficulty of using questionnaires. They are time consuming and questions need to be carefully thought out. Asking residents about shops closures, rents or house prices and their views on the environment could indicate decline.
- d. A detailed, factual case study is needed here. Briefly outline what has been done (such as the details on Flagship projects, housing and environmental improvements in Raval/Ciutat Vella). The majority of your answer will need to focus on positive and negative impacts of your chosen regeneration project. Structure this using the formula below:

People +	People –
Environment +	Environment –

The structure will ensure you don’t miss any key points. A good answer will provide an overall summary of how successful you think the project has been.

Further Research

<http://www.bcn.es> The Ajuntament de Barcelona website has very detailed data on the city.

For past perspectives in planning in the city try:

- Geography Review, Vol. 6 No. 1 September 1992
- Geographical Magazine, Vol. LIX, No. 8, August 1997.

Acknowledgements

This Factsheet was written by Cameron Dunn, who lectures at Tynemouth College. He organises fieldwork regularly in Barcelona.

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