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**RIGHT TO THE CITY, RIGHT OF THE CITIZENS:  
FOR A NEW GENERATION OF CITY MUSEUMS**

都市への権利、市民の権利：新世代の都市博物館のために

**ABSTRACT**

Although it is relatively easy to perceive the unique nature of city museums, so different from other types, it becomes particularly complex to reach a consensual and conclusive definition formalising their characteristics. We would like to specify the roles of the city museum, its functions and methods, its goals and strategies, to provide a definition of forms and formats.

We need a definition that is flexible enough to explain the ability of the city museum to accommodate the urban historical complexity of the city into the museum, which, at the same time, goes beyond its walls to merge with the city. This is a process of double representation, from outside to inside and vice versa. The city museum brings together spaces, objects and narratives to emerge as a pole of urban narrative, a reflection of all citizenship. Setting limits implies fragmenting a much more comprehensive meaning of intertwined relationships. It is in this multifaceted approach that we can guarantee the right to the city. We speak of the museum as an agora, a space for all citizens, where tourists, residents and newcomers have the right to the symbolic appropriation of the city. The city museum requires the necessary balance to provide an understandable urban perspective, causing citizens to recognise themselves. This inclusive model allows for the appropriation of heritage and narrative even when they at first seem alien to us. To achieve this, the city museum must dissolve existing frontiers, between culture and education, research and dissemination, centre and periphery, between physical and virtual space, and work with a wide variety of formats (i.e. written, visual, urban, virtual) as a way of strategic transition to provide and attract a greater number of views. It is not a question of differences but of convergences between spaces and times, through a multiscale perspective, both local and global.

The Barcelona History Museum (MUHBA) is committed to a model of city museum where social recognition is linked to the need for knowledge dissemination, an efficient and sustainable network museum, where its heritage spaces intertwine and interrelate, dialogue and interrogate – a social, cultural and urban network rooted in the city with an outlook on the world.

**Key words:** urban history, city museum, participation, inclusion, right to the city

**要旨**

都市博物館のユニークな本質は、比較的理解しやすいが、他の博物館とは異なり、その特徴を形作る合意的かつ決定的な定義づけは極めて複雑である。本稿では、都市博物館の役割、機能と活動方法、目標と戦略を特定するために、フォームとフォーマットの定義を示したい。

都市の歴史的な複雑さを都市博物館に納め、同時に、壁を超えて都市と融合する能力を十分に説明するには柔軟な定義が必要される。それは、外側から内側へ、またその逆への二重表現のプロセスである。都市博物館には、すべての市民権を反映し、都市の物語の柱として浮かび上がる空間、資料および

物語が集められている。それらを個別に分けることは、より包括的で意味の絡み合った関係を断片化することを意味する。

このような多面的なアプローチによって、私たちは都市への権利を保証することができる。すべての市民のための場である「アゴラミュージアム」では、観光客、住民、ニューカマーが、都市の象徴的な権利を持っている。市民が自分自身を認識できるよう、都市博物館には、理解可能な視点を提供するバランスが必要とされる。この包摂的モデルにより、最初は自分にとって異質であると思われる場合でも、遺産と物語を受け入れることができる。この目標を達成するために、都市博物館は、文化と教育、研究と普及、中心と周辺、さらに物理空間と仮想空間の間にある既存のフロンティアを解消し、より多くの見解を提供する魅力的な戦略的手段として、さまざまな形式(文書、ビジュアル、都市、仮想)により作業する必要がある。それは、ローカルとグローバル、両方のマルチスケールの視点を通じた、空間と時間の違いの問題ではなく、収束の問題である。

バルセロナ歴史博物館(MUHBA)は、社会の知識の普及の必要性にリンクされている都市博物館のモデルであり、その遺産空間が絡み合い、相互に作用し、対話し、効率的で持続可能な博物館ネットワークに取り組んでいる。それは、世界を展望する都市に根ざした社会的、文化的、都市的なネットワークである。

#### キーワード

都市史、都市博物館、参加、包括性、都市への権利

## City museums, citizens' museums

Committing to an integrating and participatory society means rethinking city museums as a citizens' museum model, a meeting point for a more open, diverse, reflexive and flexible urban identity. A new generation of city museums for the 21<sup>st</sup> century must be built on foundations that contribute to the construction and transformation of the city in a collective manner, with equal access and representation, acknowledging the necessary involvement of all parties.

We must, therefore, reflect on the elements that define city museums, those cornerstones that uphold the project of becoming and consolidating as a citizens' museum. This article does not pretend to be a complete and definitive guide to these defining elements but rather a reflection text that aims to show what, at MUHBA (the Barcelona History Museum), we are thinking and outlining: a presentation of the goals and task of the Museum in a framework of interrogative reflection, open to debate and with the intention of moving forward with configuring it.<sup>1</sup> As proof of all this deliberative work, the Museum annually publishes the *MUHBA Butlletí*

*Activities of the MUHBA educational program as a museum-school. © MUHBA*



(*MUHBA Newsletter*). This is a selection of reflection articles that show, with all its imperfection but also with all its drive, the work in progress on its basic lines of action.<sup>2</sup>

## Right to the city, from theory to practice

The *right to the city*, propounded by Henri Lefebvre (1968),<sup>3</sup> continues, half a century after the publication of his work, to be a current topic of major importance for reflecting on cities and their social construction. Indeed, it was the topic of the United Nations Habitat III Conference in Quito in 2016. Although it is a matter that has gradually deviated from Lefebvre's original meaning, the radical

<sup>1</sup> It is worth reading this text as a continuation of the articles of Joan Roca i Albert published in the *CAMOC Museums of Cities Review*, a journal presented at the annual ICOM/CAMOC conference in Mexico City in 2017, and that corresponding to the communication of the last CAMOC conference in Frankfurt in 2018: Roca i Albert, J. (2017). *Reinventing the Museum of Barcelona. Urban History and Cultural Democracy*, *CAMOC Museums of Cities Review*, 3, 4-9; Roca i Albert, J. (2019). *At the crossroads of cultural and urban policies. Rethinking the city and the city museum*. In J. Savic (Ed.), *The Future of Museums of Cities* (the Book of proceedings from the CAMOC Annual Conference in Frankfurt, 2018, pages 14-25).

<sup>2</sup> The *MUHBA Butlletí* is a publication of the Museum, in which the institution presents the strategic line to be followed, with the aim of being an in-house and yet very citizen publication. Access to all the articles is free and they can be consulted at: <https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/museuhistoria/en/taxonomy/term/412>. For a synthesis of the most recent strategic decisions of the Museum, see the central theme of *Butlletí 34*, *Cap a l'actualització del pla museològic: els motors del MUHBA* (Toward the updating of the museological plan: the drivers of MUHBA), by Joan Roca (<https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/museuhistoria/ca/toward-updating-museological-plan-drivers-muhba>), and the editorial of *Butlletí 35*, *Línies estratègiques MUHBA: 2019-2023* (MUHBA strategic lines: 2019-2023) (<https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/museuhistoria/ca/muhba-strategic-lines-2019-2023>).

In the same vein, since 2017, the Museum has held the seminars *Reinventar el museu de la ciutat* (*Reinventing the city museum*), an opportunity for sharing reflections with the citizens and with the museums that are members of the City History Museums and Research Network of Europe.

<sup>3</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1968). *El derecho a la ciudad*. Madrid: Capitán Swing.

transformation of society, we can also say that the “awareness of the necessary active involvement of the citizens” in the current urban context has left an important legacy.<sup>4</sup>

Lefebvre focuses on the working class for the city to recover its ability to integrate and participate; he believes in the need for a collective reappropriation of urban space to achieve social change. More recently, David Harvey has continued to claim the right to the city, insisting on the fact that, beyond individual freedom of access to urban resources, we are faced with the right to change ourselves based on the changes we make to the city in terms of urban recreation.<sup>5</sup> Thus, Harvey emphasises the remodelling of the processes of urbanisation based on collective power and, therefore, with the promotion of new social connections between citizens, a new relationship with nature and new technologies, a renewal of lifestyles and aesthetic values. The author evokes citizen movements, alternative locations as spaces of hope, experimentation with urban space, with values such as authenticity, what is local, what is cultural, history, collective memory and tradition.<sup>6</sup>

But how do we get from theoretical formulations of the right to the city to their implementation? The lack of this practical achievement has been precisely one of the most widely shared critiques in the reading of Lefebvre and Harvey, as stated by the sociologist Garnier.<sup>7</sup> A critique that had already been put forward by Manuel Castells,<sup>8</sup> when he described Lefebvre as a rather too metaphysical scholar, a philosopher, who, nevertheless, seemed not to contemplate the more pragmatic reality.

Can city museums be among the spaces necessary for the transition from theory to practice? Is it possible to rethink a new generation of city museums that will be guarantors and drivers of everybody's right to the city? Reinterpreting the right to the city, now from a cultural perspective, becomes essential. City museums are facing a great challenge.

### **City museums as knowledge hubs. The right to know the city**

In a society like ours, with constant fluxes and mutations, of increasing global cities and citizens, individuals must be able to exercise their right to the city regardless of it being their native city or having been living there for a certain time. Knowing the city where one is allows the individuals to incorporate its history into their own, and thus generate links with the city, which then result in much wider social links. Knowing and forming part of the urban process situates and orients a person in the city. The right to the city is also the right to the knowledge of the city.

A city museum is or should be a centre that actively generates knowledge for all the citizens, with a diversity of codes adapted to all audiences, to guarantee their right to know the city. The museum must be able to provide citizens with the basic kit of urban knowledge that ensures conscious participation oriented toward the city.<sup>9</sup> Thus, knowledge becomes the epicentre of the museum, the engine that drives research, development and innovation through the transdisciplinary nature of its content and the confluence of different institutions, associations, centres and communities.

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<sup>4</sup> Costes, L. (2011). From Henri Lefebvre's 'Right to the City' to the universality of modern urbanization. *Urban, Sep 2011-Feb 2012*, 1-12.

<sup>5</sup> Harvey, D. (2008). El derecho a la ciudad. *New Left Review*, 53, 23-39.

<sup>6</sup> Harvey, D. (2008). *Géographie de la domination*. Paris: Les Prairies ordinaires.

<sup>7</sup> Garnier, J.P. (2012). El derecho a la ciudad desde Henri Lefebvre hasta David Harvey. Entre teorizaciones y realización. *Ciudades*, 15 (1), 217-225.

<sup>8</sup> Castells, M. (1988 [1972]). *La cuestión urbana*. Mexico: Siglo XXI.

<sup>9</sup> For the role of contextual cultural knowledge applied to museum experiences, see the doctoral thesis of Elena Pérez Rubiales, *Essays on the art museum experience: a cultural sociology perspective*, available at: <https://www.tesisenred.net/handle/10803/285164#page=1>

Generating knowledge about the city that is relevant to the citizens does not mean showing them encapsulated objects, end products that are the result of an entire production process of knowledge; it means providing them with this entire process, showing them the tools that will help them to construct knowledge for themselves, that will help them to decipher many other codes that open more doors to knowledge of the city. Knowledge of the city, therefore, is not a closed result but rather an ongoing process that embraces different phases, from initial research to sedimentation and application, in different fields, of the knowledge generated, and with public dissemination in diverse modalities to better adapt to the needs and abilities of each individual.

In terms of knowledge, new research must be promoted on the history of the city to create new urban narratives, in the broadest range of disciplines and study objects, connecting research and dissemination through a public program open to everyone. In the case of MUHBA, the *Research and Debate Center (CRED)* is the node that drives this process of constructing knowledge. Although it does not have its own space or infrastructure, CRED does have sufficient dynamism and flexibility to attract new research from universities and other research centres and citizen study centres. Thus, CRED generates multiple areas of research on urban history (understanding urban history as a specific approach, particular to each city, and not just a local adaptation of national histories) that are active – water and food supply, work, housing, climate, sexuality and gender, minorities, among others – and with results in different formats and genres, which ensure more participatory research and a public programme.

On the other hand, in the area of knowledge as well, the city museum must also function as a *museum-school*, committed to the interaction with the educational world, thereby dissipating the imaginary line that has often separated the educational and cultural systems. The museum-school could bring both systems together by sharing and exchanging spaces, inverting and combining roles, and feeding off each other to contribute to a more egalitarian and socially just city.

In this regard, MUHBA is researching the different modalities of museum-school to try to find the formula that best fits the functioning of the city. The current MUHBA educational programme, named *Interrogar Barcelona (Interrogating Barcelona)* is already applying some parameters of the museum-school and is working in collaboration with the different educational agents of the city to become an active model for creating new, closer and more significant types of relationships between museums and schools. The programme has many different proposals, with a wide diversity of topics and timelines of the history of Barcelona, and it is aimed at all levels, from the very initial stages of education to post-compulsory secondary education. The museum is also committed to informal education, with new ways of working and innovation spaces and spaces for designing activities, in an attempt to bring the history and heritage of Barcelona to the school-going public, providing them with the necessary tools and codes to understand, interpret and read the city.<sup>10</sup> The museum-school thus becomes an essential piece of the MUHBA project as a space for building citizenship. Training the eye is a process that facilitates understanding the complexity of the city and reinforces the sense of belonging to it.

### **The right to the history of the city and shareable memories**

This active capacity of the city museum to generate urban knowledge is also developed in its role as a heritage centre. The city museum creates, collects, conserves, systematises, and studies the tangible and intangible heritage of the city

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<sup>10</sup> See the article by Mònica Blasco, *Un viatge per Barcelona: El Museu com a escola de carrer (A voyage through Barcelona: The museum as a street school)*, *Bulletí* 35, page 4: <https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/museuhistoria/ca/voyage-through-barcelona-museum-street-school>

and the citizens, based on urban history as a common thread of all its actions. The museum interprets the historical legacy of the city, a heritage that takes different forms (objects, architectural spaces, urban landscape, intangible goods) but is always a witness to urban history.

The museum's collection provides support for the generation of knowledge and the building of narratives. Spaces, objects and narratives must create a network of relationships and knowledge that is powerful enough to be able to provide us with a holistic, synthetic, and representative vision of the history of the city, which integrates research, heritage and public programming.

In its task of managing the collection, the city museum must be keenly aware of the impulse, enrichment, and consolidation of the contemporary history collection, with the creation of new urban heritage that can be configured from objects, built-up spaces, landscapes and representations of intangible culture – a collection that can explain the history and recent memory of the city in a network, another door that opens to guarantee everyone their right to the city. Indeed, and perhaps intuitively, the right to the city began to make headway in many museums as a right to representation and this is why the collection was expanded with objects from working-class neighbourhoods or recent immigrants. This is a way of potentiating the feeling of belonging and achieving cohesion of community, neighbourhood and city,<sup>11</sup> as MUHBA did in 2010 with the Turó de la Rovira project: when it conducted the patrimonialisation of an area with the remains of the war and the subsequent shanty dwellings that were built there, it incorporated the shanty-town dwellers and the informal city into the “formal” history of the city.<sup>12</sup>

In this search for new heritage that can explain the present, or the more recent past, to future generations, the MUHBA *Centre de Col·leccions (Collections Center)* becomes a dynamic space for work, research and innovation. The work on expanding and completing the contemporary collection means taking decisions to define the potential search lines and decide where the limits need to be established. Being able to also incorporate recent memory into collective history requires the collaboration of the citizens. In 2011, MUHBA presented the project *Laboratori MUHBA: col·leccionem la ciutat (MUHBA Laboratory: collecting the city)*,<sup>13</sup> a synthesis and multiformat installation of the experimental work that the Museum carried out as a creator of collections and new heritage spaces and as a constructor of narratives based on historical research. One of the successes of the project was the establishment of new links between the Museum and the citizens and between the Museum and other European city museums, with the participation and collaboration of the City History Museums and Research Network of Europe, created a year earlier with the leadership of MUHBA.<sup>14</sup>

Intending to boost the construction of narratives and views of the history of the city, MUHBA has recently intensified its work in incorporating the heritage of the periphery, with industrial spaces and housing estates (such as the Fabra i Coats factory or the cheap housing of Bon Pastor)<sup>15</sup>, as a representation of urban majorities.



*Representation in the street of the future museization of the cheap housing in Bon Pastor, a jointly managed project that incorporates the periphery into the narrative of the museum.*  
© MUHBA, Marta Delclòs

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, the project *Entrepreneurial Cultures in Europe*, with an intercultural and interdisciplinary approach to museum projects in seven European cities, such as Berlin, Liverpool, and Amsterdam, with which MUHBA collaborated. The project publication can be viewed at: <https://docplayer.net/13255583-Entrepreneurial-cultures-in-europe.html>

<sup>12</sup> For more information, see Roca i Albert, J. (2018). The informal city in the city museum. In: Savic, J. (Ed.), *Museums of Cities and Contested Histories, CAMOC annual conference, Mexico City, October 2017, Book of Proceedings. ICOM/ CAMOC*.

<sup>13</sup> On the project *Laboratori MUHBA: col·leccionem la ciutat*, see: <https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/museuhistoria/sites/default/files/labcol.140.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> In 2013, the CityHist Network drafted the Barcelona Declaration on European City Museums (<https://cityhistorymuseums.wordpress.com>), a good starting point for advancing in the definition of city museums everywhere.

<sup>15</sup> For more information on the project for the musealisation the cheap housing in Bon Pastor, which is still in progress, see the article by Pérez Rubiales, E. (2019). At home. Worker housing as a participative new branch of Barcelona City Museum. In J. Savic (Ed.), *The Future of Museum of Cities* (pages 106-115).

Strategic map of the Besòs Axis, riverbank of heritage and museums, with the MUHBA sites in black and other spaces, corresponding to other institutions, in yellow. © MUHBA



Incorporating the narrative of the majority into the memory and history of the city also means finding material representations that support and legitimise intangible heritage. Including the periphery in the historical narrative of the city provides us with a more complete and coherent explanation, a dialogue between centres and peripheries that enriches our knowledge and puts all urban agents on the historical map. This does not mean, however, turning our gaze solely on urban majorities but getting the pieces and spaces that represent them to dialogue with the more privileged sectors, the elites, often already represented on the cultural map of the city. It means showing the relationships and conceptual tensions between the pieces that represent different social realities in order to consolidate the historical narrative of the city. Thus, the efforts to complete the contemporary collection must contemplate the representation of all those involved, of the most disadvantaged sectors to the best-positioned sectors – because the empowerment of the urban majorities, as Roca i Albert explains,<sup>16</sup> will not come about just by acknowledging their diversity; it will also require the ability to show and explain the mechanisms of the city's social construction over time, and this requires explaining all the processes. The right to the city is also the right to be represented, the right to know and to form part of the history and memory of the city.

### From the centre to the periphery: the case of the Besòs Heritage Axis

MUHBA is working hard along the Besòs river, on the eastern periphery of Barcelona, on a project that aims to incorporate the narrative of the majorities into the consolidated memory and history of the city. With the configuration of an axis of heritage,<sup>17</sup> understood as a conceptual and territorial route that links spaces, heritage and narratives, the Museum is constructing an approach of crossed narratives on the trajectory of the contemporary metropolis. By starting with four MUHBA sites and establishing connections with other locations in the city that complement the discourse, the project *Eix Besòs, riba de patrimoni i*

<sup>16</sup> See the previously mentioned: Roca i Albert, J. (2019). At the crossroads of cultural and urban policies...

<sup>17</sup> See *El Besòs, riba de museus (Besòs: a riverbank of museums)* by Joan Roca, in *Butlletí 34*, page 24: <https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/museuhistoria/ca/besos-riverbank-museums>

*museus* (*Besòs axis, the riverbank of heritage and museums*) works on four strategic areas of knowledge about Barcelona: history of urban water, i.e. the sustainability and supply of the city, based at Casa de l'Aigua in the Trinitat neighbourhood; the history of labour and the city at the Fabra i Coats factory; social history at the cheap housing in Bon Pastor; and the history of the metropolis and the citizens at the Oliva Artés industrial building.

The need to integrate urban majorities has led to the consolidation of the very structure of MUHBA as a *network museum*, rooting its presence throughout the territory of the city. A network museum, which is not a network of museums, is a territorialised museum, with its rooms distributed through the different heritage spaces that make up the global narrative of the city acting as interconnected, self-sufficient and complementary nodes. These polarities are, on the one hand, representations of the times and spaces of the city, representations of the centre and the periphery, significant links as representations of the citizens throughout the historical urban trajectory. On the other hand, they are spaces that make it possible to act on a double scale, creating a fabric of proximity with the neighbourhood and contributing to configuring a city that is, in a global sense, more cohesive.

### And from the periphery to the centre... with *Barcelona Flashback*

To make the most of the potential of a city museum structured as a network museum, the network of urban nodes must be supported by a main node, a meeting point that both links and synthesises discourses. Having a starting point in dialogue with the other spaces, which appeals to all the citizens to provide them with the basic guidelines for understanding their context, means achieving democratic access to the city through urban knowledge.

In the case of MUHBA, this foundational core is found in Casa Padellàs, where there is an ongoing work to consolidate a synthetic narrative of the history of the city. It is currently possible to visit the exhibition *Barcelona Flashback*, an experimental and participatory exhibition that foreshadows the future *Casa de la Història de Barcelona* (Barcelona House of History).<sup>18</sup>

The exhibition offers visitors the opportunity to know and recognize the metropolis in a synoptic visit that brings together a collection of one hundred of the most significant objects of the Museum in a journey designed to have a variable duration, with a basic visit that requires just one hour. Several city museums (notably, the Amsterdam Museum) have already committed to propitiating a synthesis that can be visited in a short period. In the case of Barcelona, the aim is to lay out narratives, images and objects in a way that allows for a short or more extensive reading, depending on what the visitor wants. The presentation allows the construction of narratives based on an urban reading in an interrogative mode, with resources in different formats. With a novel layout of the museographic space, visitors can ask and listen to the witnesses to the history of the city, explore the multiple Barcelonas of which it is made up, and read the heritage that underlies it. Inferring individually and collectively the elements that define a city allows the individual to undertake a comparison with other cities and thus advance in much more global knowledge, in an urban network of international scope.

The *Barcelona Flashback* method stimulates the spectators to become active and participative subjects of the exhibition, it invites them to participate in the collection that explains the history of the city, with the option of completing the exhibition through donations and of contributing in the design of the future space. This is an open proposal in the form of a laboratory that aims to explore new forms of dialogue with the citizens and tourists and to seek alternatives for seeing, visiting and thinking Barcelona, given that the right to the city is a right that belongs to everyone, citizens of Barcelona and visitors, residents and newcomers.



*The Barcelona Flashback exhibition, one hundred objects to enter into the historical knowledge of the city. © MUHBA, Enric Gràcia*

<sup>18</sup> For more information, see *Barcelona Flashback*, una mostra experimental i participativa (Barcelona Flashback: an experimental and participatory exhibition), the central topic of MUHBA *Butlletí* 35 at: <https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/museuhistoria/ca/barcelona-flashback-experimental-and-participatory-exhibition>



### **A sustainable network museum. Public-community management**

The network museum model described is plausible if, among other factors, management is sustainable and, therefore, can optimise resources efficiently. It is important to understand the needs and particular circumstances of each space to adapt management to each case, understanding that the characteristics of each node are different and, therefore, require different measures. It is not a matter of opening all the spaces of the museum for the same number of hours nor of having a public programme with a large volume of activities in each space, but of determining the best way of relating to the environment and making effective decisions, taking into account the spaces individually and as a whole.

The cross-sectional nature of the team is an immense added value in a network museum, and even more so in the case of a city museum rooted in the territory. Recently, MUHBA has increased its efforts to develop new management models that intensify a proximity social fabric that is both local and connected with the city as a whole. The result, to date informal but with highly positive and substantial effects, is the experimentation with joint public-community management that makes it possible to collaborate with the districts and with other institutions, such as neighbourhood associations, study centres and local archives.<sup>19</sup> To achieve an active citizen network that affects research, collecting, programming and management of the museum, it is essential to encourage the participation of the different agents of interest in a territory.

The aforementioned project of the Besòs heritage axis is a clear example of this line of work, designed and developed thanks to the involvement and collaboration of different agents. The project is shaping up to be a laboratory for experimentation and citizen participation - a laboratory of form and format, we might say. Experimentation is both in its structure, its management and in the final product, which is expressed in a wide variety of formats (written, oral, visual, exhibitory, urban, artistic, digital, etc.) to construct a multifaceted image of the city. These are dynamic formats that often transcend the physical limits of the museum. The city museum is a museum inside and out. It is a space for work and live experimentation, for creation and innovation, which generates new urban approaches based on the collaboration and interaction of the citizens. Developing these models of interaction with local social groups offers the museum more options for working with heritage as a source for understanding and transforming the neighbourhood and the city. The horizon of a new generation of city museums lies in becoming a network museum of the citizens, because the right to the city is also the right to participate in it.

### **An inclusive museum for greater cultural democracy**

A museum that presents itself as a mirror and portal of the city is a museum that tries to present and represent the city and the citizens in all their diversity, taking into account differences and convergences, giving space to the collective as the sum of all the parts. Favouring equal access and representation in cultural resources potentiates the city museum as a social museum, as an agent of citizen cohesion and a participatory meeting space that expands the confines of cultural democracy and social justice.

The city museum must receive the citizens and redirect them again to the city with a regular, diverse and unitary public programme that aims to transcend

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<sup>19</sup> See *Més enllà de la participació: la cogestió d'espais museïtzats* (Beyond participation: shared management of museized spaces), by Joan Roca, in *Butlletí* 35, p. 28-29: <https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/museuhistoria/ca/beyond-participation-shared-management-museized-spaces>

limits to become a more inclusive museum, able to break down barriers between traditionally opposing polarities: between the culture of excellence and social culture, scientific research and public activity, education and culture, innovation and dissemination, centres and peripheries, the newly arrived and long-time residents, neighbours and tourists, museum and public space, inside and outside, between digital and analogue.

MUHBA is beating a path and is trying to materialise these precepts with its configuration as an *agora museum*, with free-access spaces where the public can enter and consult materials to begin to know the city or expand their knowledge, where they can rest and ask questions about Barcelona, interact with other interested people or simply let themselves be carried away by the flow of discovery. That is a laboratory space of the city that acts as a point of confluence for citizens of Barcelona and visitors and encourages the participation and social cohesion of a diverse citizenry.

### **The city museum, a meeting point for residents and tourists**

In recent years, the burden of tourism in many European cities has increased tensions between local and visiting populations, even generating a certain amount of tourism-phobia. In June 2017, Barcelona City Council's biannual barometer<sup>20</sup> showed tourism to be the problem that most concerned the residents of Barcelona, with a very high, 19% rate, higher than matters such as unemployment, pollution, safety or corruption. These numbers tripled those of the previous year and denoted the need for reflection on the subject.

The massification of certain spaces of the city that has come with the pressure of a voracious tourist industry has often led to demands for measures that ensure the wellbeing of the citizens, opening up breaches in the coexistence of the two groups, as if the right to the city were a birthright for the locals but with certain reservations for those who are only passing through. Can city museums undo this confrontation and contribute to the conciliation of multiple forms of appropriating the city?

MUHBA is currently dealing with this problem in the reformulation of the museological discourse of Park Güell, a space of the Museum where it explains the capital status of contemporary Barcelona, an essential link for understanding the growth and strength of the city with the will to create its own language.

Park Güell receives nine million visitors each year, many of whom are attracted by the uniqueness of the space and the mythification of its creator. Mass tourism is looked at askance by a large part of the local population, which is, as Benach would say, in the same vein as Harvey, in a "process of symbolic dispossession".<sup>21</sup> This is a type of tourism that wants to know the city on an equal footing in terms of rights, which has the right to the city insofar as these tourists are people who simply come from another city, like us when we travel.

However, MUHBA is working to formulate alternative tourist practices that help with the sustainability of tourism, attempting to mitigate the negative effects of a tourist industry that interferes and models the behaviour of the visitors and, to the extent possible, minimise the tensions of the complex relationships between visitors and residents, but not stamping out the conflicts, which are a natural part of cities. Or are conflicts and imbalances not proof of an active social life?

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<sup>20</sup> The document of the Barcelona City Council, 2017 biannual barometer, can be consulted at: [https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/premsa/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/r18019\\_Barometre\\_Desembre\\_Evolucio\\_V\\_1\\_0.pdf](https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/premsa/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/r18019_Barometre_Desembre_Evolucio_V_1_0.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> Benach, N. (2016). ¿Ciudades en el mapa o en la guía turística? Venta de la ciudad o sentido del lugar. *Revista Cidob d'afers internacionals* 113, 89-105.



Presentation of the recent research by the Museum on Park Güell, *El Park Güell i els seus orígens, 1894-1926*, accompanied by a dance band, an event that integrated research and citizenry.  
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The research undertaken by MUHBA on Park Güell and its inextricable relationship with the city<sup>22</sup> provides another reading of the elements for resituating Gaudí, Park Güell and Barcelona in a narrative anchored in the historical trajectory of the city and, as a result, closer to the citizenry, those who live there and those who are passing through. The common vision of a Park Güell that is decontextualised from urban history and from a sacralised Gaudí<sup>23</sup> and presented in isolation makes it difficult to understand either the park, Gaudí or the city. Heritage must be rooted in the city and placed in relation to its context, and alternative visits must be offered to deal with the overuse of certain stereotypes that are not truly representative of the city and the citizens.

Programming a diverse range of practices in different formats (urban itineraries, publications, exhibitions, seminars, cinema, etc.), that can reach the public and transcend the physical limits of the heritage space to place themselves in relation to the rest of the city may make progress toward the decongestion and demassification of the most popular sites and reinforce the social fabric. It is not a case of creating activities simply to entertain the public but of creating a multifaceted agenda based on the most rigorous knowledge, which can show the historical trajectory of the city from the different areas that make up its urban life. The principle of articulating spaces and narratives must be complied with for all the nodes that make up the network museum, from the spaces of the periphery and those of the centre, from those that represent the majorities to those of the minorities, from the most popular to those of the elites. This is how we promote the right to the city.

### A multiscale vision

Talking not only about the right to the city but also about the right to the neighbourhood, as we have done throughout the text, highlights the multiscale position from which the city museum must work to think the city in all its potential. On one hand, it is a museum of proximity, rooted in the neighbourhood and with the ability to strengthen the social fabric. On the other, it defines itself as an urban museum, integrated into the city and with the ability to articulate spaces and narratives and to represent urban diversity. And finally, by expanding the scale, the museum is shown as a global museum that opens to the world, a museum that is an ambassador for the city, with international projection, which works on the construction of urban knowledge in a shared manner, through transnational networks that feed off shared experiences. It is a museum that weaves the history and the memory of the city and constructs a much more universal network of identity.

To move from one scale to another in a natural way requires discerning relevant phenomena, bringing together local microprocesses of community representation with those of the city as a whole and, in turn, with the impacts of national and global events. What is relevant must be dealt with on different scales, extrapolating realities to make the existing relationships and correspondences emerge. This “scale dislocation”<sup>24</sup> will help to advance in the knowledge of the processes and avoid reductionist views.

<sup>22</sup> Recently, MUHBA, with the collaboration of Park Güell and the support of B:SM, published *El Park Güell i els seus orígens, 1894-1926* (*Park Güell and its origins, 1894-1926*), by Mireia Freixa and Mar Leniz, a study with a historical and urban outlook, which explains the origins of Park Güell, treating it in its urban context to insert it into the history of the city. Also, Albert Cuchí, with an environmentalist perspective, has published an internal document for reflection, titled *Gaudí/Park Güell/Barcelona. Una visió integradora* (*Gaudí/Park Güell/Barcelona. An integrating vision*), which helps to advance understanding of the city and its heritage. For a synthesis of the document, see the article by Cuchí, *El Park Güell: noves visions del segle XXI* (*Park Güell: new visions of the 21<sup>st</sup> century*), in *Butlletí* 35, page 15: <https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/museuhistoria/ca/park-guell-new-visions-21st-century>

<sup>23</sup> See: Mairesse, F. (2018). *Museology and the Sacred*. Materials for a Discussion. Paris: ICOFOM.

<sup>24</sup> See the reflection of Joan Roca on this concept in: *Barcelona vista del Besòs*. Notes de treball. In: Faigenbaum, P. and J. Roca. (2018). *Barcelona vista del Besòs* Barcelona: Museu d'Història de Barcelona and La Virreina Centre de la Imatge. 115-137.



*Europa Inter Urbes, a project in progress with other European city museums, provides a comparative perspective between cities to advance in the construction of a shareable European identity. © MUHBA, Enric Gràcia*

With this multiscale scenario, MUHBA has increased its efforts to rethink the role of digital technology in the city museum, incorporating it as a comprehensive strategy of the museum and across all its departments, from the collections to public programming and project development. Currently, the MUHBA projects *Multimèdia* and *Museu Virtual* (*Multimedia* and *Virtual Museum*) explore new formats for promoting greater accessibility to the knowledge of the city and encouraging interaction between spaces, from here to there, in favour of cultural democracy.

## Conclusion

The right to the city provides an alternative framework for rethinking the city, which has become the very artefact of city museums,<sup>25</sup> and the city museum, based on cultural democracy and social equality. The new generation of 21<sup>st</sup>-century city museums must promote urban inclusion, sustainable tourism and the construction of a shareable world in order to become, based on the construction of knowledge, a cultural hub, a meeting point for visitors and a centre that drives global relations. Considering the right to the city from a multiscale perspective brings us to understand it as a right of citizens (visitors and residents, long-time residents or newly arrived) to urban knowledge, to the neighbourhood and to the centre, to the history and to the memory of the city. We must champion and progress in the configuration of city museums as heritage centres of urban knowledge and citizen-building. We must transition from city museums to citizen museums.

## BIOGRAPHY

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<sup>25</sup> Jones, I. (2008). Cities and Museums about Them. In: Jones, I., Macdonald, R.R. and McIntyre, D. (Eds.). *City museums and city development*. Altamira Press. 1-15.