

The Barcelona Market System

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Barcelona appears as an interesting case study in the research on modern market systems because of its singularity, despite the fact that her first steps towards modernisation were taken somewhat belatedly in comparison with pioneering countries such as England or France. Considered in the long term, the process was more constant and ended up consolidating an extraordinary market system that is virtually unique in contemporary urban Europe. Not only has it preserved a remarkable architectural heritage that still exists today, but it has also played a leading part in the municipal politics of the last decade.

In those countries where it has been the object of more study, the market system would gradually give way to 'more modern' commercial formulas during the second half of the twentieth century. In Barcelona, however, markets underwent a decisive modernisation and an almost explosive growth, increasing in number from the eighteen that existed in 1940 to the forty that exist today, and from the nineteen sixties onwards old market buildings have been, and are still being, renovated. This fact seems to be related to two significant issues: the late introduction of new forms of retail distribution and the comparatively compact urban growth over the nineteen fifties and sixties.

In the nineteen eighties, municipal technical services began to consider the market system a key asset for restructuring retail networks in neighbourhoods and a tool enabling commercial urbanism to control the oligopoly of hypermarkets.

Despite the fact that the latest renovations have placed architecture and urban planning once again in the foreground, we should not regard market buildings from an exclusively architectural point of view but consider the system as a whole as a case study that sometimes seems to contradict the processes undergone in other cities of the Western world.

The First Steps (1836-1868):

The Markets of Sant Josep¹ and Santa Caterina

City market halls are a historical legacy, but during Spain's transition from the old regime to the contemporary age they joined the new category of

1. In successive mentions, this market will be referred to as La Boqueria. Translator's note.

emerging facilities and therefore became crucial both in functional and in cultural terms. In spite of the liberalisation of the economy that characterised the new era, municipal intervention did not come to an end and even continued when the old rule finally disappeared around 1835. Commercial activity had been liberalised in 1834, when permission was granted to trade in all 'eatable, drinkable and burnable' products, save for bread. Town City Councils, however, maintained and reinforced their responsibility over provisioning. In addition, in 1836 disentailment laws of the assets owned by religious orders offered the possibility of reordering and modernising urban space, installing modern facilities that included market places. In Barcelona the rearrangement had to overcome a number of obstacles and made slow progress due to the difficult construction of two great markets on the sites of two former convents (that had been confiscated), during which time the other municipal markets remained open on squares and streets. The intention was to move the activities that occupied and congested the two most central areas of the city to the two new markets.² The old market known as La Boqueria would be accommodated in the nearby new Sant Josep market on the Rambla, set in a porched square with monumental Ionic columns as befitted a neighbourhood that had become markedly bourgeois, aristocratic even; the new Santa Caterina market, located in a more working-class neighbourhood, took as its model the Parisian market of Saint-Germain (designed by Jacques-François Blondel, 1813-1817), although its construction was much more modest.

These markets took a long time to be built,³ and by the mid-nineteenth century, shortly after their completion, they seemed anachronistic. Both designs were contemporary to the projects for the Parisian Halles Centrales, and would soon be followed by numerous market halls built in the different Parisian neighbourhoods, as well as several hundred built in the French provinces.⁴ Around the same time, both the 1855 report drawn up by the commission that established the premises of the urban expansion of Barcelona

2. Rosa Maria García Domènech, 'Mercats de Barcelona a la primera meitat del segle XIX,' *Història Urbana de Barcelona. Actes del II congrés d'Història del Pla de Barcelona*, 6-7, December 1985, vol. 2. Institut Municipal d'Història de Barcelona, Barcelona, 1990.

3. In the case of La Boqueria, the agreement with the owners of La Virreina Palace to reorganise the fishmongers' area had yet to be signed in December 1848. The building work in Santa Caterina did not start until 1847, years of great progress in iron architecture. Reference and transcription in the Administrative Municipal Archive of Barcelona (AMAB), Artistic and Environmental Heritage, 'Enderrocament antiga peixateria del mercat de la Boqueria, 1835' [Demolition of the former fishmongers in La Boqueria market], Box 46147 /7.50.

4. Bertrand Lemoine, *Les Halles de Paris. L'histoire d'un lieu, les péripéties d'une reconstruction, la succession des projets, l'architecture des monuments, l'enjeu d'une "Cité"*, L'Esquerre, Paris, 1980, p. 32; Rosa Maria García Domènech, 'Mercats de Barcelona a la primera meitat del segle XIX,' 1985, op. cit.

Markets, foodstuffs and merchants, 1856							
Number of people selling goods in Barcelona markets							
Goods on sale	La Boqueria	El Born	Santa Caterina	Barceloneta	El Pedró	Total	%
Vegetables	300	260	160	52	20	792	44%
Meat	120	69	30	18	9	246	14%
Ripe and dried fruit	90	30	12	10	10	152	8%
Fresh and salted pork	60	60	15	9	4	148	8%
Game and eggs	55	37	18	4		114	6%
Fresh fish and seafood	53	35	9	8		105	6%
Hens	35	19	10	7	2	73	4%
Bread	37	20	12			69	4%
Lingerie fabrics	33	9	20			62	3%
Tripe	25	10	5			40	2%
Totals	808	549	291	108	45	1801	100%
%	45%	30%	16%	6%	2%	100%	

Source: Ildefons Cerdà, 'Monografía estadística de la clase obrera en Barcelona en 1856.' Facsimile edition, in *Teoría General de la Urbanización*, II, Instituto de Estudios de Administración Local, 1968, p. 61

(Eixample) and Cerdà's project posed the need for market halls consistently located throughout the new city. All these facts revealed the distance between the aspirations to modernisation and the actual constructions.⁵

5. 'Memoria que la Comisión elegida ha presentado proponiendo las bases generales que en su concepto debieran adoptarse para el ensanche de esta ciudad' [Report presented by the elected committee to set forth the premises it believes should be adopted for the expansion of this city], Historic Archive of the City of Barcelona (AHCB), point 15: 'The map should show the areas where the following buildings should be located: a parish for every 10,000 inhabitants, and for every 1,200 residents, infants schools and nursery schools, providing the population that will probably occupy each of the districts into which the city will be divided up with town halls, hospitals, markets, public baths, neighbourhood fountains for drinking purposes, fountains for street and gutter cleaning, public washing places, etc.'

Nonetheless, economic and demographic growth and the establishment of new markets brought about significant structural changes. If we take the information presented by Cerdà in his *Monografía estadística de la clase obrera en Barcelona* as a starting point, we observe a great disparity between the various markets. The new market of La Boqueria concentrated 45 per cent of the city's stallholders, while El Born congregated a third. The new Santa Caterina market was still having difficulty getting off the ground, whereas the smaller outlying markets of La Barceloneta and El Pedró only attracted small numbers of stallholders.

In 1865 Santa Caterina with its 532 stallholders clearly exceeded El Born, which at the time had 384 stallholders, becoming the second most important of the city's markets, after La Boqueria.⁶ Between 1856 and 1865 the growth of the two smaller markets was spectacular. La Barceloneta market reached a record 271 stalls and El Pedró reached 168. The latter was also allowed to continue on the neighbouring street, carrer de la Cera. The growth of the suburban Hostafranchs market also generated problems.

A survey of the evolution of all the municipal markets from the beginning of the century to 1868 reveals the gradual change from a relatively dispersed set of urban markets with small areas of impact to the establishment of a primitive ranking with less markets but greater areas of influence, on a neighbourhood, district and city scale. This incipient market system obviously still had serious shortcomings. With the exception of the covered Santa Caterina market that was born old, the other market places were not sealed off from surrounding vehicular traffic space, nor did they present the covered pedestrian areas, well lit, organised and hygienic, that characterised modern iron and glass architecture (the *parapluies de fer* or iron umbrellas described by Haussmann). Attempts were made to alleviate the inconvenience of open-air markets with tarpaulins that deteriorated very quickly,⁷ while simultaneously the main mar-

6. A report by the municipal service stated that 'Isabel 2^a market is not what it was when it was erected, tenders and sales have multiplied by four since that period and many applicants find there are no vacancies.' AMAB, Public Works Committee / Section 3, File 3083, Piece 1 3/1, 'General a todos los mercados' [Extensive to all markets], 1865. Information on La Boqueria is lacking, and there is no way of knowing this year its exact weight among the rest of Barcelona's markets. File 3038, Public Works Committee / Section 3, 1865, 'Expediente relativo a los mercados públicos' [File relevant to public markets]. The increase in importance of Santa Caterina within the market system is easily inferred, although in 1877, once the metal construction of El Born market had opened, Cornet i Mas observed that 'as a result of its proximity to El Born, it is not as popular as it should be.' Josep Maria Cornet i Mas, *Guía de Barcelona*, Barcelona, 1877.

7. On 6 February 1855, for instance, the director of La Boqueria market made it public that 'some awnings in the market are in very poor condition, several cannot even be drawn, a fact which stallholders have complained about, for they pay their quotas but then either have to leave their stalls

ket places became increasingly denser, filling to the point of brimming over and thereby creating problems of hygiene, congestion and functioning. A report drawn up in 1840 by two physicians was extremely critical of the sanitary conditions of El Born.⁸

Aside from the early design for ‘stalls’ at El Born conceived by Daniel i Molina in 1848, most of the unrealised designs in iron appeared after 1860, as was the case in other Spanish cities—the project for El Pedró market (1861), Miguel de Bergue’s design for La Boqueria (1863-1865) and Garriga i Roca’s for La Barceloneta (1868). It doesn’t seem coincidental that the latter should have been drawn up immediately after the architect travelled to Paris as a commissioner to study the Exposition Universelle, trip on which he visited other French cities to complete his survey.⁹

Towards a Market Policy (1868-1897): The First Iron Market Halls

The initiative to renovate market buildings was not just an outcome of the 1868 revolution, for some of the processes had been initiated before then, although the political change undoubtedly prompted its formulation and realisation. It is not fortuitous that a similar process should have begun in Madrid at the same time.¹⁰ On 29 July 1870 the Municipal Plenary Session proposed the creation of a special committee to study the subject of markets that was set up on the 27 December 1870, which then asked the Director

when it rains or risk the sun ruining their vegetables.’ AMAB, Public Works Committee / Section 3, File 1530, 3/1. The municipal agreements contain numerous references to the installation or repair of awnings made of canvas or cane and cardboard, all of which show concern about not incurring in excessive costs. Manuel Saurí i Matas highlighted Santa Caterina market ‘because of the convenience of sheltering stallholders and customers from the elements.’ *Manual histórico-topográfico, estadístico y administrativo. Guía General de Barcelona*, Barcelona, 1849, p. 235.

8. ‘The building of El Born is quite small and wedged on two sides between the houses that provide the limits of the market. Enclosed as it is by the high walls of Santa Maria del Mar, rather than the erection of stalls it would need an extension in proportion with the attendance of customers, stallholders and passers-by who spend all day long moving around the premises.’ A committee from the Academy of Medicine also deemed El Born market too enclosed and cramped. AMAB, Treasury Committee / Section 2, ‘Gestiones del Ayuntamiento para la construcción de barracas en el Borne y el Bornet’ [Actions taken by the Town Hall for the construction of stalls in El Born and El Bornet], 1840, File 486.

9. AMAB, Municipal Minutes, 19 September 1867, no. 49, fol. 196 and 199v. Ibid. 22 April 1868, no. 50, fol. 61v.

10. According to the issue of *La Ilustración Española y Americana* published on 22 June 1875, in 1867 the Town Hall of Madrid commissioned the design of La Cebada and Los Mostenses, and in 1869 it guaranteed the concession required in order for the building work to begin. Both markets opened in 1875; Chamberí market opened in 1876 and La Paz market in 1882. The process was then brought to a standstill until San Miguel market was erected between 1913 and 1916. On the first of Madrid’s markets to be constructed in metal, see Pedro Navascués Palacio, *Arquitectura y arquitectos madrileños en España durante el siglo XIX*, Instituto de Estudios Madrileños, Madrid, 1973, and ‘La arquitectura del hierro en España durante el siglo XIX,’ *Cuadernos de Arquitectura y Urbanismo*, 1980, no. 65, p. 39-64.

of Construction and Ornament, architect Josep Artigas, to study the issue.¹¹ The resulting report, dated 25 May 1871, began with an analysis of the situation of the city's markets and its shortfalls and presented the first overall survey devoted almost exclusively to the city's historical quarter. It maintained the central role played by the markets of La Boqueria and Santa Caterina in their respective areas of urban influence and suggested complementing them with a solid and consistent network of markets.¹²

It proposed moving El Pedró to the site foreseen in Cerdà's project for the future Sant Antoni market, the creation of a new market on the site of the demolished Jonqueres convent and, in the case of El Born, considered the possibility of expropriating the section between the square and Esparteria street to see if it could accommodate a covered market. This initial proposal was eventually abandoned due to its cost, and instead it was decided that the Sant Sebastià building would be knocked down so that Jonqueres and the new El Born would be located at the two extremes of Gran Via A anticipated in the Reform plan (of the future Via Laietana), thereby facilitating accessibility. The solution planned for El Born, however, was finally ruled out when in 1871 Fontserè introduced the new market in his project for the land made over to the Ciutadella in 1869, in a situation similar to the one foreseen by Cerdà. This is the true starting point of the modern network of metallic market halls. From this point on, the municipal agreements would pay constant attention to all the city's markets viewed as a system.¹³

11. AMAB, Municipal Minutes, 1870, 29 July, fol. 200, no. 52, and 'Sobre proponer las modificaciones y mejoras que pueden introducirse en los mercados' [On the proposal of alterations and improvements that can be introduced in markets], Public Works Committee / Section 3, File 3502. Appointment of a special committee in charge of the needs of markets: '[O]ne of the most meaningful pieces of information regarding the prosperity, the progress and even the culture of a town is undoubtedly the state of its police force, and consequently the state of its most frequented public places, including markets. For these reasons ... the undersigned have the honour of proposing that Your Excellency appoint a special internal committee responsible for the needs of the market halls of the City and of the alterations and improvements that can be introduced under all concepts, to put forward as soon as possible those it should consider more convenient.' For more information see 8 July, fol. 147v. 'Dictamen de la Comisión para proponer mejoras en los mercados de esta capital proponiendo la traslación del de Padró ... y otro de la Comisión para proponer mejoras en los mercados en el sentido de que aceptando el proyecto de trasladar el del Padró al punto que está señalado ... en el plano oficial del Ensanche a la salida de la ex-Puerta de San Antonio; se oficie al Gefe (*sic*) de edificación y ornato para que exprese su parecer acerca de la expresada mejora' [Report by the Committee to suggest improvements in the markets of the capital, proposing to move El Padró market ... and another report by the Committee to suggest improvements in markets whereby accepting the project to move El Padró market to the aforementioned location ... on the official map of the Eixample at the ex-Door of Sant Antoni, the Head of Construction and Ornament is asked to express his opinion on the aforesaid improvement.]

12. Report by the Architect and Director of Construction and Ornament, Josep Artigas, published on 25 May 1871, AMAB, Public Works Committee / Section 3, File 3502.

13. During the first half of 1873 there is news in the municipal minutes of the process of purchasing the site of Sant Antoni market, but two years later judgement still hadn't been passed on the



El Born Market, ca. 1900, when it was still a retail market

The first two metal market halls, El Born and Sant Antoni, were conceived as genuine manifestos of the new urban planning, an alternative to the disorder of traditional market buildings that invaded public space and to the frustrated modernity of the markets of La Boqueria and Santa Caterina.

Following European models, they proposed open-plan spaces protected from the elements, cut off from the street and free of the obstacles that hindered the movements of customers dedicated to the orderly contemplation of goods. In the case of markets, as in those of arcades and exhibition pavilions, the new architecture of iron and glass created ideal spaces for displaying

assessment of the land belonging to the State. AMAB, Public Works Committee, 1873, no. 55, 27 February, 3 March, 6 May, 3 July, fols. 83, 85, 144, 187, and Municipal Minutes, 1875, no. 57, 2 March, fol. 66, 23 March, fol. 89v. See note 17.

goods, emerging as modern monuments of urban ‘transience’, epitomised by the railway station—structures that ensured safe and orderly movement for mobile nomadic individuals.¹⁴

El Born market eventually opened in 1876 and Sant Antoni opened in 1882. As well as the new technology of iron visible in the façades and in the interiors, the two had in common their large dimensions and centralised ground plans with crossings crowned by octagonal domes where spacious perpendicular naves converged. As a result of these features they rose as two modernising and ‘monumental’ structures in the ever-changing urban landscape, the result of a desire to move with the times and of unduly optimistic expectations.¹⁵ It was thought that their allure would decongest the market of Santa Caterina and especially that of La Boqueria, which was noticeably overloaded. This was not the case, however, and in both instances the size of the building would prove excessive.

The debate generated by on the market of the right district of the Eixample confirms the excessively ambitious nature of these first two markets, and of the progressive tendency towards neighbourhood market halls of more modest dimensions. This was the logical option in the cases of La Barceloneta and Hostafrancs, but in that of the Eixample the choice proved highly significant.

In 1872 it was agreed that two markets would be established there, the most urgent being the one in the right section of the district, which was a more

14. Georges Teyssot, ‘Habits/Habitus/Habita’ (1996), <http://urban.cccb.org> (urban library): ‘In *Paris the Capital of the Nineteenth Century*, Walter Benjamin has noted how iron and glass were avoided in dwellings while such materials came to be used in passages, covered markets, pavilions for expositions and train stations: “buildings which served transitory purposes”. Two contrasting modes of subjectivity begin to insinuate themselves into the world of things: on the one hand, the “transitoriness” that determines a sort of man, mobile and nomadic; on the other, the old individualism of the inhabitant par excellence who defends his traditional “permanence” or “allocation” ... It is certainly true that recent studies, for example, on the Victorian country house in Great Britain, or on the apartment building during the Haussmann era, tend to qualify Benjamin’s assertion that “iron, then, combines itself immediately with functional moments of economic life”.’

15. Shortly before its opening, authorisation was granted ‘to the Economic Society to celebrate a general Catalan exposition in the new Sant Antoni market,’ which reveals the proximity between the exhibition palaces and the new market halls. AMAB, Municipal Minutes, 1881, no. 63 and 28 June 1881 AAMM fol. 419v. Ramon Grau has pointed out the similarities between El Born or Sant Antoni and the exhibition palaces designed by Fontserè for the Ciutadella. They share the condition of being spaces for displaying the spectacle of abundance and of perishables. The design by Rovira i Trias for the market of Sant Antoni is particularly interesting because it adopts a panoptical form that enables the director’s office to be based in the middle, a solution that proved controversial and was finally modified. *Diario de Barcelona*, 8 December 1881: ‘A huge and heavy structure made of wood and masonry with the appearance of a Swiss cottage is being erected in the centre of Sant Antoni market, destined, so we have heard, to house the office of the Director of the aforesaid market which reduces the visibility of the 4 wide and slender sections that come together at that point, and which is consequently detrimental to the impact of the building.’

developed and inhabited area. Once the Jonqueres site foreseen by Artigas had been ruled out, between 1875 and 1883 a location on land belonging to La Catalana General de Crédito was studied, comprising the two blocks of houses between four streets—Bruc, Casp, Bailèn and Ausiàs March.

The basic argument in favour of this option was precisely ‘the building of a great central market’ in view of the fact that the Interior Reform foresaw the disappearance of La Boqueria and Santa Caterina, and it would consequently be impossible to procure a large market hall that fulfilled the necessary conditions of centrality. One of the members of the committee opposed such an idea ‘on account of past experiences such as the case of the market of Sant Antoni, the impressiveness of which far exceeds the needs of its neighbourhood and simply proves the excessive zeal of the town hall; the same could be said of El Born; secondly, because if it is small in size yet large enough to accommodate the needs of local residents it will have the advantage of being more feasible as a result of its lower cost.’ Another municipal representative insisted on the idea that a smaller market would be quicker to build, and ‘the Municipality would save the price of the lease of the land annexed to La Boqueria.’ So the idea of a large market building was finally given up and it was decided that a neighbourhood market would be built instead.¹⁶ As early as January 1884 the acquisition of the definitive site for the future market of La Concepció was being officially discussed, opposed by certain representatives for a number of reasons that still included its inadequate size. On 18 June the reduced project and budget for La Concepció were finally approved.¹⁷

Be that as it may, the first two large markets and those that followed were built by the same local industry, chiefly by La Maquinista Terrestre y Marítima, a company founded in 1855 for the construction of heavy machinery that at the time, and in order to make up for the difficulties in this sector, directed a significant part of its production towards building in metal. Among many other works, in 1888 it had completed the metal construction of the five covered markets (El Born, Sant Antoni, La Barceloneta, Hostafrancs and La Concepció), the total area of which amounted to 23,600 square metres. This fact is emphasised in all official opening speeches of the time and in the guides to the city, and granted the first group of Barcelona market halls an overall unity of style.

16. AMAB, Municipal Minutes, 1875, no. 57, 2 April 1875, fol. 92; *Ibid.*, 1883, no. 65, 28 August 1883, fol. 270; *Ibid.*, 4 September 1883, fol. 275; 1884, no. 66, 18 January, fol. 15v and ff. on the great central market or the neighbourhood market.

17. AMAB, Municipal Minutes, no. 66, 8 January 1884, fol. 8v, fol. 423v; *Ibid.*, 1885, no. 67, 18 June 1885, fol. 187v.

From the Aggregation of Municipalities to the Regulation of Wholesale Sales (1897-1921)

By the time the process of aggregation had concluded in 1897 Barcelona's six metal market halls had been built and the different surroundings municipalities had presented their own initiatives.¹⁸ At the turn of the century the district of Gràcia, for instance, boasted three markets. La Llibertat market, in the square of the same name, had existed since the eighteen forties and would now be covered by a metal structure which was completed in 1888; its size and takings were similar to those of La Concepció and La Barceloneta. On the other side of Carrer Gran there were two rival centres: the one on Plaça de la Revolució was an open-air market while the one on Travessera de Gràcia, Abaceria Central, erected by a private group in 1892 was in conflict with Gràcia Town Hall even before its completion, a conflict that would be passed on to the Aggregation of Municipalities and then to the Barcelona City Council.¹⁹ To the left of the Eixample, on carrer València between Villarroel and Urgell and within the municipality of Les Corts the market popularly known as El Ninot (or Avenir or Les Corts)

18. Restricting the area would be a decisive factor in the endless issue of the slaughterhouse. The process had been prolonged indefinitely since the proposal Fontserè included in his design for the area of the park in 1872, and which had been rejected on hygienic grounds. The purchase of the first plots of land to accommodate the slaughterhouse in the district of Sant Martí de Provençals proved futile on account of the problems raised by the municipality. Subsequent attempts to erect it in the Sants district were also unsuccessful, and the decision to build it at La Vinyeta, within the municipal area of Barcelona, was not made until 1886. Aggregation implied that the new local administration in power inherited the different facilities of the various municipalities and had to reorganise them. This was very clear in the case of slaughterhouses: those in Sants, Les Corts, Sant Gervasi and Sant Andreu disappeared, while those in Gràcia and Sant Martí de Provençals remained provisionally open. The different municipalities in the Plan had followed their own policies concerning the markets that would have to come together from that point on in a broader and more homogeneous system, according to criteria that had been well defined and made explicit since the debate on the Eixample design had arisen and since Cerdà's proposals. Many more years would still have to pass before this would materialise, but aggregation no doubt played a crucial role in the process.

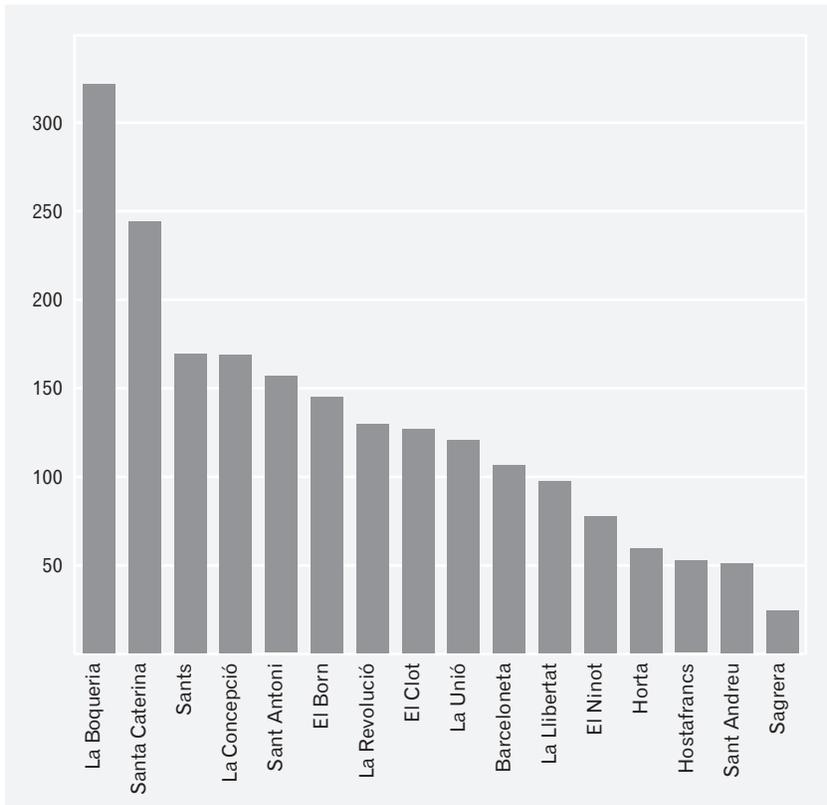
19. In Gràcia, La Llibertat market was completed with sales outlets in other areas of the district, which tended increasingly to concentrate on Plaça d'Isabel II, where the so-called Revolució market was held. In 1888 Gràcia Town Hall was offered the purchase of the land belonging to the F. Puigmartí i Cia. factory on Travessera de Gràcia for building a market. The authorities regarded the transaction costly. On 13 December 1892 *Diario de Barcelona* announced that a private group had erected 'a great market or central grocery [Abaceria Central] furnished with all known advances.' On 21 December the same newspaper announced the market's public opening. This marked the beginning of a long dispute with Gràcia Town Hall, which was inherited by Barcelona Town Hall after aggregation. The municipal authorities responded by presenting the design for renovation of the Revolució market, the building work of which was put out to tender on 13 June 1903 and actually began on 13 August 1904. Barcelona Town Hall didn't agree to purchase the Abaceria Central market until July 1911, when the Revolució market would be dismantled and a part of its material reused to build Sant Gervasi market. See 'L'Abaceria Central,' *Gaceta Municipal*, no. 29 (17 July 1950), p. 741-746.

Markets	Value of the soil	Value of the building	Revenue
La Boqueria	886.745	10.250	475.360,18
El Born	640.320	1.250.711	124.026,33
Sant Antoni	711.750	1.356.457	111.597,21
Santa Caterina	737.100	120.000	151.739,91
Sants	50.853	24.800	84.761,10
La Concepció	258.668	536.459	76.525,37
La Llibertat	132.996	250.000	42.305,93
Barceloneta	132.481	275.880	36.495,43
El Ninot		3.750	19.757,12
Hostafrancs	104.904	478.927	11.934,13
La Revolució	36.080		25.304,77
Sant Andreu	11.045	5.800	9.782,01
El Clot	60.702	84.000	21.605,58
La Unió	42.968	65.200	20.293,85
Sagrera	9.570		1.751,42
Horta			1.063,68
Els Encants			46.459,51
Poultry	216.195	36.031	17.583,24
Wholesale fish	158.186	102.500	24.868,50

Value of the plot of land and the building (1900), revenue in pesetas (1902). The number of stalls in La Boqueria has increased by 400 to correct the mistake noticed in the comparison with following years. Source: AMAB Patrimoni artístic i monumental, box 46.174, report 7.103, *Anuari estadístic*, 1902

had prospered.²⁰ In 1889 the Town Hall of Les Corts de Sarrià stipulated that it be moved to its present location as an open-air market consisting of wooden stalls. The Town Hall of Sant Martí de Provençals had ordered the construction of the two covered markets of Clot and Unió. Both projects were designed by the municipal architect of Barcelona, Pere Falqués, in 1887. The Hort Nou market in Sants was only partially covered but was growing

20. See 'L'obra constructiva de l'Ajuntament: el nou mercat del Ninot,' *Gaceta Municipal*, no. 39 (2 October 1933), p. 1007-1015.

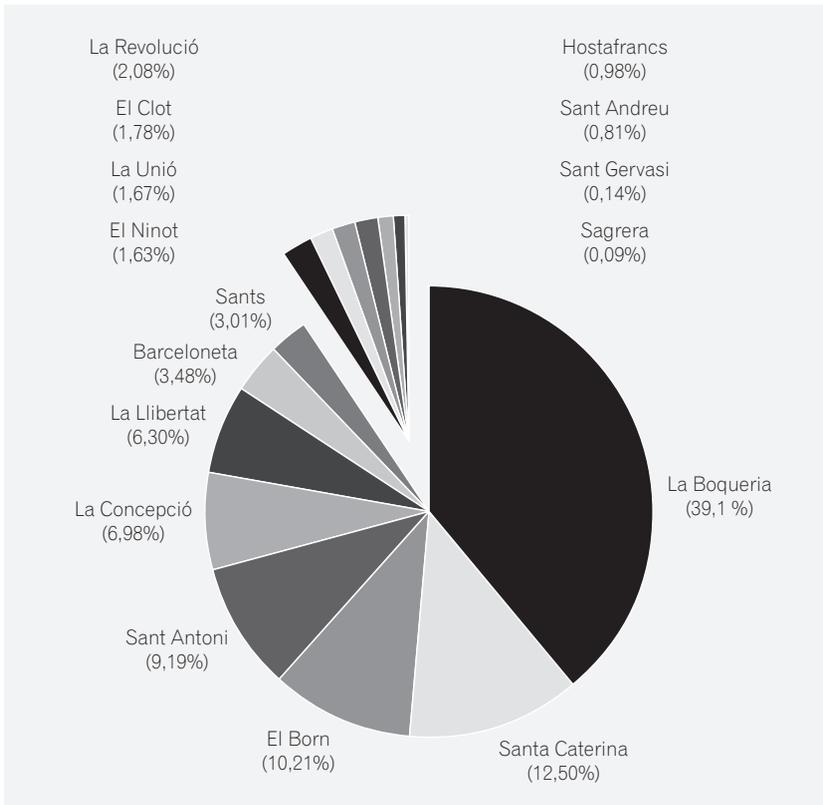


Average revenue per stall in pesetas, 1902. Source: *Anuario estadístico*, 1902

quickly, so by 1902 it had more stalls than those of La Concepció and La Llibertat.²¹ Sant Andreu, Sant Gervasi and Sagrera had their own markets even though they were smaller (see graphs), as did Horta and Sarrià, although these would join the municipality of Barcelona at a later date.

The management was fragmented until the Aggregation of Municipalities was set up, although it did share collective experience, as exemplified by La Llibertat market—which had much in common with the other markets built by La Maquinista Terrestre y Marítima—and by Clot and Unió

21. AMAB, Municipal Minutes, 1899, 11 January, no. 94 fol. 21v. 'It is agreed to build two side sections for the new Sants Market on land known as "New Vegetable Garden" for 164,444.33 pesetas; the other points of the report are sent back to the committee to be studied.' The design by the municipal architect and a total estimate of 310,398.92 pesetas had previously been approved. See also AMAB, Patrimoni Artístic i Ambiental, File 7103, Box 46174.



Revenue percentage per market in pesetas, 1902. Source: *Anuario estadístico*, 1902

markets (1889) designed by Pere Falquès, municipal architect of Barcelona who benefited from previous experiences and suggested building cheaper structures, replacing cast-iron pillars with factory pillars that separated the stalls and supported the jamps.²² The Aggregation of Municipalities necessarily imposed a new level of administration and joint management of all these

22. AMAB, Artistic and Environmental Heritage, File 7125, Box 46186, Q147, Clot Market, 'Proyecto de Mercado Cubierto para la plaza del Clot, 1886, Ayuntamiento Constitucional de San Martín de Provençals' [Project for a Covered Market for El Clot marketplace, 1886, Constitutional Town Hall of Sant Martí de Provençals], and Report, 7 January 1887, by Pere Falquès: 'One of the circumstances to be taken into account when designing a roof for a covered market is the economy of intermediate points of support in the sheltered area, so a solution should be found for the roof to be supported by the side enclosures. For this purpose solid supports are placed on the length lines on which rests the roof, leaving the sheltered length totally free. As we do not accept the side enclosure of the market, we shall not build a continuous wall for the said supports but buttress walls on each section axis and in the direction of the roof rafters ... As well as economic reasons, the adoption of the aforementioned supporting and buttress walls instead of iron columns is due to the need for

markets. A first schematic evaluation appears in a file dated 1900, and the *Anuarios Estadísticos* published as from 1902 give us a much better global perspective.²³ It is surprising that of all the markets in the old municipality of Barcelona the only one still lacking a definite architecture, still unfinished and on the whole open-air was La Boqueria which, according to the 1902 *Anuario*, represented 40 per cent of the total takings of the sixteen markets in the city.²⁴ The second, Santa Caterina with 12 per cent, was described in 1900 as follows: '[F]or the most part this building is in ruins, and some alterations are currently being carried out.' In short, the two most central and most important markets are also those in the poorest conditions. One of the reasons for this anomalous situation was the threat of the Interior Reform project that Àngel Josep Baixeras was promoting at the time and which fully affected La Boqueria and Santa Caterina. Baixeras suggested three alternative markets, one on carrer Jonqueres, another on the site of the House of Mercy and the third close to the shipyard, all three on the new A and B thoroughfares. To this threat was added, in the case of La Boqueria, the uncertainty regarding the future of the site of the ex-convent of Jerusalem; such a precarious situation hindered its architectural remodelling but not its *de facto* reinforcement.

Furthermore, the evaluation of the different markets clearly confirms the substantial change in strategy between the first two markets, El Born and Sant Antoni, and those that followed.²⁵ Both markets doubled or tripled the area of Santa Caterina and La Boqueria and they alone accounted for two thirds of the total municipal investment in new market buildings. Their takings, on the other hand, were quite modest compared with those of La Boqueria and Santa Caterina, and even with those of La Concepció (see graphs).

However, the most profitable and active (and consequently most congested and difficult to manage) were the most 'traditional': La Boqueria, open-air and cramped, the true heart of Barcelona's market system, and Santa Caterina, architecturally obsolete.

In general terms, the attempt to surpass traditional markets was associated with control over forms of urbanity and the moralisation of customs.

partitions in the butchers. ... Bricks are used in the outer building work, plaster in interiors and cement in the moulded sections and crowns.'

23. AMAB, Artistic and Environmental Heritage, File 7103, Box, 46174, Barcelona Markets 1900.

24. *Anuario Estadístico de Barcelona* (1902), 503-530.

25. AMAB, Artistic and Environmental Heritage, File 7103, Box 46174.



La Boqueria market before it was roofed, ca. 1910

This is an issue that surfaced in all Western countries.²⁶ The shortcomings in this field were often used as biased arguments. An 1859 official request against the transfer of the market of Hostafrancs pointed out, '[I]n the first place, given that the aforementioned school stands in the centre of the stretch of pavement that acts as a market, insofar as we can say that the entire area in front of the building is a market place, the two hundred boys and girls who go to the same school every day and at all times necessarily hear and witness

26. Helen Tangires, *Public Markets and Civic Culture in Nineteenth-Century America*, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 2003; James A. Schmiechen and Kenneth Carls, *The British Market Hall. A Social and Architectural History*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1999) 11-19, 51-58; Bertrand Lemoine, *Les Halles de Paris* (1980), op. cit.; Gilles-Henry Bailly and Philippe, *La France des Halles & Marchés*, Privat, Toulouse, 1998; Victoria E. Thompson, 'Urban Renovation, Moral Regeneration: Domesticating the Halles in Second Empire Paris,' *French Historical Studies*, 20 (Winter 1997), p. 87-109.

the profanities, obscene and indecent words, quarrels and fights and all the rest that is known to go on in market places and which is a terrible example for educating children and forming good habits and customs.²⁷ The same arguments would be used in 1895 in a lecture published against the Encants market: 'And on the moralising sights of the traders on business days, what can we say? There is no doubt that they place the culture of Barcelona on a level that especially honours it. That hideous shouting ... consisting for the most part in vulgar and obscene words, coarse insults that they direct at one another, often accompanied by gestures and actions that are by no means edifying and other similar nasty comments, produces a motley set of scenes that run contrary to the morality and decency characterising cities such as ours.'²⁸ In the regulations approved in 1898 this became the object of article 30: 'Stallholders are obliged to use good form and refined manners among themselves, with the public and with the municipal employees of the market.'²⁹

The Encants became an object of great controversy. The open-air flea market was seen as the most irrefutable testimony of the intolerable disorder of life on the streets. On 23 September 1879 it was agreed that a row of stalls would be removed, although an amendment opposed the measure, considering that it fell short of what was required, for 'there was no reason for either the Encants or the stalls on the public thoroughfare ... the stalls located on carrer Capmany on market days should be made to disappear completely.'³⁰ The indecisiveness was brought abruptly to end by the 1888 Exposition Universelle—the Encants were too central and occupied a main artery so it was decided that they be moved to a peripheral area. As stated in a document drawn up in 1892, '[U]nder the pretext that the Encants, as they were set up on carrer Consulat and plaça Sant Sebastià, would degrade Barcelona, the Town Hall decreed at a stroke to move those demeaning Encants to the area around the market of Sant Antoni [...] Therefore, the former Encants, with all its flaws and their 245 stallholders, was installed (in spite of the protests made by those who were most affected) around

27. AMAB, Public Works and Promotion Committee, File 1530 3/1, 18 March 1859.

28. M. Pirretas, *Inconveniencias y perjuicios que los Encantes y el Rastro causan al Comercio al detall en particular y a Barcelona en general*, Conferencia en la Liga de Defensa Industrial y Comercial de Barcelona, Barcelona, 1895.

29. *Reglamento para el régimen de los mercados de esta Ciudad. Aprobado por el Excmo. Ayuntamiento en Consistorio de 13 de abril de 1898*, AHCB, Entity 1-25, Box 2,1. Along these lines, see the comments on El Born and La Boqueria in José Coroleu, *Guía del forastero en Barcelona y sus alrededores*, Seix Barral, Barcelona, 1887, p. 262.

30. AMAB, Municipal Minutes, 1879, 23 September, no. 61, fol. 411.

Barcelona's most important market hall.' In 1892 and 1893, when a number of residents asked for the market to return to its original site, the stallholders had discovered the advantages of the new location and made strong objections.³¹ The following year attempts were made to bring some order to area around Sant Antoni market where the host of stallholders had divided themselves up without too much control.³² Therefore the same year in which the first generation of modern market halls had been built, 1888, the largest and dearest of such constructions was besieged by the most primitive marketing techniques antithetical to the values of modern urbanity that the new markets aspired to represent.

A number of signs during the last decades of the nineteenth century revealed the growing importance of wholesale sales. Meaningfully, in 1891 three proposals were made which had much in common: allocating a large city building to accommodate, examine and hire livestock, build a warehouse for selling fish wholesale in the Machine Gallery within the 1888 Exposition Universelle, and equip Santa Caterina market with a compartment-lazarette for hens, most of them imported, that 'due to the crossings they must undergo in congested spaces contain infectious principles.' The growth of the city had changed the scale of her provisioning, leading to problems of management and control. The decision to take advantage of the aforementioned Machine Gallery as an installation for wholesale sales foretold the direction things would follow from then on. In 1897 it was suggested that the same building could accommodate the Wholesale Fowl, Fruit and Fish Market and the following year the building work commenced. However, in 1900 the Fowl Market was the only one of the three that was open for business.³³ In 1899 a change of programme was agreed when it was decided that the Fruit and Vegetable Market would be installed in El Born, which still had a well-defined area for selling fish wholesale. We

31. They adduced that '[S]o many pains and efforts have at least yielded satisfactory results ... for the establishments, previously neglected, are now thriving and the 245 stallholders have now become 700 permanent and 200 seasonal retailers,' and finally appealed to the interests of the town hall itself. 'Exposición. Defensa de los derechos de los vendedores en los Encantes... del mercado de San Antonio' [Statement. Defending the rights of the stallholders of Els Encants ... of Sant Antoni market], AHMB, Entry 1-25, Box 2.5, AMAB, Municipal Minutes, 1893, 19 January, fol. 33v. 'The majority report returns to the committee (fol. 338v. of the previous minute book) for the Encants to be installed once again in plaça Sant Sebastià.'

32. AMAB, Municipal Minutes, 1894, vol. 2, no. 85, 20 November, fol. 270 and 27 November, fol. 290, p. 294. The issue of moving the market would be raised again in 1906. AMAB, Municipal Minutes, 1906, Index, Box 138, 20 November.

33. AMAB, Municipal Minutes, 1897, 1 December, no. 91, fol. 605v.-606; 1898, 9 February, no. 92, fol. 138v., and no. 93, fol. 312; 1899, 12 July, no. 95, fol. 18. 'The Municipal Architect has been commissioned to carry out the necessary work for the swift completion of the fruit and fowl markets,' 12 July 1901, no. 106, fol. 42v.

are also familiar with the situation and areas of these wholesale markets in 1900. The Fowl Market occupied 5,444 square metres of the Machine Gallery building. The Fruit Market was nominally on the same site and occupied almost 3,300 square metres but was not in operation. The Wholesale Fish Market was on carrer Marquesa by the França Railway Station and had an annexed plot of land between that street and those of Ocata and Aduana that measured approximately 390 square metres.³⁴ In 1904 the first proposals were made for returning the wholesale fish sales to El Born. The idea prospered and around 1920 the wholesale fish market occupied 1,719 square metres of the 8000 square metres odd of El Born.³⁵

During these same years three regulations were being drawn up: the general regulation of markets and the special regulations of the Central Fish Market and the wholesale Central Fruit and Vegetable Market.³⁶ One of the most active champions of the need for a wholesale fruit and vegetable market was the Catalan Agricultural Institute of St Isidre. Some of the paragraphs in the publication describe the malfunctioning of La Boqueria market, the true central market of the city: 'It is really sad to see the conditions in which the fruit and vegetables that stock the market arrive and are inspected. The location and layout of the present Sant Josep market are well known. If we told people that three hundred carts overflowing with fruit and vegetables are crammed into that back alley daily they would probably consider the statement inconceivable; however, it is true, extremely true. Such an incomplete and rudimentary system is another factor that leads to a depreciation of prices for stallholders, i.e., farmers, without necessarily benefiting consumers. The reason is obvious. The carts from the Llobregat plain, for instance, have to wait from twelve o'clock midnight when they arrive until the early hours of the morning when after having sold their goods they can set back. They have very little space so baskets and baskets pile up, great stacks of fruit are briskly unloaded, almost thrown out of the carts due to the accumulation,

34. AMAB, Artistic and Environmental Heritage, 'Relació i valoració dels Mercats de la Ciutat' [List and appraisal of the City's Markets], Q 147, File 7103, Box 46174.

35. AMAB, Artistic and Environmental Heritage, 'Proyecto de habilitación de parte del mercado del Borne para la venta al por mayor de frutas y verduras' [Project for fitting out a part of El Born market for wholesale fruit and vegetable sales], October 1920, File 7108, Box 046177 (13/88/803).

36. AMAB, Municipal Minutes, 1901, Index, Box 106, 25 January 1901, vol. 1, fol. 70v. S/M report on changes to the present regulation of markets. Municipal minutes, 1906, Index, Box 138, 31 January 1906, vol. 1, 250v.: '[A]pproval of the three regulations included for Markets in general, for the Central Fish and Fruit Market and for the Wholesale Vegetable Market, and their publication in the *Gaceta Municipal*, 31 January 1906.' The *Gaceta Municipal* was probably scheduled to appear around this time, but the fact is that the first issue would not be published until 1914.

the total absence of conditions, the lack of time and space needed to arrange them. Delicate produce travels this tortuous path to the market place and for these and other reasons farmers are forced to hand it over at totally ruinous prices.³⁷

The subsistence crisis originated by World War I proved decisive in solving the problem of the establishment of a central market in the city.³⁸ In February 1916 the Institute insisted: 'One of the causes that determine the so-called subsistence conflict in Barcelona was the lack of organisation in the city's markets, aggravated by the fact that it had adverse effects for consumers and for producers, in other words for the farmers from neighbouring regions and from further afield ... This is the sad situation we are experiencing ... a crisis due to scarcity in the city, a crisis due to abundance in the country. How can we solve this problem? By establishing a free central market where trading is public and prices receive as much publicity as necessary. This would bring the present chaos and prevailing privileges to an end.'³⁹ On 17 January 1918 it argues: '[S]ome stipulations dictated with the intention of reducing prices have counterproductive effects, violating economic laws to such a degree that it was possible, cheap even, to feed livestock on potatoes and maize on farms and allow the produce obtained to rot at the doors of Barcelona to avoid subjecting it to the restrictions and taxes entailed by entering the city. The impediments applied last season to the sale and circulation of potatoes and the tax on the price of pork have provoked the shortage of both products. Rather than intervening in retail prices the authorities should promote and stimulate production, as a result of which and by virtue of the law

37. J. M. Pujades, 'Un mercado central de frutas y verduras,' *Revista del Instituto Agrícola Catalán de San Isidro* (20 December 1913), Year LXII, Notebook 24, p. 371. The survey mentions some of the conclusions of the statement presented before the town hall: 'Consequently, so we are told, there will be a unification of prices controlled by the central market, not only as regards the markets of Barcelona but those outside of the city as well, whereas today not even those established in the capital are able to unite. If the market were to be erected in the right location for this purpose we would be able to send consignments out again if a given product is so abundant that it fetches a low price; this would be easy if the market were located in the vicinity of a railway line.' The report also suggests the use of cold stores.

38. On the consumption struggles and the leading role played by women during the Great War see Lester Golden, 'El rebombori del pa del gener de 1918,' *L'Avenç*, 44 (1981) 45-50; Temma Kaplan, 'Female Consciousness and Collective Action. The Case of Barcelona, 1910-1918,' *Signs* (Spring 1982), vol. 7-3, p. 545-546, 560-564.

39. 'Las subsistencias y el mercado de Barcelona,' *Revista del Instituto Agrícola Catalán de San Isidro* (5 February 1916), Year LXV, Notebook 3, p. 33. In November 1916 the Treasury Committee received a proposal 'to introduce the Central Market, for the trade and storage of vegetables, fruit, etc., Municipal Minutes, 1916, Index, no. 217, 9 November, vol. 6, fol. 48v.

of supply and demand the price of the product would drop ... Another way of reducing the conflict in Barcelona, in the opinion of the Institute, was by establishing free central markets where products would converge, eliminating intermediaries wherever possible and consequently managing to lower prices. One of these markets should be for all sorts of agricultural products, fruit and vegetables, tubers, grain, seeds, etc., and even firewood and charcoal, with an annex for fowl and another for livestock, and would be set up in the slaughterhouse ... The Institute affirms that if it has been supporting the establishment of these municipal improvements for almost a quarter of a century, it hopes that now in such critical circumstances it will be listened to.⁴⁰

In February 1918 a report by the Treasury Committee suggested the steps necessary to make this possible. The first was to temporarily equip El Born market, the second was to move the Central Fish Market to other town hall premises, and the third was to transfer those retail stallholders who for reasons of seniority were entitled to choose their stalls from among the vacancies available in all markets with the exception of La Boqueria. The others would be transferred to Santa Caterina market, where the large interior courtyard was being covered and surfaced to accommodate them.⁴¹

Be that as it may, the changes were slow in coming and throughout the long-drawn-out process the town hall received numerous accusations of passivity and vested interests and was fiercely opposed by the wholesalers who obtained huge profits with the rise in prices. It is not, therefore, surprising that in spite of the professed urgency of the initiative it should have taken three years to be implemented. On 19 April 1920 a new deferral was granted for repairing the roof of El Born market and work was still being performed on the

40. *Diario de Barcelona*, (17 January 1918), p. 701.

41. Municipal Minutes, 1918, Index, vol. 2. A report by the Treasury Committee dated 11 February 1918 which on 13 March had yet to be debated, proposing 'that without detriment to the agreements considered appropriate for the construction of a great Central Fruit and Vegetable Market, El Born market be provisionally fitted out ... The Town Hall will proceed to transfer the Central Fish Market and the Market Offices to other premises owned by the Council ... Likewise, present stallholders will be transferred as follows ... Once a list of occupants is drawn up, according to seniority, they will be summoned in the same order to choose a place from the vacant stalls in all markets, except those of La Boqueria, Santa Caterina, El Born and the Central Fish Market ... The others will be transferred to Santa Caterina Market as soon as the urgent building work on the premises permits.' Especially important was the work on the roofing and surfacing of the hitherto open-air central courtyard, which was considered urgent 'because it would have a direct effect on the fall in price of the fruit and vegetables,' 25 September, vol. 5, fol. 62. 'Making available to the Chief Architect of the Treasury Section a given amount to cover the expenses of transferring the retail stalls of El Born Market,' 6 November 1918, vol. 6, fol. 29. 'Motion proposed by Sr Vinaixa on the beginning and interruption of building work on El Born market.'

Area occupied by wholesale fruit and vegetable sales in different markets in 1920	
La Boqueria	3.547 m ²
Santa Caterina	1.751 m ²
Sant Antoni	993 m ²
Sants	290 m ²
La Llibertat	230 m ²
El Clot	124 m ²
El Born	
Central Area	3.864 m ²
Wholesale trade of fresh fish today	1.719 m ²
Pavements protected by the new canopies	1.840 m ²

'Projecte d'habilitació de part del mercat del Born per a venda a l'engròs de fruites i verdures,' October 1920. There were 120 permanent dealers (middlemen) and a small number of provisional dealers divided among the different markets. The area fitted out in El Born accommodated 147 permanent dealers and 100 provisional dealers. Source: AMAB Patrimoni artístic i monumental, box 46.177, report 7.108 (13/88/803), 15/11/1929

new canopies, while on 17 November the layout of stalls in El Born had yet to be decided on account of the repairs. In October 1920, when the project for equipping the new wholesalers market in El Born was designed, wholesale sales of fruit and vegetables were still divided up among the different markets in the city. A municipal report analysed the existing situation, with the areas allocated to each market, and the solution proposed (see Chart 2).

Even though the building work seemed quite advanced, the designation of General Martínez Anido as Civil Governor of Barcelona quite likely helped solve the question of the transfer, or at least helped speed up the process. Appointed on 10 November 1920 he was invested with considerable authority and was determined to intervene in 'social affairs', particularly the high number of industrial disputes and the problem of public order. On 13 November he had his first meeting with the press to announce the measures to reduce the disputes and 'study the question of associations, trade unions and federations.' On 16 November he declared that the issue of supplies was one of his greatest concerns, and from then on he would introduce all sorts of measures, some of them counterproductive



Street sellers on Arc del Teatre, 1930

although always well publicised in the press.⁴² Years later, in a reply to the Chamber of Property, the Delegation of Provisions admitted this openly: '[T]he building work was a problem and a worry for many Town Halls, imposed eventually by Sr. Martínez Anido during his term in office as Civil Governor of this province.'⁴³ Despite the fact that the reasons given by the Catalan Agricultural Institute of St Isidre were based on favouring competition and correct pricing, the new central market was supposed to facilitate a decidedly interventionist policy to regulate both the profits of intermediaries and the taxed prices affecting the sale of the most critical products.

The Undisputed Validity of Markets (1920-1975)

Studies carried out on market systems in some of the countries that we take as models such as France, the United Kingdom and the United States suggest that as the twentieth century advanced the role played by markets in retail food sales gradually diminished.⁴⁴ In the second half of the century the erosion of the market system increased, leading to the loss of many invaluable architectural works built during different periods.

Contrary to what is inferred by these studies, almost the opposite trend prevailed in Barcelona. Throughout the twentieth century markets in Spain preserved their importance, in fact, many Spanish cities and many smaller towns in Catalonia witnessed the construction of quite outstanding markets during the first decades of the century. An exemplary case is that of the two monumental markets of the city of Valencia.

In spite of the obstacles, especially those of an economic nature, the municipal action and commitment with respect to markets would be constant throughout the century, accompanied by significant reflection on the part of those architects and town planners engaged with municipal management. This is particularly explicit in the nineteen thirties when the

42. *Diario de Barcelona*, 1 March 1921, 2208. 'Speaking yesterday to journalists, the Civil Governor stated that he had dropped by the central fish market that morning to convince himself of the possible grounds of the complaints that had been received ... after visiting the central fish market the Governor called in on the vegetable market, where the building work is making swift progress.'

43. AMAB, Public Works Committee, CV-137/145 (topographic call number B-2-D-01-01-15176), 1926. Petition by the Chamber of Urban Property regarding the disappearance of El Born.

44. Helen Tangires, *Public Markets and Civic Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (2003), op. cit.; James A. Schmiechen and Kenneth Carls, *The British Market Hall. A Social and Architectural History* (1999), op. cit.; Bertrand Lemoine, *Les Halles de Paris* (1980), op. cit.; Gilles-Henry Bailly and Philippe, *La France des Halles & Marchés* (1998), op. cit.

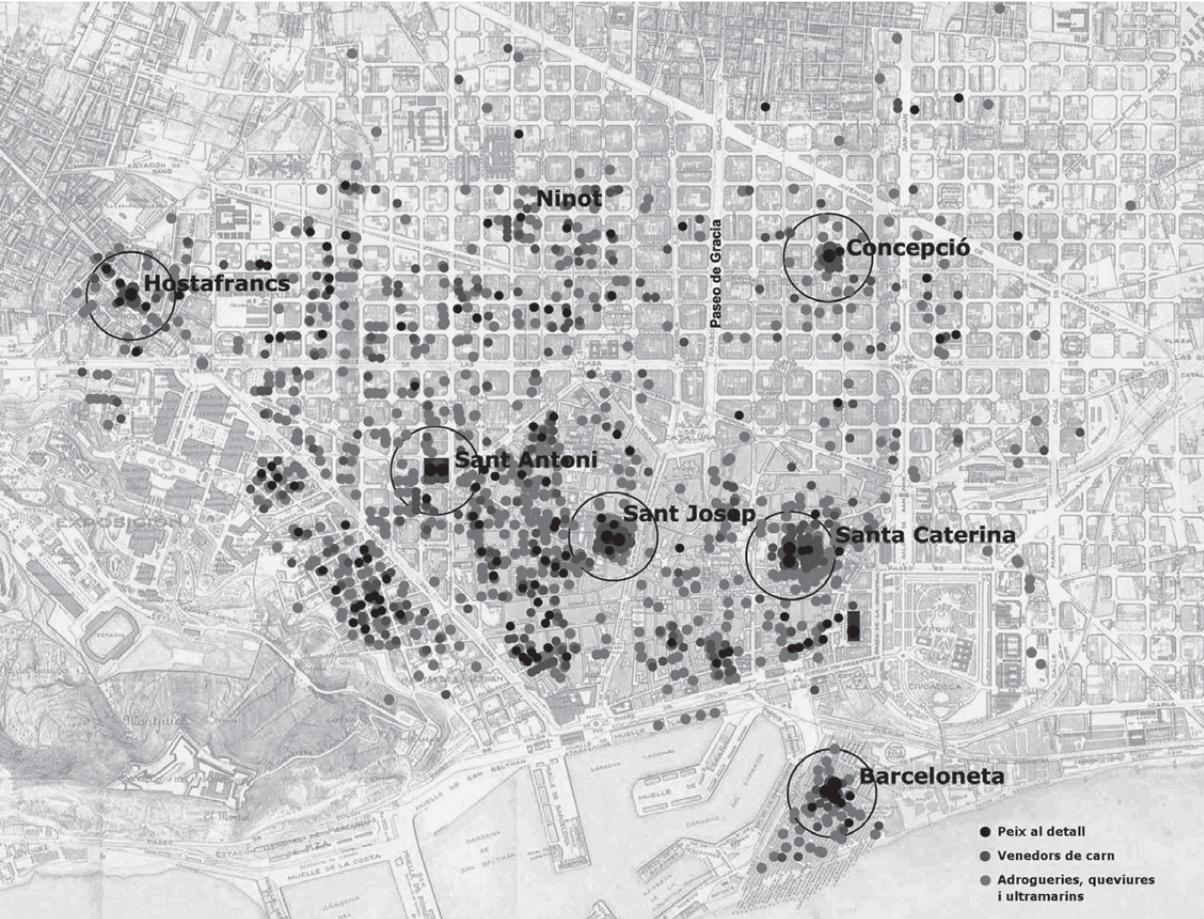
review *CAME* published by the Group of Municipal Architects of Spain dedicated numerous articles to the subject, dealing with issues ranging from the construction of exemplary modern wholesalers markets, such as the one in Frankfurt, to following the designs and projects executed in various Spanish cities. Initiatives that merited special attention included those undertaken in Madrid at the time, such as the design and construction of the wholesale central market of fruit and vegetables in Legazpi or the market plan promoted by the architect Ferrero. In Barcelona the designs conceived in the nineteen twenties and thirties were more modest, but the example of Madrid, such as that of other European cities, reveals that public markets were far from losing their topicality and were the object of a marked renovation of typologies related, in part, to the use of reinforced concrete. From a town planning point of view, the visionary design for Madrid by Zuazo-Jansen (1929-1930) was very interesting and granted the market system great visibility, transcending the well-balanced layout of the various units, some of which were presented as groups of markets and vast commercial buildings designed to grow progressively over the space of ten or fifteen years.⁴⁵ The economic crisis of the nineteen thirties, aggravated by World War Two and the prolonged postwar period, did not break the trust in markets. In fact, Madrid and Barcelona experienced a significant increase and reinforcement of their market systems in the postwar years. In comparison with the trajectory of other Western countries, this period will probably stand as a decisive junction.

We should bear in mind the effects of demographic growth and of the crises experienced from the late nineteen twenties to the nineteen fifties. The disputes generated by unemployment in the period between the two world wars, marked by attacks on markets and the increase in number of illegal street vendors, has been studied in various sources.⁴⁶ Municipal agreements reflect the growing concern for this subject after 1929, when numerous regulatory initiatives were proposed in response to this climate of conflict, until the year 1934 when the creation of 'street markets' was approved in several districts in order to reorganise the peddling of food products.⁴⁷

45. *Anteproyecto del trazado viário y urbanización de Madrid Zuazo-Jansen, 1929-1930*. Preliminary study by Lilia Maure, COAM, Madrid, 1986.

46. Chris Ealham, 'La lluita pel carrer. Els venedors ambulants durant la II República,' *L'Avenç*, 230, November 1998, 21-26. *Class, Culture and Conflict in Barcelona, 1898-1937*, Routledge/Cañada-Blanch Studies on Contemporary Spain, Oxon-New York, 2004.

47. AMAB, Municipal Minutes, Index 1934, 26 September 1934 (Minutes of 1934, vol. 5, fol. 20v.).



Retail food trade outside marketplaces and location of market halls in central Barcelona, 1932.

Source: Arxiu de la corona d'Aragó (ACA), Matrícula industrial

Markets, peddlers, street markets and small retailers would have a notable and different effect on the various neighbourhoods. In this sense, the distribution of small food trade enterprises in 1932, studied through the registers of business licences, proves enlightening and reveals two different lines of reasoning (see Fig. 2): concentrations around municipal markets and dense concentrations in areas of working-class residence, scarcely catered for by these markets. On the other hand, the absence of this form of trade in the residential areas around *Passeig de Gràcia* is quite meaningful. The same pattern had been traced in other parts and by other authors since the early nineteenth century. John Benson and Gareth Shaw, for instance, emphasised the growth of the number of small shops in connection with fulfilment of the

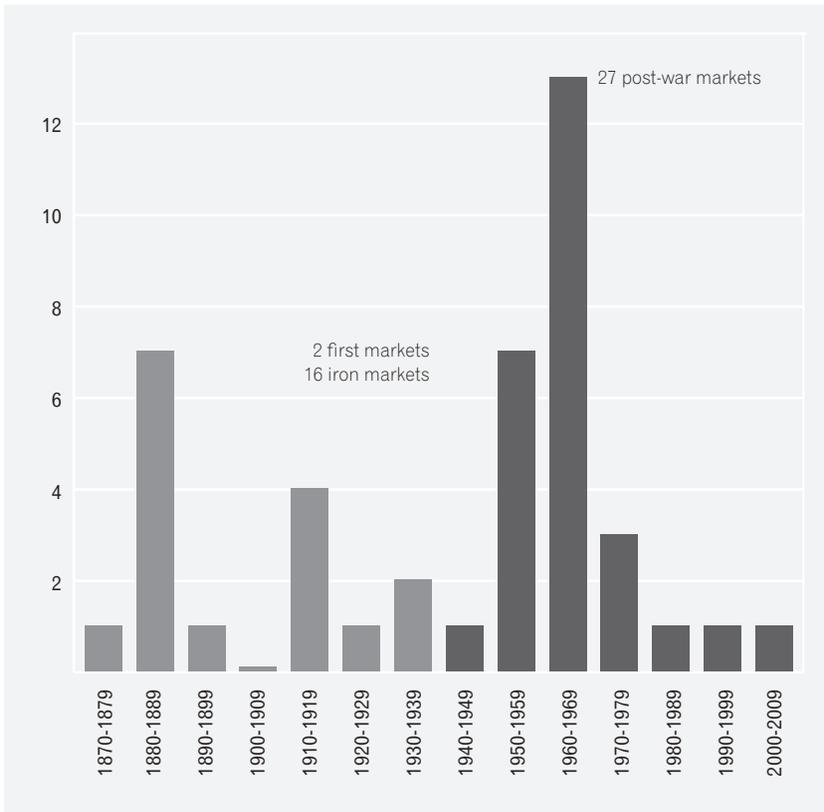
demands of the working class.⁴⁸ However, it is important to point out that we are far from equalling the impact of the retail food trade in English-speaking countries. Although Deborah Hodson states that data concerning the years 1920 and 1970 show Lancashire to be one of the regions 'where retail market trading was still most firmly established,' Scola's study of the town of Manchester, a city of similar dimensions to Barcelona, reveals how the most significant part of the retail food trade was not produced in market halls.⁴⁹ The Manchester figures for 1871 confirm that only 3.6 per cent of meat, 11.9 per cent of fish and 16.6 per cent of fruit and vegetables were distributed from markets, while in Barcelona, if we compare the outlets in the 1921 markets with those of the various shops as recorded in the business licence register of 1932 we may establish that markets account for 79 per cent of trade in meat, 74 per cent in fish and 60 per cent in fruit and vegetables. The hegemony of municipal markets, therefore, was absolute, even in comparison with cities such as Sheffield, where apparently in 1888 half of the population did their shopping in markets.⁵⁰ This difference is all the more meaningful if we bear in mind that British markets had been losing ground since the first decades of the twentieth century.

The Spanish Civil War, which took place between 1936 and 1939, generated an extremely serious problem of supplies and a considerable lack of organisation of the retail trade. Precisely the first measures implemented by the local administrative body of the victors included attempts to regulate and arrange the various modalities of the retail food trade. After 26 January 1939, when the Nationalists took possession of the town hall, the municipal agreements show signs of total disorganisation, as published in the minutes the following year, '[W]hen Barcelona was liberated the disorder of the Town Hall was so complete that we could safely say that none of the services were functioning adequately due to the absence of many civil servants, some of them Republicans and therefore on the run,

48. John Benson and Gareth Shaw (eds.), *The Evolution of Retail Systems, c. 1800-1914*, Leicester University Press, Leicester, 1992, p. 200.

49. Deborah Hodson, "'The Municipal Store': Adaptation and Development in the Retail Markets of Nineteenth-Century Urban Lancashire,' in Nicholas Alexander and Gary Akehurst (eds.), *The Emergence of Modern Retailing, 1750-1950*, Frank Cass, London, 1999: 'It is significant in this light, however, that two twentieth-century surveys of market trade and provision, conducted in the 1920s and 1970s, revealed Lancashire to be one of the regions where retail market trading was still most firmly established. Furthermore, it was the national stronghold of distinctive market type; namely the undercover, daily-operating municipal market.' Roger Scola, *Feeding the Victorian City: The Food Supply of Manchester 1770-1870*, Manchester University Press, Manchester 1992.

50. James A. Schmiechen and Kenneth Carls, *The British Market Hall. A Social and Architectural History* (1999), op. cit., p. 128.



Markets built (or rebuilt) in Barcelona per decade

others prisoners who had been taken to France during the retreat.’ Added to this lack of organisation was the laborious and traumatic purging of staff members that affected 7000 employees, as we read in the minutes. In this context, a lot of work was put in to boost a series of regulations that strove to organise the provisioning processes. Applications for licences to open new retail food establishments were suspended (15 March 1939), only three of the existing ‘street markets’ were authorised to remain open, restrictions were imposed on peddling, the sale of sea fish was regulated, attempts were made to control and administer the provisioning of milk, requirements were approved for opening retail establishments for ‘eatable, drinkable and burnable’ articles (16 June 1939). Shortly afterwards, a regulation of bakeries was endorsed (29 August 1939). This tendency continued with the building work and restructuring of sales at the Central Fruit and Vegetable Market, the endorsement of the various bylaws, the acceptance of a fourth



Interior view of El Born converted into a wholesale fruit and vegetable market, ca. 1930

‘street market’ (14 September 1940), and on 21 April 1942 the purchase of the site for the future Sagrada Família market was agreed, which was supposed to accommodate the street market located at the time on Sicília Street. This was the drift of market policies in the nineteen forties and early fifties. In 1950 Nostra Senyora del Carme market replaced the little Drassanes market. In 1951 the new markets of Horta and Vallvidrera were built and in 1954 the new Guinardó market replaced the former street market on Passatge de Llivia. The stallholders who sold their goods on the street market on carrer Camèlies also moved to Guinardó. As a part of this restructuring process, towards the end of 1952 some of the stalls in the Gardunya courtyard began to be transferred to La Boqueria, Santa

Caterina, Galvany, La Barceloneta, Sagrada Família and Sagraera markets. The latter officially opened in 1955.

After the terrible crisis of the first postwar years, the nineteen fifties were characterised by a gradual transition from strongly autarchic approaches to a new, more open economic model which would not be definitively established until the Stabilisation Plan of 1959, a prelude to the so-called development policies of the nineteen sixties. Activation of the economy entailed a greater extent of private participation, and in 1955 the requirements and conditions for the installation of privately owned markets were examined.⁵¹ The new regulations smoothed the way for privately built and run markets that the town hall had in reversion, and would therefore regain possession of after a pre-established period, as opposed to the first generation of markets. They were sanctioned on 26 July 1956 and laid the ground, in Barcelona, for the most active era in market construction. The idea was that every citizen of Barcelona could have a market at a distance of under than a kilometre from home. Between 1957 and 1977 eighteen neighbourhood markets were built in less well-served areas. On the other hand, by 1966 ‘the possibility of combining the construction of area markets and the prevision of car parks’ was systematically presented, affecting at once new buildings in the extended network of retail markets and the renovation of existing markets.⁵²

In parallel, in 1962 a public competition was held to choose a design and an economic formula for a wholesale fruit and vegetable market, an issue that had been raised unsuccessfully on several occasions since the establishment of El Born in 1921. The mayor of the period, Porcioles, argued in June 1964: ‘[R]ather than following town-planning criteria, markets today are studied and regulated according to social and economic considerations,’ the basic problem was ‘their repercussion on the cost of living and their immediate effect on the social sphere,’ going on to add that, ‘Barcelona is rightly considered the City with the highest cost of living in Spain.’ By comparing local prices with those of Madrid’s central market he inferred that the dis-

51. AMAB, Municipal Minutes, Plenary Session, 26 July 1955, fol. 120v., and Municipal Minutes, Plenary Session, 28 April 1956, fol. 54. ‘At present we have 24 markets, a number which, bearing in mind the million and a half inhabitants of Barcelona, is insufficient to meet residents’ demands—the proportion is less than one for every 500,000 inhabitants, when a sensible provisioning policy advises a maximum of 20,000 souls per market. For different reasons ... the provisioning regime in our city cannot be compared to those of other large European and American cities. As a result, and in the face of the difficulties entailed by the construction of the great number of markets the public requires, this deficiency could be solved by private markets, in other words, by granting access to private initiative as a form of collaboration in municipal activity.’

52. AMAB, Municipal Minutes, Plenary Session, 4 August 1966, fol. 79 and ff.

tribution of fruit and vegetables could have had a significant impact, and estimated a difference of the order of 11.65 per cent in this group of products. The initiative was indeed in keeping with the provisions made by the First Development Plan of 1964-1967, which strove to overcome the inertia of commercial structures and the persistence of obsolete means of distribution that had serious repercussions on the cost of living.⁵³

The process for approving the new fruit and vegetable market had to overcome much resistance and proved quite painstaking. Mercabarna eventually opened in 1971 and welcomed the central fruit and vegetable market. The first few years were quite eventful and in spite of the improvements furnished by the new facilities the truth is that it was loss-making, probably because of inherited management flaws.

As regards area markets, in 1975 the municipal agreements revealed the growing difficulties in completing the network with outlying centres such as the one anticipated for the Trinitat neighbourhood, the last one in the series. On 21 January 1975, in view of the fact that tenders were not awarded, it was decided that the existing system could not be applied to Trinitat market because it wasn't profitable for the building contractor. One councillor compared the system adopted in Madrid in 1930 with the one implemented in Barcelona in 1960, and concluded that if Barcelona system hadn't copied been was because it hadn't really worked; a committee

53. AMAB, Municipal Minutes, Plenary Session, 9 June 1956, fol. 67 and ff. 'Public provisioning is one of the issues more in need of painstaking study and conscientiousness due to its repercussion on the cost of living and to its immediate effect on the social sphere. This explains why governments pay special attention to this matter, either by adopting isolated measures or by reforming commercial structures that guarantee free concurrence and avoid inflation, correcting any monopolistic tendency that could have harmful effects on communal interests. As declared in the Development Plan, markets in certain areas of Spain still present conservative, even ancient structures. Hence the need to overcome, as stated, the inertia of certain commercial structures and the persistence of old-fashioned means of distribution that slow down economic development, have a direct bearing on the cost of living and give rise to huge imbalances in the evolution of the different sectors. The current system of provisions unnecessarily burdens consumers, undermining free competition and, in turn, harming farmers, whose legitimate interests are reduced by the strangling of commercial channels. Governments today focus their attention on the organisation of central provision markets as the most appropriate instrument to arrive at free concurrence and, in short, at a fair price.' Fol. 68 v.: 'Barcelona is rightly considered the City with the highest cost of living in Spain. If we take the year 1958 as a base of 100, the cost of living in our city, according to the National Institute of Statistics, is of 135.3 while in Madrid it is of 128.1 and in the whole of the country is of 130.7 ... The relative high cost of Barcelona with respect to Madrid as regards food, is therefore of 6.16%. The present system of fruit and vegetable distribution may have an influence on these costs, but this influence is difficult to calculate ... However, if we take a simple example to consider the dominant prices in Barcelona and Madrid during the week comprised from 27 April to 2 May, the last week for which we have detailed information, it transpires that of the total produce sold in El Born of eight types of fruit, twenty-one types of vegetables ... the highest cost is of 11.65%, even though Madrid's central market is not yet of the same standard as foreign markets.'

was set up to determine the appropriate trading system but the cycle was coming to a close, leaving forty markets homogeneously spread out over the reduced municipality of Barcelona, a scarce 92 square kilometres. From then on, the triple crisis of the nineteen seventies that affected economics, politics and urban planning models superseded the issue of markets in all the debates held by local administration bodies.

Crisis and Urban Revitalisation: Markets as Urban Planning Tools (1975-2008)

Markets in the nineteen eighties regained prominence, albeit from a different angle. The new municipal policy strove to mitigate the shortfalls they had inherited and address the various expressions of the crisis. In the sphere of municipal markets, the first problem that had to be confronted by the new town hall was the chronic malfunctioning of Mercabarna. The technical team that had managed to put order in Mercabarna was asked to study the solutions to the problems of retail trade in the food sector, by virtue of an agreement signed by the Area of Municipal Services of Barcelona Town Hall and the General Board of Interior Trade within the Ministry of Trade and Tourism of the Catalan Government.⁵⁴ During the same years in which the Spanish central government was carrying out a difficult industrial restructuring, the democratic town hall believed that this sector, strongly affected by the crisis, was also in need of restructuring, despite its fragmentation and dispersion. Alongside modern shopping centres, the economic impulse of the nineteen sixties witnessed the emergence of new technologies for the production, storage, preserving, distribution and sale of foodstuffs, whereas the economic crisis of the nineteen seventies and early eighties generated a great growth of the food sector as an answer to unemployment. This entailed a land-ownership system based on small farms, a lack of professionalism, limited investment, an extremely low degree of self-organisation, an elderly working population with little initiative, negligible market quotas, etc. Paradoxically, the increase in supply was accompanied by a rise in prices, as these establishments were only sustainable with high trade profits. Some of the information in the study proves quite revealing. Barcelona had 15,674 retail outlets, which meant a 13 per cent increase over a nine-year period when the population was static or even decreasing, and a totally unsustainable average of thirty-six families per establishment. Furthermore, local legislation did not provide town halls with

54. *Proposta d'assignació de la gestió dels mercats municipals a Mercabarna*, Ajuntament de Barcelona, 1984, typewritten document, AGEM Archive.

many means to influence prices—chiefly bylaws, the wholesale market and municipal markets.

This analysis also showed the proportion of global consumption represented by municipal area markets that concentrated 49.9 per cent of total consumption per inhabitant, 53 per cent of which corresponded strictly to food consumption and 40.4 per cent to all kinds of establishments (provision merchants, delicatessens, self-services, hypermarkets, indoor food markets and market stalls). As a result, from the very beginning the extensive market system of Barcelona (comprising forty municipal markets) and the Barcelona metropolitan area (totalling seventy-five municipal markets) was considered an essential tool in this restructuring process. Drawing together a remarkable amount of retail traders and grocers, they could prove to be decisive in avoiding oligopolist concentration of the still incipient hypermarkets. If the responsibility of town halls had traditionally been that of guaranteeing provisioning, in this new period what was needed was a global and coherent policy in the fields of trade and consumption: ‘a truly commercial urbanism.’⁵⁵ The feasibility of transforming municipal markets into a modern, dynamic, well-balanced and exemplary trade sector made them crucial elements in the new context.

In 1984 the survey was taken as a premise for the elaboration of the Special Plan for Food Establishments in Barcelona (PECAB) adopted by municipal markets, especially in those areas where trade was dense or scarce, areas that concentrated most of the food-shopping activity.⁵⁶ The study, therefore, was not restricted to market halls alone but also took into consideration the establishments around markets (nodes of polarity). Over 138,000 surveys carried out at market entrances examined the scope of these polarities, asking shoppers where they lived in order to chart customers’ origins and mapping the commercial environment as a whole as well as accessibility issues (bus-stops, underground stations, car parks, pedestrian areas, traffic directions, etc.). The idea was to locate and organise commercial polarities, gauge business establishments to avoid flooding the sector and regulate the uses and forms of trade allowed in each area of the city, presenting in the field the food trade policies of Barcelona Town Hall. With regard to direct actions, the plan anticipated the construction of new area markets and the refurbish-

55. *Proposta d’assignació de la gestió dels mercats municipals a Mercabarna* (1984), op. cit. Speaking of the competence and responsibility of the town hall and presenting markets as essential instruments of municipal politics, the text insists on the need ‘to practice a truly commercial urbanism.’

56. *Pla Especial d’Equipament Comercial Alimentari de la Ciutat de Barcelona*, Ajuntament de Barcelona, Àrea de Proveïments i Consum, Barcelona, 1990.



Customer areas in local district markets as stated for 1983-1984 in the Special Plan for Food Trade Amenities (PECAB). The three bands mark the origin of 25%, 50% and 75% of each market's customers

ment or renovation of those already existing; as for economic restructuring, it suggested adapting the size of establishments to the consumption capacity of the areas of influence, tending towards the idea of an area market that was not cut off from but actually formed a part of upgraded shopping centres, welcoming local shopkeepers, favouring concentration and the modernisation of the commercial infrastructure by promoting larger stalls and furthering the training of stallholders and shopkeepers, improving public accountability of markets by increasing the levels of information in all strata, completing and extending the supply of area markets and removing obstacles in order to facilitate administrative tasks. Fully aware of the impossibility of dealing with the problem posed by the territorial implantation of food retailers from a strictly economic point of view, it suggested promoting the commercial nucleus, preventing the emergence of forms of trade that tended to replace the objectives of market halls within the distribution network, centralising and promoting complementary retail outlets and providing the surrounding area with appropriate urban planning infrastructures and funding, creating focal points or pedestrian traffic islands around markets,



La Concepció Market, 1888. Architect: Antoni Rovira i Trias. Renovated by Albert Pineda, 1998.
The earliest of renovation projects

car parks, etc., demanding, in effect, that greater attention was paid to these issues by town planners.

In April 1991 the Municipal Institute of Markets of Barcelona was founded (IMMB), an independent commercial and service organisation for managing and administering municipal area markets and special markets in the city of Barcelona. The idea was to make the regulation of market activity and administration more dynamic, providing markets with their own budgetary management systems under the protection of Barcelona Town Hall with the consequent streamlining and increase in their economic capacity.

Since the nineteen nineties, IMMB has worked for the progressive commercial modernisation of markets. Even though its policies were not free from hesitation, a great number of interventions were made in most Barcelona markets (including cash dispensers, customer car parks, home delivery, self-services, etc.) and over recent years market activity has been revitalised. The physical and commercial structures of the markets of Sagrada Família, Clot, La Concepció, Lesseps, Santa Caterina, La Boqueria, and most recently, La Barceloneta have been completely renovated; the markets of La Llibertat, —Sant Antoni and El Ninot are in the process of being renovated, and new markets such as Fort Pienc have been built.

From the early concerns of the nineteen eighties to date, theoretical considerations on markets and practical interventions in them, carried out in the name of economic restructuring, have reflected the changes in urban planning premises and policies. The early nineteen eighties, an age rather hostile to the general town planning scheme, were characterised by interventions able to regenerate the quality of life in neighbourhoods, based on the quality of design, the formal commitment to each project and its scheduling. The idea of PECAB arose when these fragmentary visions were beginning to be articulated into more structural proposals (such as the new areas of centrality), and even though it derived from economic concerns, the market policies developed by IMMB gradually introduced many of these values that emphasised architectural features. The very first interventions already revealed consideration for the quality of the architectural designs, which varied according to each project. They were also accompanied by a process of spectacularisation that is obvious in designs such as those of Santa Caterina and La Barceloneta. The reorientation of markets towards tourism and spectacle went hand in hand with a substantial growth in the number of stalls offering choice produce, increasingly aimed at the customisation and diversification of food consumption. It is clear, however, that the gentrification of Barcelona's markets cannot in itself overcome the dwindling participation of markets in the global sphere of food consumption or, more broadly, in the

actual life of the city. As regards the twentieth century, this participation can only be gauged through approximations, which have confirmed the extraordinary importance of markets between the years 1921 and 1932, when they concentrated of the order of 60 per cent of fruit and vegetable sales, 74 per cent of fish sales and up to 79 per cent of meat sales, grouped in 6,696 stalls. A comparison with sales reports, calculated in 1983 by Mercabarna, reveals that markets still represented a significant quota of sales, which was uncommon in other Western cities at the time. The policies implemented over the past few years have been unable to prevent a sharp drop in sales. In 2006 it was estimated that around 29.3 per cent of shopping was carried out in markets, between 25 per cent and 30 per cent of fruit purchases, 45 per cent of meat purchases and 66 per cent of fish purchases. IMMB has implemented a responsible policy of reducing stalls and extending their average size; at present they amount to 6,708, almost the same number as existed in 1921 although they are now distributed among three times the number of markets. Furthermore, a fourth of the number of stalls is currently vacant. The number of establishments has similarly dropped: from around 7500 that existed in the mid-nineteen seventies to 6700 in 1983, 4223 in 1998 and 3105 in 2006. The picture we see when we take a look at the reality of Barcelona, i.e., the metropolitan city of Barcelona with over four million inhabitants, is probably even more delicate. It is becoming increasingly difficult for market halls to compete with the prices of neighbourhood supermarkets and fruit chains. In spite of the specific weight they still carry, it is not at all easy for them.

Market halls in Barcelona today find themselves at an awkward crossroads, although they still stand as a powerful asset to the city. So we should not make a hasty judgement of results from entrepreneurial criteria but consider instead the positive aspects of this policy in terms of the social structuring of neighbourhoods, the containment of oligopolistic trends and the economic promotion of the city. This comprehensive evaluation of the situation, however, can only be made through comparative approaches.