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BARCELONA'S URBAN EVOLUTION AND THE GROWTH OF ITS MARKET NETWORK

Throughout history, both here and around the world, markets have played an important role in the life of towns and cities, being the trading sites for food and other types of products. While certain craftspeople tended to concentrate in their own areas, farmers, stockbreeders and other traders would come together in more specific locations: the markets.

For centuries, people had to pay a tax to bring goods in through Barcelona's walls and this led to markets being set up outside the confines of the city. In Roman Barcino, for example, there was a market on the site of the current Plaça de l'Àngel, just in front of one of the gates in the wall. Centuries later, several stalls were also set up on the Boqueria plain, just outside the first medieval wall that ran parallel to the Ramblas

The first markets were therefore uncovered, located on open ground or in squares (hence, in Catalan, the word *plaça* also refers to a market) and set up and dismantled every day. However, as the sites became established, more permanent structures were built to shelter and protect them from the wind and sun. In fact, covered markets appeared as early as the Middle Ages in the Mediterranean region, although they didn't become widespread until the 19th century.

The history of Barcelona's current network of municipal markets dates back to the 1840s when, after the riots in 1835 and the ecclesiastical confiscations of Mendizábal (1836), the markets of Sant Josep (La Boqueria, 1840) and Santa Caterina (1848) were opened on the former site of two monasteries.

A few years later, in 1859, Ildefons Cerdà's city expansion project was approved and its development led to the construction of the first large metal structure markets: El Born (1876), Sant Antoni (1882) and La Concepció (1888). At the same time, several municipalities on the plain of Barcelona, which had not yet been incorporated within the city's municipal boundaries, also built their own markets. Sants (Hostafrancs and Nou), Sant Gervasi (Galvany), Gràcia (Llibertat and Abaceria), Sant Martí de Provençals (Clot and Poblenou) and the Barceloneta district all built their own markets between the 1880s and the end of the 19th century. This first phase in the construction of large markets came to an end at the beginning of the 20th century with the opening of the Sarrià, Sant Andreu and Ninot markets. Most of these markets, built using slender structures of metal and glass, are very large, helping to monumentalise their districts.



## THE ARCHITECTURE OF MARKETS

The architectural diversity of Barcelona's markets reflects the city's history and developments in construction techniques: from the elegant iron architectures of historic markets to the reinforced concrete structures so characteristic of the local markets built in the 1960s and 1970s.

#### **First markets** [mid-19th century]

HE MARKETS

The first two municipal markets in Barcelona, Sant Josep - La Bogueria and Santa Caterina, have features that set them apart from all later designs. The Boqueria's neoclassical square stands out, surrounded by large Ionic columns on three sides. whereas Santa Caterina has a white façade with a succession of entrance arches and a continuous balustrade at the top.

#### Iron and masonry markets [late 19th - early 20th century]

The approval and implementation of Ildefons Cerdà's urban expansion plan resulted in a network of large covered markets being created

The first were built during the last quarter of the 19th century and early 20th under the influence of iron architecture from England and France. All of them have slender wrought iron structures, wide and spacious interiors, almost always pantile roofs and facades where the stone and brick walls, often finely worked, are combined with windows covered by wooden slats to block out a lot of light but let the air through

#### **Concrete markets** [mid-20th century]

After a few decades in which almost no new markets were opened, there was a sudden boom in the network in the middle of Franco's dictatorship.

Unlike the previous markets, these were smaller in size and, instead of metal, they used the most characteristic building material of the 20th century, namely reinforced concrete. These tend to be less interesting from an architectural point of view but, in some cases, are notable for the texture of the concrete facades or the skylights in the roofs.

#### Markets for various structures and major refurbishments [beginning of the 21st century]

The policy to modernise and update Barcelona's municipal markets is based on some common general objectives. However, each market requires particular actions appropriate to the characteristics of the building and location, resulting in substantial differences between each of the projects. In some cases the work has been more superficial, focusing on maintenance and updates, while much more important work has been carried out on other markets. such as the case of Sant Antoni. There are also some instances where the market has remained on the same site but a completely new construction has been built

## **NON-FOOD MARKETS**

The first references to the Encants market date back to the 14th century but it wasn't until 1928 that this was located to the north of the Plaça de les Glòries Catalanes. Here it remained as an open-air antiques market for almost a hundred years but became so popular, receiving around 100,000 visitors a week, it eventually turned into a single market for both recycling and selling second-hand goods.

In 2013 the new market building was inaugurated on the south side of the square. The aim of this project was to maintain the feeling of outdoor shopping and therefore includes a large open space, albeit protected by a single roof. Underneath, the market stalls are arranged around gently sloping platforms that intertwine and create a large central space where an auction is held first thing in the morning. The most special feature, however, is the roof. Supported at a height of 25m by slender columns, its underside acts as a mirror and reflects the light and landscape of the surroundings, producing a curious reflective effect of both the interior and exterior of the market.

The project for the new Encants market forms part of the general transformation of the Plaça de les Glòries, a square that Ildefons Cerdà had proposed as the new centre of the metropolis, since it's the point where the three main avenues coincide: Diagonal, Meridiana and Gran Via

Barcelona, however, has other specialised markets such as the Dominical and the Encants markets in Sant Antoni which, after moving from site to site throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, finally settled in their present location in 1936

The Encants de Sant Antoni mainly offers clothing and accessories while the Dominical or Sunday market, visited every week by more than 20,000 people, specialises in antique and second-hand books, magazines, comics, postcards, stickers, stamps and multimedia products.

The reform of the Sant Antoni market building and the creation of the "superilla" or super-block around it led to the stalls and areas designated for these two markets being rearranged.

Finally, the flower stalls on the Rambles are also considered to be a specialised outdoor market, although they depend on the Boqueria Market. There is evidence that flower sellers were already in place along the Rambla in the 13th century but it's not until the middle of the 19th century that the first stalls were set up. Originally these simply had trestles and wooden planks, which were dismantled and stored each night in nearby premises. In the 1960s, fixed posts were installed, these being completely modernised in the 1990s. Nowadays there are seventeen stalls left but they had totalled more than thirty.



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Several European cities also developed their own network of municipal markets during the same period as Barcelona but, in the vast majority of cases, before the middle of the 20th century they had begun to decline and the old structures were demolished or reconverted to accommodate new uses. Barcelona, on the other hand, not only kept its municipal markets open but doubled their number during Franco's regime. Between the 1950s and 1970s, the massive influx of immigrants from all over Spain increased the city's population by around 500,000 to 1,750,000 inhabitants. Such strong demographic growth led to the rapid construction of new residential neighbourhoods, many of which lacked basic services and public facilities but were supplied by new markets, generally much more modest than the older ones.

In spite of this second phase of construction, markets have gradually lost their appeal since the 1970s. Failure to maintain the infrastructures or renew policies, as well as the emergence of several supermarket and hypermarket chains are driving away customers. On the other hand, the increasing number of women going out to work and widespread use of refrigerators mean that, for many families, shopping in a market is no longer a daily activity.

With the restoration of democracy, Barcelona's council had to make some important decisions regarding its policy for municipal trade. It could have followed the route taken by other cities, assuming that the decline in markets was due to the system being obsolete, gradually reducing the number of markets in the city. However, Barcelona decided to do the opposite. In 1986, the Special Plan for Commercial Food Facilities (PECAB) was drawn up and markets began to be valued not only for commercial reasons but also because of the human relations they promoted, the structure they provided for the area, the business life they encouraged and the heritage of the buildings. In addition, the small businesses in markets create more and higher quality employment than large supermarkets (self-employed vs employees).

Consequently, firmly convinced that such qualities must be preserved and promoted, in 1991 Barcelona's council set up the Municipal Markets Institute of Barcelona (IMMB) to reclaim markets and convert them into modern commercial facilities. In accordance with these aims, over the past few decades more than half the markets have been completely renovated, normally involving the remodelling of the original structure, the modernisation of infrastructures (stalls and logistics services) and the promotion of new services such as supermarkets, online shopping, home delivery, customer parking, Wi-Fi, etc. In addition to this regeneration policy, which is still being implemented with new projects underway, in recent years a new market has also been opened (Fort Pienc, in 2003) while two have been closed (first Carme market, located in the lower part of the Raval district, in 2006, and then Vallvidrera market, in 2009).

However, the challenge remains of how to adapt to the times and attract customers while also remaining faithful to what they are: food markets. This is precisely the aim of the 2015-2025 Strategic Plan, designed to renew the market model so that it can adapt to the economic, social and technological changes taking place.



## STATISTICS





## MERCABARNA

In Barcelona and most other cities, wholesale markets used to be located in the centre. In Barcelona's case, the central fruit and vegetable market was at the Born Market (now converted into inaugurated in 2013), the central fish market was located in Carrer Wellington, next to the Ciutadella park (demolished in 1992), the slaughterhouse and meat market used to occupy the location of the current Joan Miró Park (designed by Beth Galí and inaugurated in 1983) and the flower market was in the Palau de l'Agricultura, created for the 1929 Universal Exhibition (a building that currently houses Montjuïc's City of Theatre, with Teatre Lliure and the "Mercat de les Flors" Dance Centre).

However, as the city grew, the different wholesale markets began to have problems with capacity, logistics and transport. To ensure the city's supply chain of fresh food operated efficiently and responsibly, Mercabarna was created in 1967, Barcelona's large central wholesale market located in Zona Franca, and the different central markets gradually moved here.

The first market was set up in 1971, namely the central fruit and vegetable market, followed by the central slaughterhouse and meat market (1979), the central fish market (1983) and the central flower market (1984). During a Culture and Memory Centre based on a the 1980s, the Multipurpose Pavilion was project by Enric Sòria and Rafael Cáceres, also built, an enclosure that groups together companies dedicated to the wholesale marketing of processed and semi-finished products, and the entire Complementary Activities Zone (ZAC) was also developed, with hundreds of companies specialising in the logistics, handling, conservation, packaging, supply and distribution of food.

> Today Mercabarna is a large food city covering over 90 hectares that operates 24 hours a day with the aim of ensuring the supply of fresh food to almost 10 million citizens. Every day 23,000 people and 14,000 vehicles visit the site and its annual turnover totals 28 million euros. These dimensions and the trend towards an increasingly globalised world necessarily condition food production in Catalonia and its type of agriculture. Currently, 60% of the food we consume is imported and the great challenge for the future will be to implement agrifood policies that promote the production, distribution and consumption of organic, seasonal and local food. In other words, the aim should be for food sovereignty by reinforcing Mercabarna's role in favour of the local social and economic fabric.

## Ciutat Vella

La Boqueria and Santa Caterina were the first two open markets in Barcelona before the city wall was demolished and the Eixample urban expansion was planned.

Years later, the Born market was the first great example of iron architecture in Barcelona. Between 1921 and 1971 it served as the city's wholesale fruit and vegetable market but this was later transferred to the new Mercabarna. Today the Born market is a centre for culture and memory where you can see the remains of the medieval city that was razed to the ground in the early 18th century after Catalonia's defeat in the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714).

SANTA CATERINA

Tagliabue). 2005

Av. Francesc Cambó, 16

(Enric Miralles + Benedetta

| BOQUERIA |  |
|----------|--|
|----------|--|

#### La Rambla, 89

Original project: Original project: Josep Mas i Vilà / Antoni Josep Mas i Vilà; de Falguera. 1840 / 1914 Josep Buxareu. 1848 Remodelling: : EMBT **Remodelling:** 

Lluís Clotet + Ignacio Paricio. 2001



## Eixample

Ildefons Cerdà's project for the Eixample district in **NINOT** Barcelona (1859) proposed that each group of 10x10 blocks would have a market and other public facilities in the centre. This was never implemented in its entirety but, nevertheless, the district has five evenly distributed markets ranging from the largest in the city, Sant Antoni, to the most recent and also one of the smallest, Fort Pienc. In addition, four of these markets - Sant Antoni, Concepció, Sagrada Família and Fort Pienc - are in blocks (or super-blocks) with a wide variety of public facilities that act as a focal point for a rich social life.

| SANT ANTONI   | CONCEPCIÓ  |
|---|--|
| Comte Borrell, 1  | Aragó, 311   |
| <b>Original project:</b> Antoni<br>Rovira i Trias. 1882 | <b>Original project:</b> Antoni<br>Rovira i Trias. 1888  |
| <b>Remodelling:</b><br>Ravetllat-Ribas. 2018            | <b>Remodelling:</b> Albert<br>de Pineda i Álvarez. 1998  |
|   | THE PARTY OF THE P |



#### BORN

Pl. Comercial, 12 Original project: Josep Fontserè i Mestre; Josep Maria Cornet i Mas.

#### Remodelling: Enric Sòria. 2013

1876



BARCELONETA

Original project: Antoni

Josep Miàs. 2007





Rovira i Trias. 1884 Remodelling:



Mallorca, 133-157

Open-air market: 1894

Original project: Antoni de Falguer Joaquim Vilaseca. 1933 Remodelling: MAP Arguitectes (Josep Lluís Mateo). 2015



SAGRADA FAMÍLIA

Padilla, 255 Original project: 1944 New building: 1993

### FORT PIENC

Pl. del Fort Pienc, 3 Original project: Josep Llinàs. 2003

## **Old towns**

Most of the old towns and villages on the plain of Barcelona didn't join the city's municipal area until 1897 (Horta joined in 1904 and Sarrià in 1921). But most of them had already built their own municipal markets while they were still independent, following the style of the time based on slender iron structures and spacious interiors.

More markets were built later on in the 20th century as these districts developed, in order to serve the new residential areas.

Baptista Subirana. 1958

Pl. Joaquim Folguera, 6

Original project: 1968

Consultors Associats.

Original project: Miquel

Remodelling: Valeri

SANT GERVASI

2002

1888

**ABACERIA** 

1892

Original project:

Being remodelled

GRÀCIA

LLIBERTAT

Pl. Llibertat, 27

Pasqual i Tintorer,

Remodelling: PB2

Francesc Berenguer i

Mestres (decoration).

Josep Llobet i Bach. 2009

Travessera de Gràcia, 186

Joan Torras Guardiola.

| SANTS   | SANT GERVASI   |
|---|--|
| HOSTAFRANCS   | GALVANY  |
| Creu Coberta, 93  | Santaló, 65  |
| <b>Original project:</b> Antoni<br>Rovira i Trias. 1888     | <b>Original project:</b> Pere<br>Falqués i Urpí. 1868-1927 |
| <b>Remodelling:</b> Valeri<br>Consultors Associats.<br>2003 | TRES TORRES  |
|   | Vergós, 2  |
|   | Original project: Joan                                     |

## SANTS

Sant Jordi, 6 Original project: Pere

Falqués i Urpí. 1892-1913 Remodelling: PB2 Josep Llobet i Bach. 2014



SARRIÀ SARRIÀ

Pg. Reina Elisenda de Montcada, 8 Original project: Marcel·lià Coquillat;

Remodelling: G56. 2007



Non-food markets

In addition to its food markets, Barcelona also has FLORS DE LA RAMBLA several non-food markets specialising in certain products: the Encants (Fira de Bellcaire) is the large antique and second-hand market; the Encants de

**ESTRELLA** 

Av. Pi i Margall, 73 Original project: 1957 LESSEPS

Verdi, 200 Original project: 1974

Remodelling: 1999

HORTA HORTA Tajo, 75 Original project: Ramon Térmens i Mauri. 1951 Pending remodelling

#### **SANT ANDREU**

SANT ANDREU Pl. Mercadal, 41 Original project: Jacint Boada i Batllori. 1914 Pending new building



SANT MARTÍ **DE PROVENCALS** 

CLOT Pl. del Mercat, 26 Original project:

Pere Falqués i Urpí. 1889 Remodelling: 1995

POBLENOU Pl. de la Unió, 25

Original project: Pere Falqués i Urpí. 1889 Remodelling: G56. 2005



Rambla de les Flors

## New districts

Between the 1950s and 1970s Barcelona grew rapidly due to immigration from all over Spain. The need to supply this new population led to the second major construction phase for the city's markets and more than twenty were opened. Almost all are made from reinforced concrete and have more modest dimensions (less height and surface area and not so many stalls) than the large markets at the end of the 19th century. Some of them have been recently remodelled or even rebuilt.

**GUINEUETA** 

MERCÈ

Original project:

Estudi AGR (Josep

Josep Ribas). 1965

Remodelling: Daniel

Mòdol i Deltell. 2013

Pg. Valldaura, 186-190

Anglada, Daniel Gelabert,



Original project: 1973 New market [different location]: Albert de Pineda. 2003

LES CORTS Travessera de les Corts,

215 Original project: 1961

Remodelling: G56. 2008 VALL D'HEBRON -TEIXONERA

Pg. de la Vall d'Hebron, 130-134

Original project: 1969 **Remodelling:** BAAS-Jordi Badia. 2019

**EL CARMEL** 

Llobregós, 149 Original project: 1969 Being partially remodelled

NÚRIA Av. Rasos de Peguera, 186

Original project: Fernando Bendala and Samuel Mañá. 1966 Currently closed

#### **CIUTAT MERIDIANA**

Costabona, 4-6 Original project: 1968

**Remodelling:** Valeri Consultors Associats. 2001

- CANYELLES Antonio Machado, 10
- Original project: Albert de Pablo. 1987

#### DOMINICAL DE **SANT ANTONI**

Comte Borrell, 1

ENCANTS. **FIRA DE BELLCAIRE** 

Castillejos, 158+



#### Teodor Llorente, 10

Original project: Bonaventura Bassegoda i Musté. 1954 Remodelling and new building: Lluís Cantallops, Albert Valero, Marta Bayona, Marta Vicente. 2014



FELIP II Felip II, 118

Original project: Estudi AGR (Josep Anglada, Daniel Gelabert, Josep Ribas). 1966 Remodelling: Valeri Consultors Associats. 2002

#### **BON PASTOR**

PROVENÇALS

Menorca, 19

Sant Adrià, 168 Pg. Fabra i Puig, 270-272 Original project: Original project:

Enric Piqué Marco, Antoni Estudi AGR (Josep Canyelles i Torrent. 1960 Anglada, Daniel Gelabert, New building: Josep Ribas). 1961 AA25 Arquitectura &



MONTSERRAT

Via Favència, 241

Original project:

Estudi AGR (Josep

Josep Ribas). 1960

TRINITAT

Pedrosa, 21

**Remodelling:** 

Pending new building

Original project: 1977

JG Asociados. 2001

Original project: 1974 **Remodelling:** G56 Mur-Garganté Arquitectes Associats. 2013

SANT MARTÍ

Puigcerdà, 206 Original project: 1966 **Remodelling:** Anglada, Daniel Gelabert, Comas-Pont Arquitectes.

Jaume Huguet, 38

Being partially

remodelled

Original project: 1968

2014

BESÒS

