

MACROCEPHALIC BARCELONA OR CATALAN CITIES?

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When we say that Barcelona is a macrocephalus as compared to the rest of the Principality it is because we are speaking of 65% of the population, 60% of net production and 50% of the active population and there is a tendency to identify this polarization with a clear indication of the present day territorial imbalance. The macrocephalic characteristic is one of the most representative effects of this imbalance due to the play of dominating forces within the economic system which apparently have found this territorial model most adequate for its reproduction.

In the consideration of these categories we shall see that: 1) the production of this urban factor is carried out at extremely high social cost; 2) it requires much more concentrated investments of space which exclude alternative possibilities for location in other points of the territory and 3) there is, therefore, a tendency to drain resources towards this growing centre from the areas which become progressively lower in rank regarding this centre.

Our thesis on this point emphasizes that if the most recent growth of Catalonia can be said to be qualified by its continued concentration towards Barcelona, this concentration can be identified with the *development of the regional suburb* as a phenomenon which expresses and values it, also this process has not yet annulled *the capacity of other Catalan cities* to grow in a more rational way and this capacity must be recovered by means of the understanding of the new sense and the new nature which can be attributed to the elements of the substructure in the change of that process.

After a superficial analysis of the regional suburb as an adequate representation of the macrocephalic characteristic, one type of City within the Principality can be categorized, the dynamics of their growth is found to have a more explainable dimension in relation to their problems than their own greatness, and an articulation is discovered in connection with this type of city with an investment in its substructure which permits the valuation of new investments with a view to the intended restructuring of the territory. Four types of City can, therefore, be spoken of, according to their growth dynamics: A 'mature cities', B 'recent cities', C 'stagnant cities' and D 'empty cities'.

1. The materialization of the macrocephalic characteristic of Barcelona, especially during the last decades, shows the progressive differentiation between the two clearly opposed sides of the problem:

a) the centre, the municipality of Barcelona, is exploited to its maximum and the density of population is brutal, it searches for an extension and a fitting into the

area of the direction of Catalonia. The substructure work, which has supported these transformations, has been both of 1) internal restructuring — expansion of the underground network, building of the Ring Road, and more or less satisfactory solutions to traffic conflicts — which has attempted to enhance the overall efficiency and to make possible a more intense use and to extract a greater appreciation of the value of the land, and of 2) the intended territorial structuring — new railway stations, new accesses to the city, motorways, tunnels...

b) the consolidation of the regional suburb which has played the principal role in growth during the last twenty years, as to population (during the decade from '60 to '70 it endured a total increase of 70%), as to ground (65% of all the ground has been built up), and it is where new industrial investments are effected and where the shifts from the centre go.

It is worth pointing out, at this point, that the urban continuum of Baix Llobregat and the Barcelonés occupies a strip between 4 and 15 kilometers wide from the centre of Barcelona which has been the obligatory place of residence of a badly paid work force and this has been one of the fundamental factors in the development of the macrocephalic concentration.

2. The second part of the argument refers to the consideration of those Catalan cities which are not directly bound to the macrocephalic centre. By drawing up maps of the cities on the exclusive criterion of size (illustration 1) the suggestion arises that the incontestable importance of the agglomeration of Barcelona must be reconsidered in the light of the resources and possibilities which the urban network has had historically, and still has in spite of this polarized distribution.

If we study the temporal evolution of the graphics (1 and 2) in terms of the dynamic of each one of the cities and of the changes in the cumulative number of cities according to size, we shall see that at each level — of size — there are cities, in the last twenty years, with a strong dynamic and we shall also see that at all levels there is a growing number of cities during the last fifty years. That is to say, there are more and more cities of all sizes over 2,000 inhabitants; urban concentration is, therefore, growing at all levels.

We shall concentrate on discussing A and B type cities (mature and recent cities) as we believe that C and D type cities (stagnant and empty cities) require a specific valuation and the first two types illustrate the capacity of the city system to bear alternative investments corresponding to actions which will not congest the metropolitan centre.

Recent, B type, cities are characterized by the fact that in the '60 to '70 period they showed an extremely high growth index (approximately between 150 and 200%) and a very high growth index between '50 and '60 (some 80%). This growth

during the last twenty years occurred around small urban concentrations which had a very precarious substructure. We could say that these cities were born in 1950. Some of them were of a certain size and character in the 30s having experienced a similar rate of growth in the '20 to '30 period.

This group of cities could be said to belong to the continuum of Barcelona, and some other cities, with a similar relationship of dependence to other nearby secondary agglomerations, have characterized the regional suburb.

The A type or mature cities are characterized by a more gradual growth curve, with appreciable dynamic in the periods '20 to '30 and '50 to '70 (some 20%); their growth

during these periods has always acted on an urban enclosure — that is, on an existing urban development — of considerable dimensions in comparison to the new growth. These urban structures have been generated gradually by means of an historical process which has left in these cities, in the types of building, in the shapes of their streets and squares, in the services which they enjoy or which they have had at other times, the imprint of transformations in their special organization throughout the history of Catalonia.

3. Thus, the distribution of population by groups of cities (graph No.3) shows that in spite of the distortion which Barcelona and the towns around her represent, there is *a group of some thirty cities* with between 10 and 100 thousand inhabitants which is outside the Barcelona continuum. These thirty cities already have a population of over one million inhabitants and *they are potentially capable of being the second capital of Catalonia taken as a whole*. A divided, scattered and discontinuous "city" which would, however, have overcome the internal imbalance of the first city and the disadvantages which she imposes on the rest of the territory.

In these terms, the transformation of the present-day macrocephalic model would demand different bases for urban management which would take as an alternative, in accordance with this thesis, the enhancement of the capacity of these thirty cities. This would be feasible because of the great possibility of growth which urban development has historically accumulated as a fixed capital and which these cities offer (it is a growth by aggregating the notably large global increases with a low marginal cost and a relatively high control of the new urban ground) and also because of the new articulation which could be shaped between the nuclei which form as a whole this new capital by means of a policy of investments in new forms of substructures which would actually be located outside of Barcelona.

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