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POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE BARCELONA OLYMPIC GAMES

THE GAMES AND GAMBLING

Firstly, are the Barcelona Olympic Games a strong direct investment concentrated in a relatively small period of time and space? It can be useful to start with an answer to this question. The total investment planned is 654.000 million pesetas. By the end of 1991, it seemed the amount had risen to 770.000 million. The space of time in which this investment has taken place is very short: 1987-91/92 and the physical space is exceptionally small: the municipal area of the city of Barcelona, and also a certain amount of investment in the olympic subsites.

In order to find out if this amount —which will probably end up being near to one billion— is important, we must compare it with other magnitudes. The most important macromagnitude at our disposition is the Gross National Product, and the GNP in Catalonia in 1991 is approximately ten billion pesetas. The Olympic Games —one billion in five years— means 2% of the Catalanian GNP. They are therefore, no trifle.

If we compare the investment in the Games with the money spent on gambling, the result can be interesting. In Catalonia people spend 546 million a year on gambling. More than half a billion. Since we are referring to official sums of money, the amount is undoubtedly much higher. But since the amounts spent on the Games are also legal, the comparison can be made. Every year we spend twice as much on gambling as we do on the Games. Does this mean that the Games have not produced the expected wave of collective welfare and that people continue to gamble either in hope or due to bad habit? Or that we are a terrible country full of players who will swallow just about anything: Games and gambling? Or even, that the euphoria produced by the Games —the Catalanian GNP rises above that of the rest of Spain since 1987— has encouraged people to gamble more than ever, maybe thinking that this euphoria is only transitory?

GAMES AND THE EXPO

If we compare the total amount of investment made in Barcelona to that of the Expo in Sevilla, the results can be rather attractive: in the same public communication that states that the total investment made in Barcelona is 654.000 million we are told that in Sevilla the amount is 800 (exactly, no more and no less). If we take a very simple weighting, the investment made per inhabitant, the result is shocking: the investment made for every inhabitant of Barcelona is 384.000 pesetas, and the amount invested for every citizen of Sevilla is 1.143.000 pesetas. It is very clear that some invest-

ments (highways, the euphemistically called «new railroad access», etc) begin far from Seville: in the city of Madrid.

In other words, the Games are an important investment for the city of Barcelona but the Expo is relatively much more important, in the amount of money spent, for Seville. The Seville-Madrid axis is reinforced while the Mediterranean axis is held-up from without (and the Cantabric axis is dangerously put on longterm hold).

GAMES AND THE WORLD MARKET

The Games —and to a lesser extent the Expo, since it does not include competition and/or chance shows— are the stimulus for the creation of a time-limited monopoly. In other words, during four years and especially during fifteen days a certain point on the planet becomes unique and is observed, consumed by all the rest. No other point enjoys this privileged situation. The television networks, for example, compete with each other in order to be the only ones to inform of the events, sports events in this case, that take place there. The NBC will pay 450 million dollars for broadcasting the games for the USA. The broadcasting rights for the rest of the world are also important. Europe: 90 million; Japan: 62 million; Australia: 33 million; Canada: 16 million; New Zealand: 5.9 million.

On the other hand, about 50.000 people, apart from spectators and tourists, will travel to the city as sportsmen/women, judges, umpires, journalists or police. These movements of the population have a unique destination: the site (and eventually, the subsites) of the Games.

In a competitive market, the fact that a specific urban area has a special advantage —transitory in time, but real nevertheless— is of great importance. Because only this area can offer a given product —in essence: the beauty and emotion of a worldwide sports competition— which, by definition, is limited. Thus, if demand exists, make yourself worthy.

Competition around the world takes place at different levels: there is competition between states (or between communities made up of states), there is the more sectioned competition between great multinational companies, and competition between areas, between cities. Naturally, these three levels, which are autonomous, are also interconnected. Cities, for example, are partly conglomerates of fragments of multinationals and are —or are not— state capitals. Multinationals have —or do not have— an important central site or are in the process of consolidating one. States —often smaller than many multinationals— have certain basic elements: territory, currency, monopoly of violence. Every four years, a city can be Olympic. This option does not exist for multinationals or for states and, therefore, they cannot enjoy these benefits of legal monopoly (which only lasts for a brief period of time so as not to end this competition).

Competition at world level also takes place in the field of ideas. Every system —or subsystem— of ideas, every philosophical culture competes with others. There is also a market for ideas. One must either be there, disappear or be absorbed. Maybe for this reason, ever since 1896 the Games have been European games in general and, even more, practically Games between central and northern Europeans. The «Euro-

pean miracle» has therefore mainly been a miracle of central and northern Europe.

Barcelona is a city with very strong potentialities which did not disappear during the long period of fascist authoritarianism (1939-75) thanks to an incredible capacity of resistance. The city generates a culture of progress with aspirations of occupying an important place in the world. The brilliant individualities who possess truly «personal monopolies» know they are part of an exceptional social network (in which there have coexisted, for example, modern anarcho-syndicalism and the popular front, a passion for innovation in the fields of technology, science or the arts and the «miserabilism» of Verdaguer, a deep love for all that is local and the most extravagant cosmopolitanism). The wager in favour of Barcelona for the Olympic Games (and before, in 1929, for the Expo) is an economic wager, but also a bet in favour of culture.

GAMES AND STATE

The Games —like the Expo in 1929— are a way by which the Spanish state can invest in some place other than its traditional investment site, the city of Madrid. The Games will take place at a time when Madrid, under Franco's rule, has become an enormous city which moves on the limits of economic rationality given the inexistence, around the city itself, of a network of cities that can articulate an industrial network which, in turn, is connected with Europe. Till very recently, Madrid has been the only large European city physically isolated from the continent (in other words: not a part of the network of highways). The young democracy of 1977-79 is, it seems, a reflective democracy. The support given by the Mayor of Madrid, the socialist marxist Enrique Tierno Galván, to the nomination of Barcelona presented by Narcís Serra, is in this context a sign of rationality (as is the creation of the three autonomous regions of Madrid, Castilla - La Mancha and Castilla - León, not planned or foreseen in the whole history of technocratic planification previous to democracy).

The State finally invests in Barcelona. It holds 51% of the capital of the Barcelona Olympic Holding, a limited liability company, HOLSA, which contains the main companies created by the COOB '92 (Barcelona Olympic Organizing Committee, 1992): Montjuïc Olympic Ring, AOMSA, Olympic Village, VOSA and the Municipal Institute for Urbanistic Promotion, IMPUSA. The State directly builds a new airport in the Prat de Llobregat. The State, through the Generalitat (Catalan Government), invests in the sports university and the highway network.

The Games are the stimulus or incentive for —circumstantially?— changing the site of public investment. As are the autonomies. But with an advantage: a great concentration, focalization on one spot (well, three spots if we count Seville and, of course, Madrid). With the Games, Barcelona's culture is once again present in the political culture of the State. Barcelonians —and Catalans in general— once again assume a unique and specific importance in some of the key places of State politics in Spain. This presence is not specialized and restricted to certain areas but is rather a cultural

multiform presence across a very wide span of fields and activities. At the same time, and with the advent of the Games, the culture of Barcelona once again acquires worldwide projection. With more resources and with a new experience.

WHAT DO WE INVEST IN?

An important investment, a world market, a State in the process of decentralizing, worldwide projection: but, what do we invest in? Of the 646.000 million pesetas, almost one third (196.000 million) are destined to the road network. Basically, encircling highways around the city, rings, road connections and tunnels. In other words: the car industry, which would have great difficulty in maintaining its present sales rate without this type of public investment. These investments are, however, very localized in the small municipality of Barcelona, where, fortunately, there is a slightly negative growth index among the population. Plus, this option is for the private —and almost individual— use of automobiles (considering that the family use is mainly extramunicipal). The option is, at least, debatable since, according to the majority of investigations carried out by the administration itself, the alternative presented is that of public collective transport, and a second Catalan «railroad eight» that will link the Barcelona subway to the subways of the Vallès area and the Maresme.

The amount of investment in housing (149.000 million) and sports facilities (141.000 million) comes after the investment in road networks. In reference to housing, the Games have generated a new neighbourhood with 1.814 houses within the old municipal limits of Sant Martí de Provençals, where in 1988 there existed 83.810 housing facilities. It must be said, nevertheless, that the housing in Sant Martí in general has important deficiencies: of these 83.810 housing facilities, about 2.079 have no bathroom whatsoever and another 34.058 only have a rudimentary «auxiliary bathroom». There are about 14.000 without channeled gas facilities and 25.803 without an elevator. The new houses are, on the other hand and due to their relatively high sale price, destined for the citizens of the richer city neighbourhoods. The buyers are from the Eixample (28%), Sarrà / Sant Gervasi (22%), Gràcia (12%) and les Corts (9%). Like in the 1929 Expo, therefore, housing continues to be the great absentee of the Games.

The investment in sports facilities is important, even if already existing facilities have been remodelled and fixed to be used. But the question is whether the sports stadiums and facilities are the type of equipment that is most necessary from the point of view of a society immersed within a very fast process of change in which the «live work» factor is slowly pushed aside by the concept of «general intelligence». If this is so, the investment in human capital seems to be a priority. Sports do not seem to be an important stimulus for the collective intelligence. And at the same time Barcelona is lacking in something as basic as public libraries (understanding that a public library is one that remains open till, for example, midnight and naturally on weekends. An example of this is the —private— library of the Ateneu Barcelonès).

The heavy investment in sports facilities would not in it-

self be negative if it were not because it excludes or postpones, in fact, other investments of a strategic character in this period of historical mutation that we are probably living.

However, the labs, institutes and research centres in which work is carried out for the near future based on the New Materials, New Technologies and new methods of organization, are still taking their first steps. And the five Universities in Barcelona —or the ten in all Catalonia— tend to become more and more an extension of high school education.

In this context, the package of investments in information science and telecommunications is in fourth place of the five areas of public investment in the Games, with a total investment of 76.000 million pesetas. The two communications towers —Collserola and Montjuïc— are the symbols of this sector.

But the phone fares in Barcelona continue to be much more expensive than in the United States. And the receipts do not include, as do those of american phone companies, any details about the phone calls (day, duration of call, numbers dialed, fares). The phone monopoly has been stronger than the thrust, democratizing in many ways, of the Games.

THE OLYMPIC AREAS

The final result —in space— is the definition, or redefinition of four Olympic areas or zones. In fact, the main area, Montjuïc, was the main area defined as the great option in 1914 by the architects of what would end up being the 1929 Expo. The point, therefore, is to use the outdoor (or indoor) facilities of the mountain of Montjuïc once again. An area, on the other hand, in which many cultural, commercial and ludic facilities have been constructed in the past years.

The area of the Olympic Village is found right beside the space destined for the Exposition of 1888. The historical reference is also taken into account in this case. Or, if you wish, the obsolete nature of the industrial facilities of what used to be the «Manchester of Catalonia», gives way to a new use of the soil which is undoubtedly beneficial for its owners. Nevertheless, the reutilization of factories and warehouses following the examples of Amsterdam, London and New York —of which the multiple concert hall Zeleste is a good example— would probably have been more culturally interesting, socially useful and politically efficient.

If we only considered the two main areas, we could probably state that the Barcelona of 1992 hasn't changed, it continues to be a city organized between Montjuïc and the Ciutatdella.

The Diagonal area is strictly based (apart from the Hospital Pavillion) on the use of private facilities along the avenue which consolidates its social prestige from the 50's.

What's really new, therefore, is the Vall d'Hebron area. The area where the biggest effort has been made to combine the natural surroundings (a valley between the Collserola hill and the Tres Turons), the historical site (the Horta Labyrinth, the old country houses), hospital specialization, political avantgarde (cultural centres and associations of Nou Barris, the Teixonera, Montbau, Vall d'Hebron Hospital) and the fight against a very wide spectrum of social isolation and neglect. However, the Vall d'Hebron is not the only redoubt of

the new poverty. Both inside and outside the municipality of Barcelona, the areas where the percentage of jobless people is preoccupying are well known. The Vall d'Hebron area can be a model but it will probably become a mirage or illusion: the large investment made there will be difficult to repeat in all the areas with low per capita rent.

PARALLELISMS

It isn't very hard to situate the whole construction process—and cultural debate—around the subject of olympic and postolympic Barcelona in the context of the Great Barcelona model designed between 1901 and 1917. The parallelisms are so evident, the points of coincidence so flagrant that comparison is practically obvious:

1. The same *interest*, then and now, in Catalonia for motivating the public investment of a state strongly focalized around the political capital, Madrid.
2. The same need for road networks and infrastructures to try to articulate a powerful, but fragile, industrial network.
3. The same absence of a financial system of its own, a Catalan bank, having therefore to resort to the large Spanish bank; this coincidence even goes as far as the specific bank that's in charge of the treasury (the Banco Hispano-Colonial, which became, after 1901, the banker of Barcelona City Hall and would be absorbed by the Banco Central in 1950, which, in turn, has fused with the Banco Español de Crédito, which is the COOB bank).
4. The same interest in mobilizing—via elections, for example—wide sectors of the population around an initially urbanistic goal.
5. The same capacity for seducing the national and international public opinion by similar means: the high level of creativity of Catalan publicists.
6. The same lack of interest versus two main issues: the massive construction of comfortable and reasonably priced housing facilities, in other words, susceptible to be bought by the petite bourgeois or middle class, State employees and workers in the fields of industry and services. Also the establishment of a network of public collective transport that offers a real alternative to private individual transport.
7. The similarity becomes almost complete if we observe the physical spaces in which the investments have mostly concentrated: the Montjuïc mountain area, the great option of 1917, where even the same olympic stadium is recovered (and the same Art-Déco atmosphere) and the area of the old Ciutadella, torn down in 1869, enlarged now for the sake of the suburb known as Poble Nou. In 1992, Barcelona has hardly moved at all.

BOURGEOIS AND NON-BOURGEOIS

Following the outline of A. Cirici, in 1929 there were three bourgeoisies:

- a) The liberal-conservative bourgeoisie linked to industry;
- b) the monopolist bourgeoisie linked to construction and subordinated to the great banks;
- c) the bourgeoisie of the liberal professions.

To simplify, each one of these bourgeoisies had and generated its own culture and even its own morale and style.

In 1992, all three still exist—with a similar specific weight?—but there is a new and powerful one which already had a certain importance in 1929: the international bourgeoisie. And there is also the «ignored presence» of the subordinate classes.

The continuity between these two aims may seem surprising—or not, it depends—. For example:

- a) The role of a firm of lawyers and economists, with good connections in the world of the up-and-coming enterprising bourgeoisie which projects itself in Madrid. In 1917 it is the firm of F. Cambó, and in 1975 that of M. Roca Junyent and Narcís Serra (by chance, Mr. N. de Carreras, a Cambó man, was N. Serra's Godfather).
- b) The bourgeoisie with «Spanishizing» tendencies and a populist vocation was, in 1917, dressed by the Republicans (J. Pich i Pon) and in 1975 was monarchic (J.A. Samaranch). And the «Madrid man» in Barcelona (S. Roldán) representing the State administration, president of the Holding Olímpic, S.A., has contacts within the sphere of Catalan business.
- c) The professionals, for example, architects, also offer a certain continuity. Both those who think of the city-territory (N.M. Rubió i Tudurí, since 1920 and M. Ribas i Piera, since 1959) and those who believe in the constructed or built city (O. Bohigas, son of a 1929 artisan: P. Bohigas; J.M. Milà, son of a 1929 politician, etc).

There is also the—practically central—space occupied by the multinational companies and the international bourgeoisie, especially in the field of the audiovisual reproduction—and universalization—of the Games, and the aspects of short and half term financing. Symbolically, the Japanese architecture—and sculpture—of Montjuïc and the Anglosaxon architecture of Collserola. And also the Jewish connection of the multinational Architecture Taller (R. Bofill).

The «ignored presence» of the subordinate classes is, as usual, difficult to detect although it does exist. The Mayor of the Games (P. Maragall) is the grandson of the countries' first modern urban poet (Joan Maragall). He knows that the city has been his grandfather's «burnt city» and, since 1979, has obtained a government majority with the support of the communists (in 1992: E. Víntró, A. Lucchetti and F. Vicens). In fact, the main man responsible for the Games, the head of the COOB, is an old member and leader of the communist party (J. M. Abad) and numerous technicians with the same origins work in the different Municipal areas.

Finally, there is the apparently inexistent but nevertheless

real counterweight of regionalism. In the Vallès, from one Mayor of Sabadell (J. Moix) to another (A. Farrés), with the aid of a cosmopolitan from Sabadell (P. Vila). In the Baix Llobregat, with hardly no local bourgeoisie, the essay is even more surprising. But it has in its ranks people as different as: a theologian (J. N. García Nieto), a person linked to the field of robotics (C. Riba, grandson of the poet C. Riba), experts on citizen security (J. Bosch), scholars (J. Codina), publicists (I. Riera), hitherto unheard-of novelists (J. Ll. Atienza).

CONCLUSION

In June of 1988, the «sociological magazine» *Acracia* wrote:

The Spanish bourgeoisie has held its Universal Exposition. The sciences, the arts, industry and agriculture, all more or less methodically grouped together into magnificent palaces, give an astonishing idea of the creative power, the knowledge and the work of mankind. The visitor lacking in revolutionary sense is blinded and dazzled in the face of so much magnificence. The observer with rooted convictions about the rights of man and the duties of society receives a painful impression because here, as in any bourgeois manifestation, one only sees the capitalist exploiter, not the worker who has fought terrible battles with matter and with nature. There, only the bourgeois exhibits himself and receives diplomas, medals and universal fame, while the worker who has sold his intelligence and his creative power for a miserable salary is condemned to oblivion. (*Acracia*, III, 30, page 624).

Is this true for the Expo? Are the Games slightly different? Who receives the medals? A country, a State, an economy, a worker —only for a few years and destined to recycle himself— in the field of sports, competition, competence? And those who do not sell themselves? The ones whose «presence is ignored»? They are, as the father of Political Economy once said, the origin of «the riches of all nations».

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