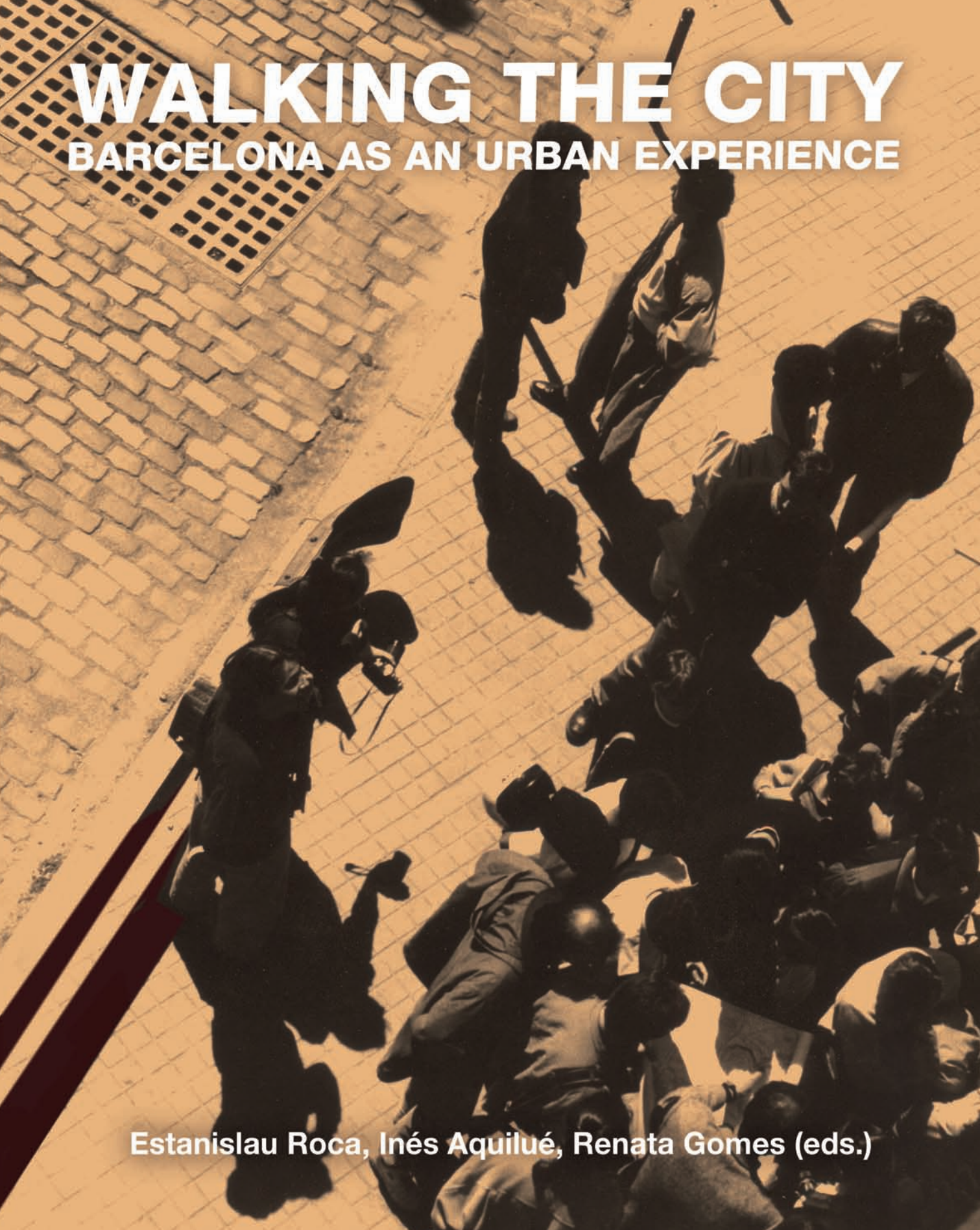




WALKING THE CITY

BARCELONA AS AN URBAN EXPERIENCE

Estanislau Roca, Inés Aquilué, Renata Gomes (eds.)

CONTENTS

Foreword	11
E. ROCA, I. AQUILUÉ, R. GOMES	
Preface	15
O. BOHIGAS	
Presentation	17
I. GONZÁLEZ	
Walking Barcelona. An invitation	19
M. TENORIO	
Images of Barcelona	25
I. ARMILLAS	
Introduction	33
E. ROCA, I. AQUILUÉ, R. GOMES	

ROUTES

ROUTE 01. Ciutat Vella	45
A. MORO, J. GALINDO	
ROUTE 02. Gràcia	69
A. RAMON	
ROUTE 03. Eixample	89
M. COROMINAS	
ROUTE 04. Rail system	109
M. DOMINGO	

ROUTE 05. Industrial past M. TATJER, A. VILANOVA	129
ROUTE 06. Meridiana C. GASTÓN	153
ROUTE 07. Housing estates M. FRANCO	169
ROUTE 08. Nou Barris S. COMPTA, M. MARTÍ	181
ROUTE 09. Olympic Village J. CARBONELL	201
ROUTE 10. University of Barcelona A. LEZCANO	215
ROUTE 11. Conquered urban spaces L. ALEMANY, L. SORIANO	231
ROUTE 12. Friends for life J. PUIG-PEY, E. ROCA, J. SABATÉ	247

STEPS

STEP 01. Innovation E. ROCA, I. AQUILUÉ, R. GOMES	271
STEP 02. Comparison E. ROCA, I. AQUILUÉ, R. GOMES	279
STEP 03. Walking in cities D. NEUMANN	289

FOOTPRINTS

FOOTPRINT 01. The City as memory	299
E. ROCA, I. AQUILUÉ, R. GOMES	
FOOTPRINT 02. The trail of the student	313
E. ROCA, I. AQUILUÉ, R. GOMES	

HORIZONS

HORIZON 01. Havana	329
C. CROSAS	
HORIZON 02. Antipodes	349
F. SAGARRA	

Acknowledgements	361
Bibliography	365
Index	371

FOREWORD

Estanislau Roca, Inés Aquilué and Renata Gomes
Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya · BarcelonaTech

The publication now in your hands aims to convey the essence of an academic project and investigation launched in 2004 in the form of a university course.¹ The course consists of outings and excursions throughout the city and is taught at the Escola Tècnica Superior d'Arquitectura de Barcelona (ETSAB-UPC) in the Urban and Regional Planning Department. The project is led by Estanislau Roca (D Arch), currently Director of the Urban and Regional Planning Department at the UPC in Barcelona, who guides the class, its content and its goals. The course is coordinated by the architects and professors Inés Aquilué (PhD candidate) and Renata Gomes (D Arch).

11

In 2011, the Walking Barcelona course was awarded the Jaume Vicens Vives Award for University Teaching Quality in Catalonia, and the 2011 UPC Award for Quality of University Teaching, both distinctions of great prestige and influence in academic circles.

Its objective is to further students' knowledge about the city, through a series of tour experiences that offer an in-depth look at Barcelona's architecture, urban planning, sociology, history and other aspects.

¹ *Walking Barcelona* was launched in 2004 as a training course for *Tridimensiudad BCN 2004: International Meeting of Students of Architecture and Urban Disciplines*, organized by students of the ETSAB, coordinated by PhD student Carlos Pinto under the guidance of Professor Ferran Sagarra, who took responsibility for the course until the 2009-2010 academic year. Since 2010 the course has been directed by Professor Estanislau Roca. From the 2008-2009 course up to its 2012-2013 edition, its coordination was managed by Professors Laia Alemany, Sílvia Compta and Leticia Soriano.

The project's long-running nature has enabled the development, over the years, of a rich corpus of background material. Contributions from course teachers and from the students themselves, many from universities elsewhere in the world, have created a solid knowledge base whose horizons are unbounded and timeless.

The city of Barcelona, due, of course, to its proximity, has always been the focus of this educational project, but the intention from the start was to create a methodology that could be exported and applied to any city. Indeed, it has already been transferred to Rome, Medellín, Montevideo, Lisbon, and others.

Recently, the project has taken on a greater dimension based on its collaboration with the program run by the CASB (Consortium for Advanced Studies in Barcelona), which consists of Brown University, the University of Chicago, Columbia University, Cornell University, Duke University, Harvard University, Northwestern University, Princeton University and Stanford University.

The Introduction features three articles, one on city chronicles, another related to images of the city and the third regarding our academic project, its educational contents and the presentation of Barcelona as a lab, due both to its wealth of substrata and contents, and to its continuing status as a positive experience in urban planning and the transformation of the city. The second section features a selection of twelve articles written by experts who frequently accompany us, namely:

- I. *Building by looking: the capillary nature of Barcelona's Ciutat Vella*
by Antonio Moro and Julián Galindo
- II. *Walking Gràcia*
by Antoni Ramon
- III. *Walking Barcelona's Eixample: three centuries of urban development*
by Miquel Corominas
- IV. *Barcelona and its rail system*
by Miquel Domingo
- V. *Exploring the city of Barcelona through its industrial past*
by Mercè Tatjer and Antoni Vilanova
- VI. *On either side of the Meridiana*
by Cristina Gastón
- VII. *Housing estates: where the City changes its name*
by Manuel Franco

VIII. *Nou Barris: neighborhood struggles and the political will to monumentalize the periphery*

by Sílvia Compta and Miquel Martí

IX. *The Olympic Village*

by Jordi Carbonell

X. *Walking the University of Barcelona: the University and the City*

by Andrés Lezcano

XI. *Conquered urban spaces: reclaiming the City to live in*

by Laia Alemany and Leticia Soriano

XII. *Friends for life, 2014*

by Joan Puig-Pey, Estanislau Roca and Joaquín Sabaté

This is followed by three further sections:

- STEPS: explains the content and evolution of the teaching project.
- FOOTPRINTS: reflects collective memory and student learning through registers.
- HORIZONS: expands teaching in other areas.

We hope that this publication will allow the reader to find interests beyond those of the content itself and enjoy the walk through their cities from different perspectives.



Group of students visiting the Barcelona Pavilion. 2013

PREFACE

Oriol Bohigas
Architect

A title with an argument

It is no easy task to intervene in a collection of texts with a thematic unity when the criteria and production are already well advanced. Any space that remains to be occupied is either that of criticism or of justification of the contents themselves, even if this means distancing oneself from the explicative value of the essays but maintaining the consistency and continuity. Arguments need to be used, therefore, that are very simple and of a very general nature.

15

Clearly, the title of the book that brings together these essays hits the nail squarely on the head: *Walking Barcelona*. By itself it manages to define the contents and sketch out some initial questions. Walking “a city”—or any other place caught up in an anthropic process— is not the same as walking “around a city” and, therefore, the first thing that must be decided is which are the paths to be walked. It must be decided not only based on immediate functional objectives, but as a response to or a consequence of what the place has been or has represented — what it is or what it represents. Walking also demands two prior attitudes. Firstly, it means looking with a simultaneously generalist and specific scope in order to be able to understand the breadth of the concept, as well as to avoid tripping up against some obstacle and falling into a wasteland with no path to walk at all. Secondly, it requires a control of the positions chosen as viewpoints, according to the interpretational terms that we wish to impose.

However, there is yet another concept implicit in walking: measuring and interpreting the view on a comprehensible and explainable scale. In the dimensional definition of the visual field of each walk, there will be implicit references to the length of the walker’s stride. And the movement of

the viewpoint will be marked by different walking speeds and any faltering caused by accidents. Measure, then, is a scale reference of what surrounds life and the sociology of the human species.

Therefore certain urban descriptions and certain urban planning criteria whose conceptual origin lies in walking and all its related attributes offer, in my opinion, many more guarantees of information efficiency than the habitual, purely quantitative formulas that were often used until relatively recently in works on urban planning. Nowadays empirical justifications of the historical, social, political and even aesthetic references that abound in new urban projects are necessary. Walking a place means, precisely, looking at it at a humanly suitable pace —the palm, the length of the walker's stride, the limitations of the visual field, the literary constructions— in order to be able to classify it culturally as an object in continual historical activity.

PRESENTATION

Itziar González
Architect

Towards a collective mapping of urban experience

There exists a tradition of people that we can simply call city lovers. There are also people who, as Alexandre Cirici wrote in his guide, *Barcelona pam a pam* (Barcelona step by step) (1972), attempt to “make us understand that the things we find in the street have a meaning that affects us”. In the city a sequence of interior and exterior spaces strongly intertwine with our own lives and construct a unique urban experience. That is my way of seeing things, which also inspires the valuable academic proposal of this book, directed by Estanislau Roca. Through it we realize that getting to know a city is an essential condition for being a complete citizen, but it is not sufficient. We need, as these students have done for months, become explorers and cartographers of our own urban experiences. An experience which is both individual and collective. And, with this publication is now a shared experience.

17

The texts contained in *WALKING THE CITY* are the thread of a story that unravels the complexity of our cities and allows us to read their deepest hidden secrets, their most dramatic contradictions, their most moving and subtle poetry. The photographs and drawings evoke the eyes that trace the forms and vibrations of life and which become the exceptional witness to the conglomeration of desires and frustrations, successes and errors.

I have recently been fortunate enough to collaborate with the cultural program *Àrtic* on Barcelona's public television (BTV), writing the script and the presentation of brief segments about the exploration of parts of the city that link directly with the book that you now hold in your hands. In this

program, I remind viewers how ancient soothsayers would listen to the entrails of sacrificed animals in order to find out whether it was a good place to found a city and I invite the public to do the same, their own maps of the results of their own inquiry in the entrails of the streets and interior spaces of Barcelona. The proposed tool to carry out this measure is the scalpel of their intentional gaze. Now, however, and thanks to the publication of this book, one can also discover the force of the rubric of the lines of a drawing.

We are living material in an urban environment. Everything comes together and flows through our bodies in the form of the city, in the same way that we expand within the city when we traverse and share it. We are in the city and we become the city. However, at the same time, and referring back to Alexandre Cirici, we should go further and realize that the city is always the result of cooperation between a multitude of people. This cooperative construction is precisely what WALKING THE CITY proposes and offers us. The sum of the students' drawings and perceptions, the trace of their comparisons with their own home cities and the great umbrella of representations and images. For that reason I predict that, in the same way as the guide *Barcelona step by step* needed to be updated 40 years later with the booklet *Per no perdre peu*, WALKING THE CITY will need continued and unconditional support in its radical proposal to push academia into the streets and squares.

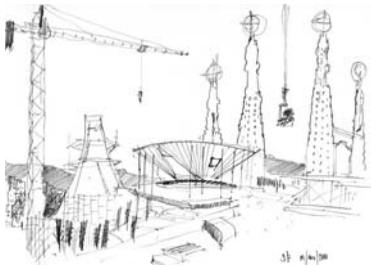
18



Collaborative design for the process of public participation in Lesseps Square
(Itziar González 2002)

WALKING BARCELONA. AN INVITATION

Mauricio Tenorio
The University of Chicago



Sagrada Família in construction. Drawn by Sebastian Harris



Sagrada Família nave. Drawn by Sebastian Harris

1.

Walking is to thinking what seeing is to reading. Walk Barcelona, walk it with no sense of destination, let your imagination be tempted by the urban stroll. Any simple pedestrian feels, if fleeting, the need to enunciate, in tidy and revelatory words, the images prompted by walking Barcelona. I am not talking about observing the guidebook's commands ("walk to Sagrada Família, walk through Les Rambles..."); I am referring to getting lost through and in the city. Say, beautifully odd Sant Andreu, the Sant Viçens Square in Sarrià, General Prim Square in Poble Nou, its odd trees, or the unique sense of bendable and soft textures in huge and hard structures in Passeig de Gràcia, or the melancholic flora emerging from the cracks in the worn out slabs of Poble Sec's sidewalks, ... all this seems to ask the walker to have the narrative skills not to leave the fleeting impressions unexpressed. Words often do not come, but to no avail: the temptation remains. Walking is thinking at its most frustrating: it comes easy to us but not with its Baudelaire or Benjamin included. Manuel Chávez Nogales, as many city-dwellers do, failed in distilling knowledge from the walk, but not from the frustration itself: *"hay que huir de todo intento descriptivo, sin decir que la ciudad sea indescriptible, y sin abdicar en una falsa modestia, podemos renunciar a las enumeraciones pretenciosas, llenas de figuras retóricas estériles y de evocaciones desvinciadas al peso de una erudición si no indigesta indigerida."*

All in all, once the vice —walking Barcelona— is acquired, thinking is a matter of the feet; walking a brain matter. Of course, being a historian of cities, the vice comes with the territory but my own professional and unprofessional ruminations tend to result in a walk through the city. I walk to

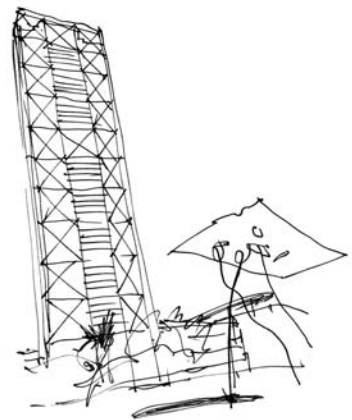
name things and feelings, to feel named by things and feelings. Walking Bailén Street, José María Fonollosa thought and walked his and the city's mutual making and unmaking:

*Y una inmensa ciudad será el cadáver.
Con seres trabajando sin descanso
Para destruir la forma, este volumen
Que la gente conoce por mi nombre.*

2.

Walk Barcelona's geometries for, if the social and the moral have a mental shape, it is geometrical — a lasting shaping delineated in all things human by the species' enduring urban experience. Geometry and its quintessential experiencing, the city, has vouched for senses of order, equidistance, logic, peace, efficiency, fairness. But the city is just that: circles, squares, parallels, diagonals in small and large blocks; in buildings or avenues or in sidewalks' slabs or in the mandatory octagonal walk in Barcelona's Eixample. Barcelona, like other cities, is a geometrical experience, but it is somehow more so than other cities. In it, all is geometry in action molding the experiencing of the city: the streets' names —Paral·lel, Diagonal, Meridiana—, the unique city grid imagined by Ildelfons Cerdà's large Eixample —something more than a grid—, the sidewalks' slabs —often squares containing a square containing a circle— or the exact lines that demarcate the city's confinement — a mountain line and a coastal line; a river on one side, another river on the other. There is, perhaps, nothing particularly Barcelona about this geometrical experience. Except for the dimension of things, for the scale and frequency of contrasts.

Barcelona constitutes the pocket, and yet full, version of the great European metropolis. It encompasses the full package of the modern, post-modern, and hyper-modern urban center in a manageable human size. Barcelona, unlike Berlin or Paris, can be fully inhabited in a walk, in a day. Health permitting, for weather always does, from Collserola to Port Olímpic, and from Sant Andreu to Hospitalet, would be a matter of a whole morning and a whole evening walk. In no more than a four-hour walk, the city offers the entire repertoire of surprises, beauty, ugliness, wealth, and poverty that other cities would require days or weeks to reveal to the walker. Geometry experienced at this scale constitutes more than the bonsai rendition of the *Großstadt*; it becomes the sudden disclosure of the geometrical formatting of both our thoughts and our steps.

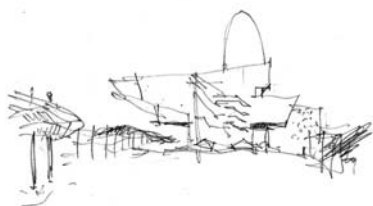


Hotel Arts by SOM Architects from Chicago, and the sculpture David i Goliat by Antoni Llena. Drawn by Sebastian Harris

Our feet learn the lesson. They aim for straight lines — they know their geometry — but they invariably draw zig-zags, diagonals, perpendiculars, and circles in their paths in tandem with the city's ruling geometry. The gaze captures the squares and circles of the tiles the foot cannot avoid stepping on, the brain thinks geometrically and ahead of the route to be taken, it is mesmerized at the geometrical and rhythmic beauty the city produces. For it is a large geometrical complex but at a manageable human scale; thus it is a witness to geometry and its constant defiance. Gaudí's buildings defy geometry: oases of asymmetry, opinionated curves and unexpected reliefs. The insolence only makes the already geometrical experience of the city more geometrical. In turn, an immense geometrical domain (the Eixample) sizes the labyrinth of narrow streets in the small old city — like Jerusalem's old city. The very contrast between the constrained mess of the pentagonal old city, containing traces of old orders, and the massive grid surrounding it, reinforces geometry as the deciphering code of the urban experience. Then again the post-this and that architecture of the Forum and its surroundings would stun the dweller with squares and rectangles piling up in shapes, masses, weights, and angles that resist gravity... but the scale, and the trendiness of the architecture: a baby playing with its building blocks.

In sum, rambling Barcelona with no particular course does not improve logical reasoning. It is in fact irrational. But it exposes the walker to the molding of its own thoughts.

21



D-HUB. Design Museum by MBM Architects. Drawn by Sebastian Harris



Encants Market by b720 Architects. Drawn by Sebastian Harris

3.

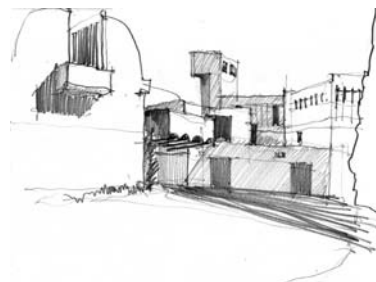
Do walk Barcelona, and if you do, avoid fixed routes, those set by official epics or by tourist guides. Just get lost. *“La ciutat acaba mansament, sense cap orgull”*, wrote Manuel Durán, *“sense crits, amb algun petit grinyol i el lamentar espasmòdic dels gossos”*. The city has and has not a set narrative to tell. Though there are tourist guides, and an official state epics for, say, Mexico City, the monster city does not even attempt to mask its sublime monstrosity. Millions of European tourists walk New York City every day — which is the least American of American cities, so the visitors' anti-Americanism convinces them —, but their *“Sex and the City”* New York, the city from their hipster German or French guides, is alien to New Yorkers. Barcelona has a different odd relation with its international image. Maybe because of its size, or perhaps due to its peculiar relation vis-à-vis Madrid, but the fact is that for Barcelona there seems to be a more authoritative and demanding script to experience it than for other great metropolises, which can hardly control either their own history or their metropolitan lives.

Barcelona is a beauty, and it knows it. See the pride of uniqueness and beauty in the state promotion of the city, which, in city billboards, in posters, in guides, in museums, tells you of an unmatched epic history, of uniquely Catalan aesthetics; moreover, it tells you how to see it. As late, as I walk, posters and posters everywhere tell me that the city enhances my creativity, that Barcelona is “the most creative city in the world”. I feel as stupid as ever, or as enriched and excited, when I walk in Barcelona as when I do in Mexico City or Chicago, absorbing their beautiful geometry and their defying chaos, their ugliness and contradictions. The advantage is that one can really get lost in Barcelona, it is not that large, and though there are places more dangerous than others, it just does not have the drastic segregation of crime that Chicago offers or the, after all, comforting democratization of crime of, say, Mexico City where you can be killed, or not, anywhere.

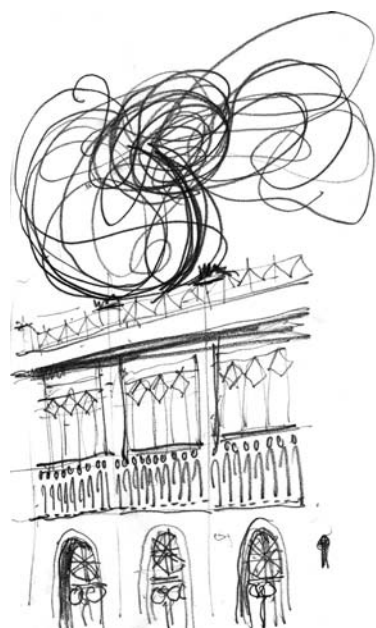
4.

Walk Barcelona, its great neural connections, the sidewalks, with no mobile phones, no headphones. Walking its sidewalks with headphones is like eating with your nose plugged. Listen to the city’s languages and noises, the clamors of a geometry always in reconstruction, the accents and variations of many languages in constant beautiful promiscuity – different versions of Catalan and Spanish; English, Urdu, French, German. Walk the sidewalks and learn the skills to master the art of walking Barcelona. Each city has its own tricks. In Mexico City you cross avenues, jump onto buses or fences, at times running into the middle of the cars. The code is unwritten but clear: you, walker, do whatever you want as long as you do not disturb the “whatever I want” of other walkers and drivers. The others can kill you, and you know it, but the others assume you know their paths, you would not get in their way. It works, sort of. In Barcelona there is another principle: you do whatever you have to do to keep your slow or rapid pace, alone or in artillery formation, as often tourists walk in Barcelona. The others have to put up with it.

Besides, be aware, the sidewalk in Barcelona has lately been commandeered by three recent uninvited — for the walker — presences: the excess of uncontrolled tables and chairs that have taken over the sidewalks as a result of European non-smoking policies, the many unruly bikes that, unlike in long-time biking cities (Amsterdam, Berlin), behave as tyrants of the sidewalk, and Barcelona’s majesty, the motorcycle, which seems to have Constitutional immunity over walkers; if you feel that one is behind you, it is not only the omnipresent noise they make, it is that one is beside you either seeking to park — and they park anywhere — or inaugurating



Miró Foundation. Drawn by Sebastian Harris



Tàpies Foundation. Drawn by Sebastian Harris

a shortcut through the city's traffic. But walk, walk, learn the tricks, the reward is Barcelona inside you.

It is hard to miss the overlapping of cities while walking Barcelona or Paris or Berlin. Layer over layer of different Barcelonas, the Gothic over the Roman city, the large modern 19th-century development over old towns and streets, the new trendy architecture of what used to be shanty towns over the coastline and Montjuïc. There is, of course, the temptation to sanction one of these Barcelonas, one of these geometries we walk, as the authentic, the real one. And yet, what would become of a city if it could be a fixed idea, a mere portrait? Cities do not offer fixity, and to capture Barcelona in a portrait is almost unachievable, as it keeps changing so rapidly. So you can walk Barcelona, as you would be asked by the many guides and history books, in search of its real geometry, a peeling off of the leaves of fakeness that cover an artichoke's heart: a "natural" grid, the real Barcelona that is, as it is often said, a natural city, a true outcome of a genuine history, unlike so many metropolises that are the products of states, industry, kings, and empires. But all cities are unnatural, nothing to do about it, all cities, like snakes, change their skin, and thus streets, buildings, neighborhoods or habits could be ugly but they are never fake. Barcelona, like any great city, is nothing but the overwhelming and simultaneous, if undesirable, histories one over another. The lesson learned by walking Barcelona's geometry is not in searching for the real one, not in the logic of national or regional prides or historical truths; the lesson is that of irony, mess, promiscuity and density of life that wandering the city produces.

Walk over this mind-formatting geometry: the walk that sees the un-geometrical and illogical crowds walking in the old city, in the famous Ramblas, or that witness the irony of, at night, seeing so few lightened windows in the Eixample — a geometry of rectangles in the midst of blackness which reveals the contradiction of people being currently evicted from their apartments while so many apartments remain empty and dark everywhere. Walk and notice the perfect octagonal logic of the Eixample's corners now always fully inhabited by dark men and women who, with a supermarket cart, empty containers; wonder where they live. Where is their city? Within or outside this gorgeous geometry? And yes, do walk the part of the city full of tourists going up and down Les Rambles wearing Mexican sombreros sold by Pakistanis in souvenir stores. Yes all this is not really Catalan, yes it is ugly, and yet it is Barcelona. It is useless to exhibit the *caganers* on the shelves in shop window, or to try, as the Generalitat did, to organize a campaign for the *barrets mexicans* to be substituted by the *barretina* or to addend the Catalan motto: "Catalunya is not Spain... and not Mexico, for God's sake!" Useless to ask the vendor not to carry sombreros in his shop.



Cathedral Square. Drawn by Sebastian Harris



Cambó Avenue. Drawn by Sebastian Harris

Walk and witness the contradictions, the ironies and the beauty, say, of children playing in the redesigned Lluís Companys Promenade, or young Pakistani men playing cricket. All is Barcelona: the Mexican sombreros, the Mediterranean sea, the children, the cricket games.

5.

This is my vice, walking Barcelona. Indeed, I have only one mother tongue, and only one innate way of walking. I walk cities with the steps learned in my own mixture of paths from three cities: La Piedad (Michoacán), Mexico City, and Barcelona. Now I walk other cities without leaving a footmark, other than the pale trace of my feet *"aquerenciados"* to long walks in my beloved three cities. My unconditional and endurable love for Barcelona is my inability to escape from it. I inhabit it and I love it, I like thusly myself; I live it and I hate it; I hate thusly myself. I leave it, move out, and I only enlarge it, it is wherever I walk, so attached to my feet is Barcelona. It is as hard to be fully Barcelona as to relinquish it. Like the lover who we inadvertently call by the name of our ex, Chicago must feel outrage for I walk its streets with this, as it were, alien and untruthful pacing.



Arc de Triomf by Josep Vilaseca. Drawn by Sebastian Harris