

# Urban Ruptures as Pre-Existing Potentials of Theatre: The Arnau Project

Kyriaki CRISTOFORIDI

(ORCID: 0000-0002-1503-548X)

PhD candidate - Universitat de Barcelona, Doctoral programme "Society and Culture"  
[sandy\\_cristof@yahoo.com](mailto:sandy_cristof@yahoo.com)

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE: Kyriaki Cristoforidi holds a bachelor's degree in Theatre Studies (University of Athens) and in Philology (University of Crete) and earned a Diploma in Advanced Studies working on tragic theatre (Universitat de Barcelona). She is a professor of history and theatre theory, critic, translator of plays and playwright and has worked in theatre archives and museums. She is currently researching the Arnau Project.

English translation, Neil CHARLTON

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## Abstract

In this article, we will start from the axiom that, as a place of confluence of opposing forces, the city provides the conditions for various ruptures to manifest as urban circumstances and as structuring and destructuring elements, both in human potential and in the geographical and tangible space. We will see how the Arnau Project, the result of citizen initiatives and the support of the municipal authorities, tries to confront these urban pathologies. On the one hand, on an intangible level, in the role of an actor working to come up with viable solutions to the discomfort generated by these ruptures. On the other, as a revitalising agent of an abandoned space: the Teatre Arnau. An additional aim is to redefine this space and re-examine the relationship established between the theatre and its users, to support some unusual theatrical administrative models in the current landscape of cultural management and to foster the creation of new dramaturgical potentials. Our approach, from a theatrological point of view, studies the theatrical phenomenon as a whole in its diversity of aspects that can vary between the architectural, artistic, political, social, cultural, and so on, making use of primary and secondary sources.

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**Keywords:** urban ruptures, Arnau Project, "teatre de barraca", itinerancy, communal goods, civic management

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## Urban Ruptures as Pre-Existing Potentials of Theatre: The Arnau Project

### Ruptures in the Tangible Space

Although today Barcelona is an open city, in constant formation, a metropolis<sup>1</sup> similar to the Greco-Roman metropolises of the past, a global city (Sassen, 1995: 27-43, 2007: 38, 42 and 2010: 4), ruptures in the tangible space continue to emerge, such as the demolition of theatres and other emblematic buildings, as well as social spaces of public access. According to the data compiled by Carme Tierz, tens of theatre auditoria in the Catalan capital were demolished, either by erasing their theatre character once and for all or by giving way to newly-constructed buildings hardly intended for theatre use. In order to broadly outline this panorama we will cite some of them here: the Bataclán music hall and the Teatre Calderón in rambla de Catalunya were demolished and converted into hotels; the Teatro Calderón de la Barca, Teatre Odeon in carrer Hospital, Teatre Nou, Teatro Triunfo, Sala Mozart, Teatro del Olimpo, Coliseu Pompeia, Windsor Palace Teatro Club, Teatro Circo Olympia and Teatro Cómico were demolished; the Teatro Onofri is now the Teatre Condal; the Teatre Apolo and El Molino have a newly-constructed building; the Teatro Español is now a concert and performance hall, also newly-constructed; the Teatro Lírico or Sala Bethoven disappeared from carrer Mallorca; the Edén Concert was demolished and converted into a car park; and the Teatro Talía in avinguda del Paral·lel (previously also called Teatro de las Delicias, Teatro Lírico, Teatro Trianón, Teatro Pompeya, etc.) was demolished (Tierz and Muniesa, 2013: 33-351).

Construction work on the Teatre Arnau began in the 1890s. The Barcelona Contemporary Archive holds a plan o 1884 for the construction of a café

1. According to the Globalization and World Cities Research Network (GaWCos is based in the Department of Geography, Loughborough University, Leicestershire, United Kingdom), in the 2016 ranking Barcelona has the status of Alpha city, <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global\\_city](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global_city)> [Last accessed: 10 November 2018].

In the AT Kearney – 2018 Global Cities Report, Barcelona is ranked in 23rd position worldwide, <<https://bit.ly/2ZtvQtn>> [Last accessed: 10 November 2018].

on the site of the current premises. It was completed in 1903<sup>2</sup>, thus beginning a century of history with a wide-ranging programme, varied times, requests to undertake reforms of different kinds, requests for licences for different uses, complaints, fines and a succession of musical and theatre stars, together with a tradition in the change of names of the venue, from Saló Arnau to Folies Bergère, Teatre Arnau, Cine Arnau and Arnau Paral·lel, which indicate the breadth of uses and expectations of this venue: arcade (Ramon and LaCol, 2017: 8), theatre, cinema, night club, music hall, café-concert-variety theatre, and so on.<sup>3</sup>

Thanks to sources such as the What's On section of the *La Vanguardia*<sup>4</sup> newspaper library, the archives of the Museu de les Arts Escèniques of the Institut del Teatre, and of the Ciutat Vella District Municipal Archive<sup>5</sup> we can assert that the definitive closure of the Teatre Arnau was in 2000 and not in 1994<sup>6</sup> or 2004, as erroneously published. We agree on this with Carme Tierz and Xavier Muniesa (Tierz and Muniesa, 2013: 48), with Antoni Ramon and the cooperative of architects LaCol (Ramon and LaCol, 2017: 16) and, in part, with Enric March.<sup>7</sup> We also believe that the last show at the theatre was the comedy *C/Amargura, 13* by the company Diabètiques Aceleradas with performances from 7 June in the same year.

Thereafter the Teatre Arnau faced two threats of demolition. On 4 July 2004 Sebastián Tobarra published in *El País* the article “El Ayuntamiento se plantea derribar el teatro Arnau para dar un nuevo uso al solar” (The Council considers demolishing the Teatre Arnau to use the site for other purposes) (Ramon, Aloy and Olaizola, 2011: 145-147), in which he explains that, due to the theatre's low profitability and with the restriction on the use of the property for theatre activities, the Council wanted to demolish it to change the use of the land converted into a vacant lot and thereby attract investors. He highlighted that the possible alternatives envisaged by the Council for the building would be allowing its deterioration, expropriating it or demolishing it. A few months later it was reported that the owner of the Teatre Arnau, María del Carmen Ramos,<sup>8</sup> signed a sales agreement with the businessman

2. The theatre appears completed in 1903 in the photograph of the Institut d'Estudis Fotogràfics de Catalunya, Thomas Collection, published in: RAMON, Antoni; LACOL COOPERATIVA D'ARQUITECTES, 2017.

3. Ciutat Vella District Municipal Archive.

4. On 18 December 2003 Santiago Fondevila wrote in *La Vanguardia*: “[...] the director and choreographer Coco Comín, responsible for the magnificent ‘Chicago’ seen at the now defunct Teatre Arnau” in his article “Los musicales vuelven a Barcelona”.

5. In the Ciutat Vella District Municipal Archive we find the official document of Barcelona City Council “Informe de les alegacions al pla especial urbanístic de concreció de la titularitat pública del Teatre Arnau” (with report number: 07PC-1287), signed by the architect Carles Ventura i Cabús and the lawyer Sonia Cobos, with the approval of Isabel Meléndez i Plumed, Director of Technical Services for Urban Planning and Infrastructures, which states that: “As set out in the document of the Special Urban Plan and in the reports contained in the administrative record, the Teatre Arnau has been closed since 2000 [...]”, Ciutat Vella District Municipal Archive, file: 01-2007 L 25 097.

6. Since 1994, when the theatre was provisionally closed, these financial problems prevented the continuation of the project. In a publication of that year we read: “Javier Urbasos, manager of the theatre, considers that the estimated debt amounts to around sixty million pesetas.” In: RAMON, Antoni; ALOY, Guillem; OLAIZOLA, Ekain. *Arxiu d'arquitectura teatral*. Barcelona: Ate 01, 2011, p. 141.

7. In the book *Barcelona, ciutat de vestigis*, Enric March is not clear about the year given that on page 186 we read: “[...] there remains the abandoned building of the Teatre Arnau, [...] which definitively closed in 2004 [...]” and on page 190 we read about the same theatre: “until 9 June 2000, when it was definitively closed.”

8. Probably Francisco Ramos Carrasco's heiress.

Joan Martí Ferré.<sup>9</sup> This project never materialised. In February 2007 the Chinese Christian Evangelical Church in Spain had become the owner of the theatre<sup>10</sup> but on 20 July that same year the Municipal Council Plenary Session definitively approved the “Pla especial urbanístic de concreció de la titularitat pública del Teatre Arnau”.<sup>11</sup> This takes us to the next threat of demolition of the Teatre Arnau. According to the Property Registry, the theatre was acquired by Barcelona City Council in 2011, after its purchase<sup>12</sup> under mayor Jordi Hereu, and has since remained closed and abandoned in an accelerated process of deterioration.

The expropriation plan mentioned by Sebastián Tobarra in 2004 (Tobarra, 2004: 5) as an alternative from the Council became viable three years later, while some years after another alternative solution cited by him emerged: demolition after the failure to get investors to reform the building.<sup>13</sup>

September 2016 saw the implementation of the participatory process for the Teatre Arnau, promoted by the platform *Recuperem el Teatre Arnau* (Let's Recover the Teatre Arnau) and monitored by the Department of Participation and Districts at Barcelona City Council. In the meeting of the group promoting the participatory process on 8 June 2016 the Councillor for Ciutat Vella, Gala Pin, pointed out that there were two options for the future of the Teatre Arnau: either demolish and rebuild it or reform it, and stressed that the government team of the time preferred the second option.<sup>14</sup> In the meeting of this group on 26 October 2016, Enric Torrelles, Head of Projects at the Institut de Cultura de Barcelona, introduced the assessment report on the state of the theatre, undertaken by the architect Andreu Ibáñez Gassiot,<sup>15</sup> and noted that the building was suffering serious structural deterioration, in a state from deficient to very deficient, and added that “[...] the structural problem makes the reform unfeasible and the Teatre Arnau must be rebuilt [...]”<sup>16</sup>

9. TOBARRA, Sebastián. “Un inversor compra el teatro Arnau para levantar un geriátrico”.

10. In the document “Pla especial urbanístic de concreció de la titularitat pública del Teatre Arnau”, record number: 07PC1287, Informe Tècnic del Document d’Aprovació Definitiva, Ciutat Vella District Municipal Archive, file: 01-2007 L 25 097, we read: “It has been possible to verify that on 6 February 2007, the property of the Teatre Arnau was acquired by the Chinese Christian Church in Spain [...]” and also: “The ‘Pla especial urbanístic de concreció de la titularitat pública del Teatre Arnau’ was initially approved by Decree by the Councillor on 8 February 2007. The agreement was published in the BOP no. 39 of 14 February 2007 and in *La Vanguardia* of 15 February 2007.”

11. Information compiled based on the Council’s official document, signed by the lawyer Mila Pérez Esteban on 10 August 2007 and record number 07PC1287, Ciutat Vella District Municipal Archive, file: 01-2007 L 25 097, <[https://www.eldiario.es/catalunya/diariicultura/Teatre-paralelo\\_6\\_388871111.html](https://www.eldiario.es/catalunya/diariicultura/Teatre-paralelo_6_388871111.html)> [Last accessed: 10 November 2018].

12. In “El futuro incierto del Arnau” Oriol Puig mentions that the purchase price of the theatre was two million euros. And Silvia Angulo argues in “Barcelona compra el teatro Arnau” that the purchase of the Teatre Arnau amounted to 2.5 million euros. In “El futuro incierto del Arnau”, by Oriol Puig, 1994 is mentioned as the year when the theatre closed.

Moreover, in “El Ayuntamiento de Barcelona derribará el Teatre Arnau” we read that the purchase price of the theatre is estimated at two and a half million euros: “[...] in 2011 the Council bought the property from the Chinese Christian Evangelical Church for 2.5 million, although the congregation had paid almost half — 1.5 million euros — in 2006.”

(See also <<https://eltranvia48.blogspot.com.es/2014/06/la-discreta-agonia-del-teatro-arnau.html>> [Last accessed: 30 October 2018]).

13. After the purchase of the Teatre Arnau, the Council planned to offer a 50-year concession to the investors to cover the reform expenses of the theatre. See the article “BCN busca un inversor para rehabilitar el teatro Arnau”.

14. Information taken from the proceedings of the meeting of the group promoting the participatory process for the Teatre Arnau, 8 June 2016, drafted by Urbaning.

15. “Informe: avaluació de l’estat de conservació de l’estructura del Teatre Arnau, ubicat a l’Avinguda Paral·lel nº 60 de Barcelona”, Estudi Cuyas 38, S. L., 21 October 2016.

16. Information taken from the proceedings of the meeting of the group promoting the participatory process for the Teatre Arnau, 26 October 2016, drafted by Urbaning.

Thus began a stage marked by intensified efforts to tackle the demolition of the Teatre Arnau.<sup>17</sup> At the same time the Observatori d'Espais Escènics at the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya was commissioned to carry out a study on the importance of the property as heritage, while a budget for its reform was examined.<sup>18</sup> On 26 January 2017 this heritage study was presented in the meeting of the promoting group and the implementation of a public tender to reform the building was announced.<sup>19</sup>

The public tender specifications, similar to the conditions set out by the promoting group, were prepared by Oriol Martori, from Urbaning, with the advice of Antoni Ramon, from the Observatori d'Espais Escènics, Núria Vila from the cooperative LaCol, and Andrés Martínez from the cooperative Raons Públiques as well as the platform Recuperem el Teatre Arnau. On Wednesday 28 February in the foyer of the Sala Barts the winner of the final tender was announced: HARQUITECTES<sup>20</sup> with a proposal “Boca a Boca”, which complied with a set of criteria such as moderate budget, maximum conservation of the current structure and energy and environmental sustainability, among others, and also proposed a symbolic and functional opening of the tangible space towards the city. The work of Street Art Barcelona, which since 2016 has directed the graffiti project “Arnau Gallery” with monthly activity on the wall supporting the theatre façade, would also form part of the project. The Arnau Itinerant promoting group actively participated in three meetings – on 15 January 2018, 18 February 2018 and 29 June 2018 – with the architects Antoni Ramon and Andrés Martínez to ask for the opinions of the group about the reform plan.<sup>21</sup>

In the press today the Teatre Arnau is called the last “teatre de barraca”, a typology that refers to its architectonic form. Enric March mentioned this term in 2015: “[...] the Teatre Arnau is the only trace that remains in El Paral·lel from the early 20th century. It is the last ‘teatre de barraca’”,<sup>22</sup> and in 2017 Antoni Ramon and the architects of the cooperative LaCol also analysed it (Ramon and LaCol, 2017: 37, 68). From then on the term appears more often. In May 2017 Antoni Ramon defended the Arnau as follows:

It had an exposed metal structure [...] In fact it was like a warehouse, because many auditoria in El Paral·lel were created like this to speed up building permission and later, with a line of pillars, they were turned into theatres. [...] the

17. Before this stage, from 2012 the platform Salvem el Teatre Arnau had been working to save the building. (See the article “Arnau Project: Reclaiming the Arnau Theater of Barcelona” by Kyriaki Cristoforidi, 2018, soon to be published.)

18. Information taken from the proceedings of the meeting of the group promoting the participatory process for the Teatre Arnau, aimed at the building and architectonic heritage of the Teatre Arnau, 14 December 2016, drafted by Urbaning.

19. Information taken from the proceedings of the meeting of the group promoting the participatory process for the Teatre Arnau, 26 January 2017, drafted by Urbaning.

20. On 28 February 2018 the Council published a detailed description of the winning project: “Boca a Boca és la proposta guanyadora per a la rehabilitació del Teatre Arnau”.

21. Information taken from the researcher’s field diary.

22. MOLINA, Jordi. “Enric H. March. Salvem l’Arnau: ‘Recuperar el teatro Arnau es una cuestión sentimental, pero sobre todo arquitectónica’”.

poor relation of theatres with proscenium stages: a proscenium with a box behind and in front, with stalls with boxes in a horseshoe shape.<sup>23</sup>

Many of the theatres built in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were rapidly built and their interior imitates the auditoria with a proscenium stage. Their construction plan is reminiscent of the frivolous and very simple structure that was set up as a ballroom in the popular Catalan festivals, called the *envelat* (Albardaner and Llorens, 2013: 22); that is, an awning, a simple, ephemeral and diaphanous construction, with furniture added in the interior to accommodate the audience and meet the needs of a performance space. According to Francesc Albardaner i Llorens (Albardaner i Llorens, 2013: 25), an *envelat* consists of two types of elements: the *gàbia*, the outer structure, and the *adorno*, the furniture and the interior decoration, which imitates the bourgeois halls and theatres. Like the *envelats*, the “teatres de barraca” also have structural and decorative elements, with a simple one-storey structure, both for leisure activities and theatre. It is possible that the main idea for the construction of this type of theatre had arisen from the need for the continuation and development of the *envelats* towards safer and fixed structures, which explains the introduction of the outer columns of the Catalan *envelat* into the structure of the building itself. By analogy, it is worth mentioning that the first building of the Teatro Español mimicked circus tents.

### Ruptures as Determining Factors in the Urban Space

If we look again at the Catalan capital, focusing on its human geography, we realise that it is composed of a very diverse mosaic, with an extensive international population. At present, about 50% of foreigners live in El Raval district.<sup>24</sup> These conditions of coexistence generate linguistic, social and cultural ruptures and of other kinds as a result of population displacements, migrations, generational, linguistic and cultural differences, and so on. For migrants, living in a new place initially entails complete lack of information, a cultural discontinuity, a lack of knowledge of the language, a break with the familiar social organisational models, a general “illiteracy”, time wasted during the adaptation process, an economic and emotional cost of settling in the place and other factors. However, these ruptures are not only seen in foreign populations. Other residents are also exposed to conditions of socio-cultural exclusion and exclusion from education and politics, given that for specific reasons they are part of “urban tribes”, with characteristics and needs different from the majority. We agree with Manuel Delgado in considering it impossible “to encapsulate any individual in a single unit of belonging” (Delgado, 2003: 7). This discontinuity or rupture of the local socio-cultural cohesion of a city requires the redefinition of its identity, taking into account the new emerging reality and new citizen models, without assimilationist

23. PAUNÉ, Meritxell M. “Antoni Ramon: ‘Un buen modelo para el Arnau sería el Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord de París’”.

24. Data taken from the website of the Fundació Tot Raval, <<https://www.totraval.org/ca/qui-som>> [Last accessed: 30 October 2018].

tendencies, and applying the principles of equality and equity within heterogeneity. Roberto Bergalli states: “The societies that have mattered and matter in the history of the modern West have been and are the product of great ethnic and cultural combinations” (Delgado, 2003: 117).

In the current stage of the Arnau Project, the Arnau Itinerant promoting group, the result of the aforementioned participatory process, had its first meeting on 30 March 2017<sup>25</sup> and it is a kind of test bench, a laboratory for the future project based on a collaborative and cooperative approach. Here itinerancy is seen in the provisional state of the project, which at the moment has a certain structural organisation and a relocated activity with no fixed headquarters, since the theatre building is under reconstruction. Usually itinerancy in theatre is understood as the displacement of an itinerant company from one stage to another; that is, itinerancy in the framework of the theatre phenomenon is defined in its spatial dimension. In the Arnau Project and in the field of the performing arts, for 2018, the Col·lectiu de Companyies de Teatre Independent de Catalunya programmed the play *Carrer Hospital amb Sant Jeroni* by the Catalan playwright Jordi Prat i Coll with a subsidy from the Institut de Cultura de Barcelona. For this staging, an itinerant solution was chosen within the urban space adjacent to the Teatre Arnau; the action and the audience moved through different spaces in El Raval district. Here itinerancy is also treated as a spatial condition.

However, in the Arnau Project itinerancy as an essential element of this new network of citizenship could be considered in terms of dramaturgy, which is a way of thinking, writing and making theatre based on diverse experiences taking place in a shared urban territory. Here the dramatic raw materials would be the trajectories and routes, the personal and collective itineraries, extracted from the past or projected onto the present and future of the citizens. This itinerant theatre, as a result of a process of approaching, examining and accepting diversity in the human geography of the city, meets the demands of analysing the dialectical relationship between what is frivolous and what is stable. The aim is to look at this continuous deconstruction and reconstruction through a procedure of self-awareness and recognition of the space occupied by each group or individual, which alters the previous social cohesion. Therefore, itinerant theatre here is a study of a suspended reality and in conditions of constant change, while itinerancy is considered as a structural element of the social fabric of the city. In this context, the panorama of a variegated citizenry is perceived as pre-existing scenographies, without nothing of the ethno-theatrical, folkloric or local customs but as an open and creative field in the area of serious theatre or performative theatre.

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25. Information taken from the proceedings of the meeting of the Arnau Itinerant promoting group, 30 March 2017, Barcelona City Council, Department of Active Democracy and Decentralisation.

## Ruptures as Corporeal Experiences

We must also mention the ruptures experienced by the human body itself, which, thanks to its arrangement, intentionality and activity, manages to achieve a political and social dimension. A political body, not in the sense that Hobbes gives to this binomial<sup>26</sup> but as a political space in itself, a place where forces of repression and resistance are exercised, decisions are taken, certain individual or collective modes of action are chosen, relations with the social environment are built, and so on. The human body is a space of fermentation of social circumstances and events that give rise to the undertaking of a political action, understood as a constant occupation of communal goods and as an activity that emerges among people as they relate to each other (Arendt, 1997: 45-99). Similarly, the body empowers the human as an individual, as a unit within a community, even when the eagerness for a collective identity is hypertrophied. Thus the face-to-face way of promoting human relations versus socialisation and politicisation through a body built in the networks and digital spaces is also advocated. The human body as a set of mental and physical qualities is presented as a tool to persuade and claim. It is a territory of political experience within an organised society whose communal spaces are built through active and face-to-face participation. For Georgios Alexias, the subject seen as a body is a dynamic situation that always extends its limits of power rather than a static reality as traditionally happened with the unambiguous definition of the body as a biological, static and uniform construction (Alexias, 2003: 348). According to the same thinker, we have moved from being aware of our corporeality through the approaches of positive sciences to the biological body to realising that we have a body as a result of our engagement in social circumstances and struggles (Alexias, 2003: 349).

The Arnau Project would be based on the premise that one of the main potentials of the theatre phenomenon is the strength to summon people. The audience goes to the theatre to witness the show while sharing the same main objective: to see the play. And by meeting in the same space they are exposed as a group to the same stimuli, becoming a collective recipient, and therefore automatically forming a community. The theatre architecture itself in all its formats and eras designs buildings predestined to receive from a few tens to thousands of people. Nowadays the newly-built theatres tend to override the distinction between boxes and stalls, thus prioritising the distribution of seats equally and fairly. Historically and traditionally we have examples of very unsettled and critical theatre audiences, like those of the amphitheatres of classical Greece, the Elizabethan theatres of England, the case of Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Opressed in Brazil, Erwin Piscator's in Germany in the 1920s, and others, that show that the theatre acts as a space for reflection where the scenic, dramatic and representative action generates and promotes the factual and collective action of the audience. This dimension of the theatre phenomenon that requires the presence of physical

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26. See FERNÁNDEZ RAMOS, José Carlos. *Sociología del Cuerpo Físico y del Cuerpo Político*.



bodies (political bodies) to materialise, and that resembles the procedures of a direct democracy, does not allow us to forget that the theatre space, apart from being a place of entertainment and performance, is also a political space.

Since the beginning of the planning of this project, the platform *Recuperem el Teatre Arnau* has identified the intention to place it in the field of the social economy and the sharing economy, with a non-profit and communal goods character, following the logic of the transformative economies with new management models, democratic governance understood as internal and participatory democracy, with horizontal, equitable and non-hierarchical management schemes, shared leadership, rotation of organizational posts, environmental responsibility, innovative consumption relations, transparency and free access to the project's information binding, and so on.

It is true that, as the *Teatre Arnau* is a public facility, it would be necessary to strike a balance between a level of self-management and the risks generated by the dominant socioeconomic structure, avoiding paternalistic and clientelistic relations and the possible dependence on the public administration. Social responsibility, along with the intention of promoting community articulation in the neighbourhoods surrounding the theatre with active and face-to-face participation in its management, makes us think that the community economy models meet the aspirations, since they are "collective forms of resolving needs" (Suriñach, 2016: 17), in which paid and volunteering work occupy comparable spaces. The concept of citizen or civic management, which combines the participation of authorities and public administrations with grassroots initiatives, is quite in keeping with the aims of this project and allows for direct participation in the processes related to running a community centre.

It is also a project that works for the promotion of grassroots culture, understood as any artistic or cultural activity, and not only as a popular or folk culture, which, to be programmed, does not go through the administrative filters of large cultural institutions but is rather energised, programmed and consumed by the cultural agents themselves; that is, both programmers and makers. Enric March<sup>27</sup> notes in relation to this:

The institutions should take responsibility for their competences (maintaining the spaces and funds), but the programmes should be agreed with the participation of the residents or the organisations that represent them. [...] If a theatre group wants to perform in the *Teatre Arnau*, the responsibility must exclusively fall on that theatre group.

It is true that many questions about the operation of the future socio-cultural facility remain unresolved, such as meeting salary expectations in combination with the voluntary and unpaid involvement of the project members. In this regard, other compensation logics could be considered, such as time and service banks, exchange networks, shared care of people, and more.

27. MOLINA, Jordi. Enric H. March. *Salvem l'Arnau*: "Recuperar el teatro Arnau es una cuestión sentimental, pero sobre todo arquitectónica".

In contrast to the Arnau Project, there were more proposals to reopen the theatre, apart from the attempt to occupy it on 7 April 2006 when members of the Cultura Lliure group, artists of La Makabra squat and circus school that had closed down by the police, members of the social centre and squat Miles de Vivendas in La Barceloneta and hundreds of artists and activists theatrically and enthusiastically entered the abandoned Teatre Arnau on avinguda del Paral·lel. The object was to create a self-managed arts and community space “liberated for culture”<sup>28</sup>, and with this purpose they renamed the Teatre Arnau as Arnau Paral·lel.<sup>29</sup> On the one hand, there was the proposal of FQF Produccions in 2000 to create a centre for dance and theatre centre, multimedia arts, cinema, etc., which placed special emphasis on the para-theatrical arts, while seeking to recover the Teatre Arnau’s heyday, and at the same time provide a ballroom and a training space.<sup>30</sup> It was a business and profit-making proposal, devoid of community character, with a structure based on administrative and managing departments. On the other hand, in 2008, there was a proposal to restore the Teatre Arnau with private funds and open it as a cabaret<sup>31</sup> following the pattern of the cabaret El Plata in Saragossa and the erotic prototypes with shows featuring quick-change artistes and a somewhat sordid atmosphere, elements that were reminiscent of the different stages of the history of the Teatre Arnau. This proposal would have an artistic director, possibly Bigas Luna. Similarly, the proposal to the promoting group of the participatory project made in 2016 by Deputy Mayor Jaume Collboni, who devised the conversion of the Teatre Arnau into a space for the presentation of end-of-year theatre projects for the neighbourhood’s educational centres and into a children’s theatre, also sought to follow pyramidal administrative models.<sup>32</sup>

## Conclusions

It is clear that the theatre phenomenon develops embracing a wide range of contents beyond the contemplation and study of theatre activity. The Arnau Project emerged as a need to identify and meet the demands of residents in the city of Barcelona. These included the imperative of recovering a building that combines architectonic heritage value<sup>33</sup> with the intangible value it has in the collective historical memory of the residents of Barcelona. Thanks to the neighbourhood and theatre sector’s struggle, together with the authorities’ interest, we can reassert that social mobilisations and struggles against ruptures in the tangible urban space are capable of enabling disused spaces under severe threats of disappearing and making them available for communal use.

28. “Cultura lliure”. *Masala*, no. 30, June-July 2006, p. 15.

29. BOET, Isis et al. “Un grupo de jóvenes ocupa el teatro Arnau para celebrar cinco días de fiesta”.

30. Ciutat Vella District Municipal Archive, 01-82A330591, C-635.

31. SAVALL SARAGOSSA, Cristina. “Bigas Luna vol portar el cabaret d’El Plata al teatre Arnau”.

32. “Collboni i l’Arnau”. *La Veu del Carrer*, no. 141, October 2016, p. 11.

33. The Teatre Arnau “has a C protection level in the architectonic heritage catalogue, which would mean maintaining the façades, interior spaces and ornamental elements [...]”. In: RAMON, Antoni et al. *Arxiu d’arquitectura teatral*.

This theatre project tends to research and reflect on the social fabric of the city of Barcelona itself, whose diversity creates a colourful tapestry, rich in influences and knowledge. The inclusive nature of the project allows the participation of all those interested in both the creative artistic processes and in the organisation and operation of the space and activities programmed. It facilitates the exchange, fusion and development of the different influences and favours creation of new dramatic languages, which have emerged thanks to the proximity of culturally liminal situations. In addition, people here see themselves as “embodied social subjects” (Alexias, 2003: 348), as actors that interrelate directly with the institutional structures, while maintaining a personal identity within the collective identities they foster with their participation.

In Barcelona, the phenomena of touristification, commercialisation of relations and commodification of public spaces are increasing, especially in the city centre, so that residents are in danger of being deprived of the experience of participating in the creation of their own city. The Arnau Project is aimed at the articulation of a shared experience and has social transformation objectives. It creates the conditions for the project to become a driver of innovative cultural and administrative policies that seek to ensure communal gain. Therefore, all work within the framework of this project can be considered as an indirect remuneration for citizens.<sup>34</sup> In the same way that the building considered as the last “teatre de barraca” in Barcelona has taken an important heritage value, along with its intangible historical value, the Arnau Project – given the community work it has done, the expectations for the performing arts it opens and thanks to the preservation and research in the field of historical memory – deserves to be seen as a communal good<sup>35</sup> and therefore to be included among the communal goods of Barcelona that as such must be supported and protected.



34. According to the analysis of the term in FERNÁNDEZ, Anna et al. *L'economia social i solidària a Barcelona*, “by asking for old infrastructures to be converted into social spaces, the neighbourhoods brought about the implementation of an ‘indirect salary’, advancing in the democratisation of urban resources and the right to the city.”

35. FERNÁNDEZ, Anna et al. *L'economia social i solidària a Barcelona*. The section dealing with citizen and community management of public facilities specifies that “in recent years, this framework had been expanded by the community management, based on a process of permanent social mobilisation, resulting from the exercise of re-appropriation and self-management of public facilities and services understood as communal goods, ensuring universal accessibility and framed within the social and sharing economy paradigm.”

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