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Urban Governance of Employment Activation. The Case of *Barcelona Activa* (Spain)

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SUMMARY:

Within the framework of the “knowledge society” and the globalized economy, with the consequent processes of rescaling nation-state and improving of more horizontal modes of governance, many European urban areas carry out activation policies through their capacity to mix productive flows, foreign investments, social characteristics and local economic development. According to this perspective, activation policies have to be interpreted as territorial qualified initiatives that contribute to shape local socio-economic growth.

Barcelona Activa is the local development agency of the city of Barcelona (Spain) designed for the increase of employment, business cooperation and local entrepreneurial spirit. This agency promotes Barcelona through citizenship participation and professionalization, public-private partnership and integral plans of urban marketing.

I will focus my analysis both on methodological strategies and governance outlines of this agency, approaching activation policies as indispensable instruments for the improvement of Barcelona as one of the most important southern gateway to Europe.

KEY WORDS:

Activation policies, urban governance, economic promotion, social cohesion, local development, territorial marketing.

1 Introduction: A New Framework for European Activation Policies

In the last twenty years European employment social policies have marked a paradigmatic change. The passive interventions distributed according to a certain citizenship criteria or depending on deposits carried out previously by the unemployed (without any practical obligation from them), have been progressively replaced by activation programs, in which benefits are subordinated to more responsibilities. Traditional social protection generated dependency among policies beneficiaries. Now planned specific programs aim at enabling them with the adequate resources to develop their own employability (encouraging them to become “self-entrepreneurs”) (Van Berkel and Hornemann, 2002).

This new perspective involves a substantial change regarding the socialization of the social risk (Taylor-Gooby, 2004; Paci, 2005). Within the traditional frame of Keynesian welfare system the risk was considered as an external characteristic of the subject (unemployment, disease, etc.), while in the neoliberal and technocratic debate the main risk depends on the individual (i.e., the risk that he/she cannot be active). Consequently, standard and conventional social policies, based on predefined categories of social risk, have been replaced by more individualized ones (Borghi, 2002; Chicchi, 2003, Van Berkel, 2005).

The *European Employment Strategy* underlines that the competitive position of the European economy should be strengthened by a progressive deregulation of the labour market, with more employment flexibility and better skills qualification (Barbier, 2005)¹. Modern economy demands more flexible adaptability from the enterprises and from the employers too. Workers must learn to cohabit with permanent changes (regarding their jobs and their employers, as well) by an actively adaptation to the new knowledge-based society (Mingione, 1993; Esping-Andersen, 1999).

For an effective implementation of these new measures, it was settled in motion a progressive decentralization of social policy. To attain this goal, since 2000 European Union adopted the *Open Method on Coordination*, a soft instrument working through recommendations, monitoring, exchange of best practices, and the joint elaboration of performance indicators. The European institutions select a series of guidelines, often grouped into conceptual categories (“activation”, “employability”, etc.), act to supply the European conceptual framework for social policy, and orient national debates about activation policies (Serrano and Jepsen, 2005)².

¹ It is no longer enough for people to have the appropriate knowledge; they must also have the appropriate aptitudes and psycho-social motivation and competences, they must be permanent available and flexible (Polavieja, 2003). Nowadays, personal adaptability (i.e a mobile, interchangeable and multi-skilled worker) and availability are described as the main resources that define individual employability (Serrano and Crespo, 2004).

² In 2000 the Lisbon Council adopted the expression “Active Welfare State” and since then “activation” is a key notion in the European employment strategy (Serrano and Jepsen, 2005).

Every European Union member state has to follow these guidelines for national and regional political decisions (*National Action Plans*)³. A brief number of quantitative and qualitative benchmarks were formulated as instruments for synchronic (at the same time) and diachronic (between countries) comparative check for the best practices models. Finally a mixed team from each member state carried out an evaluating process, by reviewing and monitoring back all the process. These follow-up practices have become a constant in the relation between European institutions, central governments and local actors.

One of the most important characteristic of the *Open Method on Coordination*, is the greater involvement of social local partners in the formulation of common wealth, and in the definition, carrying out and evaluation of activation policies, in order to stimulate a governance network articulated on different administrative and executive levels.

A review of social intervention plans is now in progress, especially through the localization of new decisional practices and planned strategies. We passed from a vertical coordination of social policy (*government*) to a horizontal coordination (*governance*), with a remarkable increase of the social actors (both private and public) participating in the activation policy processes (Le Galès, 2002)⁴.

The local agencies are important strategic actors because they know very well local labour market characteristics and which resources and partners mobilised for the development of effective activation policies. Thus, urban and metropolitan areas become the privileged place where social cohesion must be defined and achieved, by managing all the tension derived from social vulnerability factors (such as social loneliness and labour or economic precariousness) through social actors cooperation and coordination.

Activation policies for employment and local development implement individualized strategies of labour insertion and foment a stronger and widespread social responsibility (Barbier, 2005). At the same time, they increase human capital and permanently improve the local labour employability, making it more suitable to the emergent job demands, fomenting entrepreneurship culture, helping small and medium-sized companies to create new job according to innovation and information and communication technologies, adapting strategies to the requirements of local socio-economic development. As direct consequence of all these interventions, local agencies try to achieve an integral and participated local improvement by the relative growth of occupational rate.

Barcelona Activa is the local development agency of Barcelona (Spain), the tool of Barcelona City Council for the design and implementation of activation policies, whose common mission is the city economic promotion by creating high quality and future-oriented

³ These *National Action Plans* are based on four main aims: to increase professional insertion; to develop entrepreneurial spirit; to improve companies' flexibility and workers adaptability; to reinforce employment equality of opportunity for men and women.

⁴ There are two main tendencies involved in this change: Firstly, the introduction of market parameters for social policy plans, realized in the framework of a new "re-commodification" and normally associated to the reduction of public inference in favour of private actors. The second one is referred to the co-participation of a plurality of social actors and organizations into the *policy making* process, with the consequent diffusion of new negotiable procedures, local partnership and social networks (Le Galès, 2002).

employment and business, encouraging entrepreneurial spirit, supporting local companies and developing an inter-sectoral and inter-institutional cooperation. Within a new framework for European activation policies, *Barcelona Activa* demonstrates how a city as Barcelona, already rich and competitive, could implement specific policies and strategies for its socio-economic development.

In the next paragraph I introduce the greater importance that urban governance has assumed in the new scene of globalized economy and transnational competition between cities and between metropolitan regions. I will remark the role of the local development agencies as indispensable actors for territorial valorization and activation policies at an urban scale. Therefore, I describe the principal characteristics of Barcelona's economy and labour market, with reference to productive change and future perspectives of increase at an international scale.

In sum, the aims of my paper will be:

- To describe which structures are involved in the organization and realization of *Barcelona Activa*'s project;
- To investigate the "vocation" of Agency's services according to city and territorial promotion (mostly focusing my attention on its principal aims, methodologies, target plans, users and beneficiaries);
- To interpret how this kind of activation policy could be also referred to:
 - Citizenship participation and professionalization;
 - Social cohesion;
 - Urban marketing.

2 Rescaling State and Urban Governance

The turn from the Keynesian welfare state to a more complex, negotiated system oriented to international competitiveness, innovation, flexibility, and enterprise culture represented a crucial change for activation policies in Europe (Jessop, 1997; Valkenburg, 2004).

The primary coordination instruments in the Keynesian welfare system were the market, the nation-state and the mixed economy. In the emerging Schumpeterian workfare regime all these instruments have lost significance to inter-firm networks, public-private partnerships, and a multilateral and negotiated economy (Jessop, 1994).

Moreover, as Bob Jessop underlines, in contrast to the primarily national focus of the mixed economy, these new forms of negotiated economy also involve key economic players from local and regional as well as national and, increasingly, international economic spaces. This is linked to the partial hollowing-out of nation-states through the expansion of supranational institutions and political configurations (e.g., the European Union, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization, etc.), gaining strategic guidance in fostering the mobility of capital, goods, services and labour in the global economy, and the paralleled

transfer of regulatory authority downwards to sub-national territories (regions, metropolis and cities) (Jessop, 2000).

Since the mid-1980s the localized schemes of the Keynesian welfare state were criticized as being excessively bureaucratic, expensive, and inefficient; subsequently, new forms of local governance, based upon neoliberal principles such as fiscal discipline, lean administration, privatized service provision, and the new public management, were introduced.

According to Neil Brenner, since that period urban policies have been mobilized by national, regional, and local state institutions throughout Western Europe in order to promote territorialized subsidiarity⁵ and competitive advantages of strategic cities and regions, in relation to supranational spaces of economic competition⁶. Many western European states have deployed local policies extensively at an urban scale, with strategies of endogenous development. Cities are no longer seen as containers of declining industries and intensifying socio-economic problems, but are increasingly viewed as dynamic growth engines through which national competitiveness may be promoted in the new post-industrial and global economy (Brenner, 2004).

We have been witnessing an important growth of metropolitan governments, municipal administrations and local governing organizations autonomy and authority. As Patrick Le Galès maintains: “Urban policies are becoming more fluid as a result of a complex process of structuring, during which a widening range of actors, from different sectors of society, with different interests and acting at different levels, interact and produce policies. This brings about an immense field of experimentation undertaken by local actors, who are taking an active part in the redesign of public policies” (Le Galés, 2005; pp.242).

Reviewing the main arguments used by Neil Brenner for his studies, we can agree that urban governance has served as a major catalyst, medium, and arena of state rescaling processes, after the dilemmas generated by Keynesian forms of urbanization and central-directed development and government (end of 1980s). After this rescaling process, according to Bob Jessop and David Harvey’s researches into urban entrepreneurialism (Harvey, 1989; Jessop, 1997) and the ones of Brenner into the Urban Locational Policies (Brenner, 2004), great European cities have become the motors for national competitive success and for the

⁵ The principle of subsidiarity intends to guarantee a decision making the more close possible to citizens, constantly verifying that its action must be undertaken at a communitarian scale in relation to the possibilities offered at a national, regional or local level . Thus, subsidiarity could be considered under a duplex point of view (Van Hecke, 2003):

- *As a vertical issue:* the hierarchical sharing-out of competences must be move towards the closest administrative field to the citizen and, then, to territorial necessities;
- *As a horizontal issue:* each citizen must have the chance to cooperate with the institutions in defining those policies that will have a bearing on its own social living context.

⁶ The transformation from traditional local *government* to urban *governance* is interpreted partially as a consequence of structural socioeconomic changes associated with the economic globalization, improved by the liberalization of international financial systems and the widespread rise of commercial networks and information and communication technologies (Castells and Borja, 2003).

territorial competitiveness of selected urban regions (cities and suburbs) competing at European and global scales to attract foreign investments, , well-off social groups and visitors⁷.

In this framework, cities become privileged site of aggregation and representation of interests, bringing them together to organize a mode of city governance.

Many important European urban areas have found new ways to foster and encourage local development and employment growth, because they have replaced nation-states as major political, socio-economic and international actors by building multiple networks and actively developing foreign partnerships (Castells and Borja, 2003).

The economic development of these cities relies on procuring governmental resources, whether they come from the European Commission or from national agencies, as well as on the ability to integrate the effective use of both potential and available resources, which ought to be aimed towards the satisfaction of necessities and basic issues of the local population. There are several key aspects to consider regarding the potentiality resources that have to improve local economic development, such as the local production infrastructures, local employment market, pre-existent business and technological capabilities, functional infrastructures, local credit system, social and political configuration and historical and cultural heritage (Borja, 2003; Bagnasco, 2003).

Information on local development must be linked to a collective project in which every policy program should be based on the existent territorial demands and necessities. Municipalities, as closer administration to local agents, have several advantages from this last aspect, such as the better identification of local requirements, the ability to distinguish potential endogenous resources, the opportunity of social mobilization linked to territorial identity, the easiness for strategic agreement between local players and a transparent control over the assorted spheres of action (Sánchez Hernández, 1999).

Local administrations have at their disposal the specific knowledge about the territory that is needed to thrust a change in basic aptitudes from the local population, facing the new challenges of local development. Local development, therefore, asks for the revaluation of human resources as a strategic task in the medium and long term, an instrumental capacity that should be based on strengthening the multiple aspects that this activity implies, such as the transmission of general and technical knowledge, the stimulation of mobility and creative participation, the modification of mentalities in an innovative sense and, in sum, the building of citizenship (Borja, 2003).

As the units in charge of organizing economic territorial promotion and local activation policies, local development agencies are key players for economic growth and employment generation. They organize themselves through those big cities where they are located, depending on their enterprise and infrastructural concentration. They are controlled by public administrations but operating as private organisations, as well as public-private partnerships, for the implementation of activation policies. These developments aimed at creating “quasi-

⁷ In contrast to earlier forms of urban managerialism, which emphasized public welfare and collective consumption initiatives, the priorities of maintaining a good business environment attracting external capital investment, and promoting local economic growth now predominate (Jessop, 1997 and 2000).

markets” in the provision of public services: introducing flexibility, controlling the externalities derived of public programs and containing costs. They also act as qualified intermediates between offer and demand of local job market, encouraging participation and strategic cooperation between the local actors, as well as business associative ties and flow of relevant information to business and employment development.

The role of these agencies is not, then, that of a common conventional consultants. They have to gain the trusts of different local actors in order to build together the project of local development. Political and administrative de-centralisation, subsidiarity, horizontal governance and transfer of competences to the sub-national entities, all these elements open new possibilities to encourage territorial authorities with a bigger capability for self-government, and strengthen the deployment of local socio-cultural values (Kazepov, 2005).

That is the easier way (encouraged by European institutions too) to define an endogenous development strategy, better adapted to problems, resources and idiosyncrasies of each territory, favouring perspectives of international competition, long-lasting economic growth and specific local image-making.

3 The City of Barcelona: The Southern Gateway to Europe

The economic and demographic dimensions of Barcelona are significant in its metropolitan area and in the whole autonomous region of Catalonia:⁸ it concentrates the 27% of Catalan population, generates the 37% of the regional GDP and the 7% of the national one and has greatly contributed to the growth of Spanish economy between 2001-2005, registering a 3% average GDP increase per year (CES, 2005)⁹.

Over the last century, Barcelona has pioneered the industrialization process at a national scale. Although the metropolitan area¹⁰ remains the biggest industrial agglomeration in the country, nowadays in Catalonia the sectoral dynamics are adjusting themselves to the changing Spanish productive characteristics. After the economic crisis of the 1970s, when 25% of jobs were lost (mainly in the local industries), the services sector developed systematically in the whole major city and at the same time many industrial equipments moved to peripheral areas or abroad (Toharia, 1998; Sánchez Hernández, 1998).

Industrial activity in Barcelona shows a relative exhaustion now: without the drive of the energy sector, the structural crisis of big manufacturing implementations make invisible the positive results of other local industrial activities. Comparing with the two surrounding rings that form its province, Barcelona is focused on the services sector (*Table 1*). At an

⁸ In 2004 its population was 1.5 million over a 101 Km² territorial surface.

⁹ The rate of economic growth in the European Union has been clearly inferior to that of Catalonia and Spain over this same period (European Commission, 2005).

¹⁰ The territory surrounding Barcelona is divided into two areas: Metropolitan Area (a first ring with 33 municipalities, including Barcelona, distributed over 585 Km²) and the Metropolitan Region (with 193 municipalities over 3.235 km²) for a total of 4.3 million of population. It is the sixth urban agglomeration in Europe in terms of resident population.

autonomous region level, the compensation is a much dynamic industry sector and a building activity with an accelerated growth.

Table 1: Percentages of Employment in the Main Productive Sectors (2001)

	City of Barcelona	First ring <i>Metropolitan Region</i>	Second ring <i>Metropolitan Region</i>
Agriculture	0,2	0,1	0,6
Industry	20,7	28,8	35,2
Building	4,3	8,4	10,7
Services	74,8	62,7	53,5
<i>Total</i>	100	100	100

Source: Barcelona City Council, 2006

The geographical configuration of the city of Barcelona, relatively close to French territory, between the Collserola Mountains, the Besós and Llobregat rivers and the Mediterranean Sea, has been significant for its historical development. The recent promotion of many new air routes (transcontinental as well) and the investments done on the enlargement of highway and railway networks, have improved national and international communications, from and to the city, to the point of being one of the most important commercial node in the southern seaside European region.

The relevance of this city as a tourist and business centre, consolidated over the last years, is confirmed by the sustained growth of the numbers of visitants that were accommodated at the receptive centres of Barcelona (over 8 million guests in 2000).

Activities related to business services have a significant weight in the overall economy of the city. Barcelona has particularly benefited from a qualitative leap in its opening to the exterior, with an extraordinary increase in exports and foreign investments, locating 79% of the main business headquarters in Catalonia, satisfying relevant logistic responsibilities as an economic and directional centre.

One productive activity that shows better the connection between industrial production and business services in Barcelona is the port, point of reference for the commerce in the whole region. On the other hand, new technologies have been increasingly used, in integration with plans for development and local working population retraining (e.g. workers fired from the textile industries or the growing number of university students, already qualified for the new

economy) and intensive territorial renovating projects. With the project 22@BCN¹¹ and other new equipments, the advanced service sector is progressing in Barcelona: a whole scope of business services based mainly in science, applied research (I+D) and digital technologies, aspiring to remain *tête-de-course* with international competitors in the future¹².

During the last years, characterised by a slowing down of European national economies and a climate of stark and generalised international uncertainty, Catalonia has kept creating employment, with an increase in 8,6 points in the local employment rate, year 2001, over last year's value (the most consistent increase among all the autonomous regions in Spain)¹³, consolidating a very positive dynamic towards convergence with the European values in terms of unemployment and activity rates (European Commission, 2005).

The province of Barcelona gathers the 75% of the total Catalan working population. Barcelona municipality itself, with a working population of 640 thousand people in 2002, registers 24% of the regional assets, offering a supportive environment for economic growth. Working population numbers have risen in nearly five percentiles in the last ten years, and the local unemployment rate is lower than the national one (*Table 2*). In spite of having suffered from the first unemployment increase (measured in absolute terms) since 1994, unemployment rate hasn't seen significant changes, moving from 6,13% in 2000 to 6,49% in 2001, and staying under the national (11%) and European means (8%).

The very positive dynamic that Catalonia has benefited in terms of employment creation was particularly marked during 2001. Barcelona has seen a similar evolution providing 35,8% of the regional jobs and nearly three quarters of the total numbers of working Catalonians. Employment figures were 14% higher in the Metropolitan Region than in the national values.

¹¹ Lorenzo Di Pietro, Director of "Portal22: New Jobs Space" from *Barcelona Activa*, points the 22@BCN project as the biggest example of economic restructuring and urban rezoning in the city of Barcelona. 22@BCN is born with the will to transform 198 centre town hectares (in the Poble Nou district) into a series of equipments aimed to show inhabitants new labouring opportunities in ten economic activity fields that have a great potential to create jobs, beginning with identifying and describing new professional profiles related to the new economy, new technologies and informational society. Thus, Barcelona has designed a new urban planning model that backs a diversification of uses for the urban space where new generation economic activities, research, education, commerce, services, leisure and residence coexist. In 2000 *Barcelona Activa* contributed to the setting in motion of the Plan 22@BCN with the Urban Development Area of Barcelona City Council.

¹² One of the reference document on this subject is the 1st Metropolitan Strategic Plan for Barcelona that locates the genesis and diffusion of knowledge in the so-called new model of post-industrial society, based upon globalized networks international flows of goods and information, creativity, culture and new technologies (Castells, 1996).

¹³ In 2005 the unemployment Spanish rates decreased in 239.000 people, according to the National Survey on Working Population (*Encuesta de Población Activa*) for the last 3-month yearly period. This diminishment has set the unemployment rate figures in 8,7% of the working population (i.e. people with the age and disposition to work): it is the lowest national value registered for the end of a year since 1978. Job creation rates were the highest since the figures can be compared (1996), with 894.100 more working people. Every sector but industry had rises in employment in 2005. Building was again the most dynamic sector, with an 6,78% increase. Next was the services sector (6,17%) and agriculture (2,47%). Industry lost 0,36%. This increase is caused to a big extent by the regulation of immigrants that took place in 2005. However, the less attractive feature of employment increase is the quality of the jobs created: 33,7% of the working population had a temporary contract in 2005 (the biggest percentage in the European Union). With this increase, the number of temporary and atypical workers in Spain raised to 5,3 million (CESC,2006).

Table 2: City of Barcelona - Evolution of Employment (1991, 1996 and 2001) and Large Groups of Age Distributions (2001)

Employment situation	1991	1996	2001	2001		
				16-24 years	25-39 years	40-64 years
Working population	44,0	44,2	48,6	48,8	86,4	69,0
Employed	38,0	35,1	43,3	39,9	77,4	62,2
First job seekers	1,2	1,7	0,9	3,3	1,4	0,6
Unemployed	4,8	7,4	4,4	5,5	7,6	6,2
Non-working population	56,0	55,5	51,4	51,2	13,6	31,0
Retirees	17,5	21,7	18,7	0,1	0,1	7,2
Students	20,7	19,3	16,8	46,4	3,9	0,9
Other cases	17,8	14,5	15,9	4,7	9,6	22,9
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0

Source: Departament d'Estadística. Barcelona city council
 Population census 1991, 2001. Instituto Nacional de Estadística - Institut d'Estadística de Catalunya
 Population census 1996. Institut d'Estadística de Catalunya

Nowadays, services sector gathers 80% of the jobs in Barcelona, but in the whole Metropolitan Region a weighty industrial sector remains. This diversification of productive economy has come together with a significant ability to adapt to the new sectoral dynamics: Barcelona has strongly opted for an economy based upon knowledge and specialization in emergent sectors, such as those related to information and communication technologies, advanced business services and new social demands. A patent manifestation of this strategic stake is shown by the fact that 45% of new jobs come from fields thick in knowledge, technology and informatics culture, with the city gathering 47,5% of the jobs from these sectors over the whole Catalonia (Recio, 2002).

According to Lorena Ventura Calvo, Director of the *Barcelona Activa* "Improvement of Labour Access and Inclusion" section: "The sustainability of increasing employment rates in the economic context of Barcelona is a consequence of an active policy aimed specifically to that objective, as well as the multiplying effect that big infrastructure and cultural events investment projects have (such as the Social Forum 2004, with an occupational impact that has translated into the creation of more than 60.000 new jobs in the city) and a sensible vision towards the future, the new technologies and the post-industrial assessments".

Barcelona aims at an economic development not only through endogenous factors (state subsidies and local businessmen capabilities) but also thanks to the organization of big

international events and establishment of partnerships with other cities in order to attract the flows of global economy.

From the beginning of the 1990s, the city has deployed a local model of network strategies, where public administration steadily loses monopoly in favour of new arranged structures that include social and business agents. This model is represented by the proliferation of mixed entities, consortiums, councils or societies, whose purpose is the generation of a metropolitan business collective (that brings together the public administrations and the local capital, and intend to capture the civic-social field) with enough capability to ensure and increase the global competitiveness of the territory (Bonet i Martí, 2004; Sánchez Hernández, 1998).

This change took shape in Barcelona mainly after the culmination of the Olympic Cycle (1986-1992) and the Social Forum 2004. During these two events, this city has experienced rapid economic and cultural reconstruction and attracted both national and foreign investments to promote the modernization of its urban infrastructure and services: from large infrastructure projects to small interventions, the city has raised the quality of life for the majority of its population, upgrading both housing and public spaces.

In order to sustain its strategic growth, the municipal administration, together with local capital, have developed a number of strategies to transform into economic assessments their geographical locations, social capital and enterprising-ness of the Catalan businessmen, taking profit as well from the strong sense of pride and enthusiasm of local population. According to Marisol Garcia and Salvador Giner, there are two main explanations for this: first, Barcelona has a stronger tradition of civil society¹⁴, and is the capital city of a developed region with a strong national consciousness and a long tradition of local autonomy; second, Catalan pride has been reinforced with the success of the Olympic Games (and later with the Social Forum 2004, too) and, as a result, strong local leadership has capitalized on the opportunities created for the city (e.g. a large majority of foreign investment in Catalonia gathers around Barcelona) (Garcia, 1993; Giner, 2002).

As Maravillas Rojo Torrecilla, President of *Barcelona Activa*, remarks, “*Barcelona Activa* works to promote the city of Barcelona through its human capital and its available local resources, as the main logistic platform for the south of Europe. This means strengthen Barcelona attracting foreign investments and taking profit from its centrality increase as an inter-modal node, looking for reaching the leadership of the C-6 Mediterranean Euro-region¹⁵ (Barcelona, Tolosa de Llanguedoc, Montpellier, Zaragoza, Valencia and Ciudad de Mallorca), favouring its internal cohesion and geo-strategic position”.

¹⁴ By civil society Marisol Garcia here means “the social sphere (as autonomous and self-instituted) and the elaboration of public spaces in the institutions of society and the state. Thus civil society is neither seen as a private sphere independent from the state nor in an antagonistic relation with the state”.

¹⁵ The Euro-Regions are over-national structures of cooperation between two or more territories placed in various countries of the European Union. They do not correspond to some legislative or governmental institution, their acts are limited to the competences of the local and regional authorities that constitute them, usually in order to promote common geo-strategic and economic interests.

4 *Barcelona Activa: “An Agency from the City and for the City”*¹⁶

The aim of *Barcelona Activa*, as local development agency of Barcelona, is outline and manage activation policies for the local economic promotion, increasing human capital and employment, and supporting new small, micro and medium-sized companies and quality future business projects.

Set up twenty years ago, in 1986, *Barcelona Activa* now covers a foreground role in achieving the main strategic objectives of Barcelona for the future. During the transition-to-democracy period (first half of 1980s) the Central State had full competence on employment policies, whereas the seventeen Spanish Autonomous Communities were just the administrative frameworks for their implementation: *Barcelona Activa* executed these policies in different urban districts of Barcelona, but without any competence on their design till the end of 1990s. Since the mid-1990s the Spanish Government devolved the relevant competencies on active employment policies to the Autonomous Communities in order to increase administrative subsidiarity at all territorial levels (province, region and municipality) and to make more resources available for them¹⁷. In Catalonia this devolution did not occur until 1998. Distinctive of this Community case was the contrast between the orientations set by the regional government of the conservative party *Convergència i Unió* (CiU) and the programs implementing them at local level by the parties governing the largest regional municipalities (such as Barcelona), which were mainly controlled by the *Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya* (PSC). Thus, whereas the government of Catalonia sought to formulate centralized activation policies and to privatize their implementation, the PSC sought to decentralize their definition at a local level and to develop them on the basis of social collaboration.

The situation changed only in late 2003, when, for the first time in Catalonia, a coalition government led by PSC was formed with the exclusion of the CiU and took place in the Generalitat¹⁸ (Lope and Gibert, 2006). After this important political change, *Barcelona Activa* increased its functional structures and equipments in the city¹⁹, enlarged its social visibility and realized many more programs of activation policy, counting on wider resources and on a mayor discretionary responsibility for their use.

Since its beginning *Barcelona Activa* has been a public limited company with municipal capital, with a board of directors in which all the municipal groups, social agents and some of the institutions committed to employment and economic promotion of the city were presented. *Barcelona Activa* is conformed as a company that works through programs it designs and submits to the various European, State and Generalitat official announcements or initiatives, obtaining the resources which, together with the City Council subsidiary co-

¹⁶ Extract from the interview to Montse Basora Farré, Director of the *Barcelona Activa*'s service for the “Promotion of Business Initiative”.

¹⁷ This new deal depends on the contemporary increasing importance of the European Union's employment policy, which encourages the adoption of active labour policies, for which resources are furnished especially for economically weaker countries, such as Spain.

¹⁸ Catalan Regional Government.

¹⁹ *Barcelona Activa* has a network of seven specialised facilities in the municipality of Barcelona now.

finance, enable the Agency's services to attend the different kinds of users (people who are actively seeking employment, entrepreneurs, companies and investors)²⁰.

Barcelona Activa is a flexible agency, that faces up to the changing conditions of the local environment with quality and a particular capacity for innovation: anticipates and adapts itself to the changing needs of local context, expands competences and contracts professionals depending on the programs awarded, and follows its strategic targets making use of new technologies,.

The Agency establishes short-term objectives within four-year period Action Plans, which at the same time contributes by the Municipal Action Plan and the Social and Economic Strategic Plan of Barcelona. For the 2004-2007 Action Plan, approved by the board of directors of the company in 2003, seven activity lines are established to carried out the Agency's tasks (*Barcelona Activa*, Summary of Activities 2004; pp.13):

- 1 *Promotion of entrepreneurship*: to spread entrepreneurship and help entrepreneurs take the step from the business idea to the creation of their own business;
- 2 *Consolidation of new businesses*: to promote the future of recently created business projects by generating cooperation networks, contributing to the improvement of their competitiveness;
- 3 *Access, introduction and improvement of employment*: to adapt the professional profiles of those people looking for work or that want to improve their labour situation, and help towards the job incorporation of those social collectives that have particular difficulties;
- 4 *Training and skills improvement*: to improve knowledge and professional skills and adapt to the new requirements of the knowledge society;
- 5 *New job opportunities*: to widen the professional opportunities that new job cultures, new occupations, and the emerging economic sectors require;
- 6 *Technological skills acquisition and diffusion*: to convert new technologies and their applications into a professional development instrument for people and companies;
- 7 *Encourage permanent innovation*: to improve the competitiveness of the city's companies and professionals.

The Agency's action is based on five commitments that reflect its vocation and philosophy, the aim to increase and complement itself with the administrations, as well as with social and economic agents, and other city partners or operators (*Barcelona Activa*, Summary of Activities 2004; pp.14):

²⁰ According to the Agency budget data of 2004, the economic resources of *Barcelona Activa* depends on the European Structural Funds for 9%, the Generalitat Funding for 33%, the Barcelona City Council subsidiary co-finance for 48% and the property (Agency's functional equipments) for 10%.

- To guarantee the parity of participation in the Agency's set of actions, moving towards an effective equality of opportunities between men and women;
- To act from cooperation and complementation, acting where value is added, and sharing Agency's initiatives with others institutions or organizations;
- To work together with the social agents, working out a model of common goals on consensus and participation;
- To be an organisation that works with quality and is client-orientated, placing the users in the centre of the Agency's actions.
- To Re-enforce *Barcelona Activa's* position as a local development company, sharing its model and best practices with other similar national and international agencies or administrations.

Barcelona Activa's new Action Plan has meant a step forward for the Agency in innovation and actions related to local development. More and better services and contents, personalised attention, self-access areas, and new ways of offering many services in specialised facilities have made possible an important increase in the number of users: during 2004, the Agency has attended a total of 126.941 participants through a varied set of programs carried out.

The Agency keeps a constant dialogue with all the national and local institutional levels (the City Council, the Metropolitan Area, the Generalitat and the Central State) and a strong experiences exchange and collaboration at an international level. (with other European cities and many municipalities from Latin America).

In the last years *Barcelona Activa* has strengthened a commitment with local social actors and an open dialogue with political representatives in order to make favourable the socio-economic, institutional and cultural context for innovative and target-oriented plans, at a local scale. This increasing collaboration with local institutions and partners (such as Trade Unions, Universities, Employers' Associations, the Barcelona Chamber of Commerce, no-profit organizations, sectoral associations, private actors or activists from the social economy sector, etc.) also shows the collective aptitudes and future ambitions of the Barcelonese community.

Crucial to the success of these partnerships is the resource synergy, i.e. the "added value" that comes from partners combining resources rather than acting alone. These different social partners work together with the Agency on a common socio-economic pact, based on a model of integral active policy for local development and on consensus, agreement and cooperation.

Barcelona Activa leads territorial pacts, according to its strategic lines, and emphasise the public-private inter-organizational partnership for the incentive of high quality, future-oriented employment, business and development, and for the definition of the "Brand Barcelona", as a marketing action to promote the city of Barcelona internationally.

5 Economic Promotion Services, Increase Entrepreneurial Initiative and Consolidation of New Companies

The *Barcelona Activa*'s economic promotion strategy for the city of Barcelona is articulated around three main aims:

- To increase entrepreneurial initiative and support the creation and growth of quality business in emerging sectors;
- To develop competitive companies and micro-companies networks in information society as dynamic elements for the “Barcelona of Knowledge”;
- To attract foreign investment and companies that could move from abroad to settle and expand in Barcelona.

Montse Basora Farré, Director of the *Barcelona Activa*'s service for the “Promotion of Business Initiative”, underlines: “Business initiative is a traditional characteristic for the people from Barcelona (...) Increase entrepreneurial initiative contributes better professional and personal opportunities for everybody. That's why our Agency has settled many agreements with schools and universities to spread enterprising culture into the local society, starting by the youth. Moreover, set up a business company add value and new wealth to the city, and create more and new jobs, as well”.

Barcelona Activa implements a new model for coaching entrepreneurs (the “blended model”) that is based on self-access and combines tailor-made activities with the creation of cooperation networks, access to online contents and expert advice, in order to transform an entrepreneurial idea into a viable business project.

In 1999 was activated “Barcelonanetactiva”, a virtual business incubator conceived as a pioneering on-line platform in Europe made of on-line services for entrepreneurs, that has been expanded as a virtual community and improved as a pedagogic instrument, with many contents permanently updated. “Empresa On Line” is another program that facilitate the elaboration of new business plans and offers an informative guide with all the necessary know-how about the setting up of a company and the relative funding search²¹.

A new project, “Barcelona become an Entrepreneur in Equality”, was added in 2005 (within the framework of the European initiative *Equal*), which aims to bring closer business creation to the less favoured collectives, such as women with family responsibilities, disabled people, long term unemployment, extra-communitarian immigrants, and those on the verge of social exclusion.

The activities of *Barcelona Activa*'s economic and business promotion services had reached important outcomes during 2004. Almost 114 small and medium-sized companies (which

²¹ Faced with the difficulties that small innovative companies have in finding funds, the Barcelona City Council Barcelona and 18 major companies of the city created “Barcelona Emprèn”, the venture capital company allocated in *Barcelona Activa* and aimed at small business projects with an innovative character in specific productive sectors of the city (e.g., audio-visual, Internet services, bio-technology, e-commerce, etc.).

employed 779 workers) were installed in the Agency's equipment of "Forum Nord business centre", that has been recently recognised as "Technological Park". In the framework of activities for the consolidation of new companies, *Barcelona Activa* also started "Xarxactiva d'Empreses", an active-network program that helps their growth by promoting business cooperation and networks.

The 26 programs for the creation and consolidation of new companies have supposed more than 30.000 participants (with an equality participation rate of men and women), accompanying 1.065 new business projects and 294 companies already consolidated. 60% of the business projects accompanied in 2003 has been set in motion as companies in 2004, and each one of them has generated an average of 2,3 jobs at the beginning of their business activity. The 84% of the companies installed in the Agency's incubator still follows active during the fourth year of their creation (a survival index that doubles the European Union average).

All these data prove that small and medium-sized companies are the principal motor of local economic activity²², the most important employment source in Barcelona, due to their high adaptability to the productive system changes.

The post-industrial revolution made the access and incorporation of new information and communication technologies as discriminatory elements between companies and workers in the global market and informational society. The small and medium-sized companies take up the challenge for incorporate these innovative processes into their productive and management systems. For this reason, *Barcelona Activa* provides them a "Platform for Business Relationships", the "Center for Technological Companies", "Infopime" (an on-line service that brings together all the economic data available to the Barcelona City Council) and "Cibernàrium" (a multi-space for spreading and learning the world of Internet to professionals, companies and students, the main tool of *Barcelona Activa* for helping to develop technological literacy and lifelong learning, with the aim that the users can identify the opportunities offered by new technologies, discover their applications in the professional or business world, and learn how to use them).

Barcelona is an enterprising city than constantly try to keep and expand its economic activity, that's why it has to compete with other territories for employment development and for attracting foreign investments. When a company plans to set up an affiliated centre, it looks for a new furnished place with a sustainable quality of life, qualified human resources, enterprising spirit, universities and research centres, urban accessibility and viability, vocation for European and cosmopolitan citizenship, high educative skills, technologic development and public-private partnership.

Barcelona already has many projects set in motion for its territorial development (the new HVT line, the enlargement of its port and airport, the 22@BCN and new underground stations, among others) that might increase its appeal for people to live, work and make business there.

²² 99,8% of Catalan companies are small and micro-companies; 63% of Catalan workers have a job in companies with less than 10 workers.

The City Council, through *Barcelona Activa*'s services, promote Barcelona as an attractive setting for investments and companies that look to the future and improve the "Brand Barcelona" abroad, through an inter-sectoral cooperation and inter-institutional collaboration. Furthermore, the Agency brought out "Barcelona Negocis", a range of innovative services of information and support for companies, professionals and institutions who want to set up or do business in the city, with the aim of encouraging decision-making and facilitating the establishment of companies offering a user-friendly service, that includes on-site attention, a website with up-to-date general economic information, a hot line for municipal assistance and support in the necessary paperwork for getting licenses or search for funding.

6 Employment Services: Competences Improvement, Technological Qualification and New Opportunities

Since its inception *Barcelona Activa* has followed the occupational guidelines of European Union. Most of the Agency's employment programmes and services are co-financed by the European Social Structural Funds (FSE 2000-2006) and by the European Fund for Regional Development (FEDER), especially for those operative plans within the framework of the Community Objectives No. 2 (to adapt working population to the new skills requested by the labour market, in order to prevent situations of social exclusion) and No. 3 (to qualify and improve unemployed professional competences in order to facilitate their labour insertion).

Unemployment effects change depending on different social collectives. Thus, those strategies against relevant unemployment (i.e. caused by contingent drops of the economic cycle) cannot work for the long-term unemployment too, with more structural characteristics.

The *Barcelona Activa*'s line of labour access and employment improvement, is carried on with a methodology that help people who are looking for work by fomenting self-access in the job search. Individual activation is put into effect offering "personalized insertion itineraries" that combine the participation in information, orientation and formation sessions and activities, that vary according to each beneficiary, to his/her professional profile and to the job he/she wants to get in on.

Agency's specialists help the users in their process of discovery, identification and analysis of their own skills and personal interests, with the aim to develop an individual project of professional insertion for everyone, with an integral plan of intervention. Users receive a personalized ongoing tutoring, motivational sessions and courses on labour market orientation, short-term units and seminars in order to prepare them with different techniques (e.g. the promotion of network contacts, the preparation of curricula, etc.) for the labour demands.

According to the outlines of the *European Employment Strategy*, *Barcelona Activa* devotes more attention to social collectives with particular insertion problems, such as young scholars drop-out, dependant lone women, unemployed older than 45, disabled people, long-term unemployed and extra-communitarian immigrants. In 2001, with the approbation of

Barcelona City Council's request for developing a European *Equal* initiative, *Barcelona Activa* carried out the program "Footbridges towards employment", for the elimination of those obstacles that do not allow labour insertion to people with special difficulties. This initiative was led by *Barcelona Activa*, whilst fourteen partners from different local business sectors, NGOs and institutions have participated, and eighteen organisations from various areas of the city have collaborated on it: 611 job contracts has been formalised in 2004 with this program.

For its activation strategies the Agency take into account the productive reality of Barcelona, highlighting those sectors that need qualified workers, and guaranteeing a minimum quality of job recruitment, especially into services of social interest or innovative business projects that could contribute to local development.

According to what Lorenzo Di Pietro, Director of "Porta22, *Barcelona Activa* New Jobs Space", explained to me: "Porta22 is a platform of contents for the detection, promotion and orientation of new occupations and professional opportunities, new work culture and emerging productive sectors (such as companies services, customers services, new information and communication technologies, aeronautics, mass media and cultural services). With the total lay out of the activities program, Porta22 managed to attract a public more interested in the changes of new labour market. During 2003-2004, Porta22 developed 200 new professional profiles and applications, and attended a total of 26.154 users".

Regarding to the mutable demands of the local labour market and to the new professional profiles developed by Porta22, *Barcelona Activa* proposes intensive formative units for updating competence and technological qualification. At the same time, the Agency organize training sessions, extra-scholar activities and vocational workshops, offering many job experiences in which the users can experiment new professions and start, improve or update their curricula.

Thanks to these work-and-training methods the insertion rate of *Barcelona Activa*'s users has raised in these last years. Nowadays, the average of who finds a job through them is between 75 and 80%: all these activities were attended more by women than by men, and mostly by young people under 25 and by unemployed older than 45.

For Lorena Ventura Calvo, Director of the service for "Improvement of Labour Access and Inclusion": "One of the most important goal of the Agency's Employment Service is the lifelong formation and the permanent knowledge retraining for all our users, in order to prevent any risk of professional obsolescence for them inside the flexible productive context of Barcelona. *Barcelona Activa* also develops formative actions with enabling approaches for a better individual activation and make easier the labour recruitment at a local level, mediating between labour demands and people that are looking for a job according to their more qualified skills and higher professional expectations. This means that our services represent competitive advantages both for qualified people/workers looking for a job and for the new advanced companies of the city".

7 Final Remarks

Full employment and social cohesion were outlined at the Lisbon Council in 2000 as two of the most important goals for all the European Union member states. These two aims directly derived from the post-industrial and global economy and the labour changes brought about by the information and communication technologies of the emerging Knowledge Society. Thus, social integration is linked to employment and jobs quality (Van Berkel, 2002).

According to the social foundations of post-industrial economies, with the definitive overcoming of Keynesian Welfare State model, employment principally depends to market dynamics now (Esping-Andersen, 1999; Navarro, 2002), with the consequent conversion of social policy into new strategies for the labour force activation (i.e. from protection to participation).

This new deal is based on the idea that salaried employment is the minimum condition to be an independent and autonomous person, on a new interpretation of social risks (with a greater accentuation for individual responsibilities) and on new modes of public governance, according to rescaling state government²³ and increasing role of local entities to encourage employment and local development.

The territorial governance is an indispensable instrument to involve both social and institutional actors in a plan of democratic and responsible integration. The main pillars of the horizontal and participated social organization of the common wealth are the administrative decentralization and the human capital activation.

The Europeanization process from below and the decentralization from above (as rescaling state) have contribute to the expansion of a “new European localism” (Bagnasco, 2003) and to the increasing role of sub-national governments, or meso-governments as Luis Moreno points out (Moreno, 1999), for the carrying out of policies local-oriented. This is reflected in the interests of many local authorities, regions, large urban or metropolitan areas, that cooperate as entities sharing a feeling of belonging to a community and compete globally through their own business initiative and territorial marketing, at the same time.

Barcelona has considerably grown its geo-strategic importance and *Barcelona Activa*, as its municipal agency, has tackled with designing and managing local activation policies, acting permanently as the promoter, intermediary, catalyser, and informant that allow local social cohesion and development to take shape. It means that *Barcelona Activa* develops basic but essential functions for Barcelona in order to keep the city in step with the passing of time and to promote it internationally.

All the users are activated by the reinforcing of reciprocity between their individual perspectives and the contextual socio-economic ones. Each plan of personal empowerment, technological qualification, competence and professional improvement, is developed within a general frame of citizenship participation and employment integration (e.g. Equal projects)

²³ Nowadays, rescaling State process is particularly strong in Spain due to the recent constitutional reform of self-government in Catalonia. This has been formally recognised as nation inside the Spanish State, which is increasingly organizing its territorial structure according to a federalized scheme.

that reinforce social cohesion. In turn, all these actions are perfectly coherent with the new exigencies of Knowledge Society and with the flexible, innovative and fragmented labour market (Mingione, 1993; Toharia, 1998; Polavieja, 2003).

At the same time, the strategies to increase local entrepreneurial initiative and to consolidate new companies in the city answer to a specific plan of economic and territorial promotion.

Barcelona Activa's programs for employment and economic development are built in order to consolidate the "Brand Barcelona" as a product that testify local excellence and attract foreign investment. Both Economic Promotion Services and Employment Services are viable within the frame of urban governance in which *Barcelona Activa* leads and coordinate local partnerships and adapt its activation policies to the changing city context, coherently with this image-making process.

Through this method the Agency strongly contributes to the Barcelona territorial marketing, managing a patrimony of resources (i.e. functional equipments, services, human and social capital) and techniques for the territorial planning (e.g. the project of urban re-qualification *22@BCN*), the local industrial rationalization, the online cooperation, the permanent innovation and detection of local needs and opportunities and, in general, for the citizens quality of life.

Nowadays *Barcelona Activa* is a national and international benchmark concerning active policies for local development and creation of companies and employment. This is also reflected by the Agency's participation in foreign cooperation projects and national and international networks²⁴.

Maravillas Rojo Torrecilla, President of *Barcelona Activa*, remarks: "*Barcelona Activa* chief strength are its on-line/on-site working methodology and its critical mass made of a great variety of activities and users that give confidence and visibility to the Agency (...) It is important be permanently innovative, in order to adequate our policies to labour and socio-economic changes. This condition is basic not only for our Agency but above all for the social cohesion, the local development and the employment integration in Barcelona... and it makes sense only if we will continue to afford these aims together, within the same integral plan of urban promotion".

²⁴ *Barcelona Activa* represents the City Council of Barcelona in the Commission of Economic Development and Urban Regeneration of the Euro-cities network and participates in the LEED program of Local Development and Business Creation of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation of Development (OECD). Since 2002 *Barcelona Activa* has carried on a project of cooperation with the Urb-AI network, which aims to develop a transferable methodology within the sphere of information society to guide entrepreneurs through new technology, together with many municipalities from Spain and Latin America. Parallel to this, Barcelona was chosen by the European Commission as one of the regions to be awarded the Prize for Excellence in Innovation and Business Creation, inserting it in the European network of *Paxis* Regions of Excellence.

Appendix

I Members from *Barcelona Activa*'s Executive Board Interviewed

Maravillas Rojo Torrecilla	President of <i>Barcelona Activa</i> Adviser of the City Council of Barcelona
Lorenzo Di Pietro	Director of <i>Porta22, Nuevas Oportunidades de Empleo</i> (Porta22, New Jobs Space)
Lorena Ventura Calvo	Director of <i>Acceso, Inclusiòn y Mejora del Empleo</i> (Improvement of Labour Access and Inclusion)
Montse Basora Farré	Director of <i>Promocion de la Iniciativa Emprendedora</i> (Promotion of Business Initiative)

II Main Outcomes of *Barcelona Activa*'s Activities During 1999-2004 Period

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Total users attended	71.608	76.576	77.974	98.069	109.790	126.941
<u>Economic Promotion Services</u>						
New business plans coached	1.146	1.442	1.589	1.663	1.560	1.065
Companies installed in the business incubators	114	86	136	123	121	114
<u>Employment Services</u>						
Users attended	22.242	16.362	19.014	24.779	24.901	17.678
% of women attended	62%	64%	51%	52%	58%	50%

Source: Barcelona Activa. Memoria de Actividades 1999-2004

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