

29

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Foreword

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This time a little over two and a half years ago, the central Spanish government was declaring a state of alert and a total lockdown for the whole population. We spent almost three months cooped up at home, before experiencing considerable restrictions on mobility, capacity in public places, and interpersonal contact. One of the most significant things the pandemic has taught us is to calculate, and not just in terms of time ('years' of pandemic, 'months' of lockdown, 'days' of quarantine), which is always a relative, experience-based dimension, but also in the categorical magnitude of absolute quantities: 13 million cases, almost 130,000 deaths, 4 million people unemployed, and so on. The fact that this is one of the main lessons we have learnt from the pandemic is an indication of its impact on the macroeconomic, labour, social, psychological, cultural, and of course, personal spheres.

On cities and the socio-economic and socio-political ecosystems they shape, the pandemic has had enormous repercussions, though they are hard to quantify in precise terms. Is there such a thing as a **post-pandemic Barcelona?** Cities and urban environments have been at the epicentre of tension, problems, and disruption caused by Covid-19, and they are the spaces where these issues have been the most visible. But they have also become forced laboratories for innovation, for strengthening and creating new policies and citizens' initiatives, which have had to be implemented quickly to mitigate the most immediate consequences of the pandemic and the lockdown.

For that reason, issue 29 of *Barcelona Societat. A journal on social knowledge and analysis* aims to look back and analyse what has happened in the last two and a half years, who the protagonists of this period have been, what tasks they have faced, and how they have approached them. First, we look at how municipal social services – undoubtedly one of the key players in this pandemic – were impacted and their response. Specifically, the first article in this issue offers a retrospective on how the city's most vulnerable groups were assisted and asks what municipal social services have learnt from the pandemic. The article argues that these lessons must prepare us and bolster our resilience for future crises.

In a similar vein, the second article in this issue of *Barcelona Societat* deals with the impacts of the pandemic on health in the city and how the Administration has responded. According to the text, the pandemic has highlighted the need to tackle health from an intersectoral perspective that, beyond mortality figures, also considers social inequalities and the various impacts on the economy, mental health, and access to healthcare, among other areas. A proper assessment of how this comprehensive approach to health has been deployed will help us to be better prepared for potential future emergencies.

Though health is the sphere on which the pandemic has had the clearest impact, other sectors have been turned upside down, too: take the labour market for people with disabilities, for example. Predictably, the pandemic has brought about an unprecedented jump in unemployment among this group, a general fall in numbers being hired, and important changes to the proportion of workers with a contract, in both the protected and the ordinary labour markets. The third article in this issue describes these changes and explains how the support network for people with disabilities in Barcelona has intervened to counteract these negative effects and offer alternatives to employment through the ordinary labour market. The article ends by recommending a consolidation of the measures developed during the pandemic so that the city can offer employment alternatives to people with disabilities.

In the fourth article, the spotlight is shone on another of the groups most affected by the pandemic: children and teenagers. By analysing the most noteworthy aspects of the report 'Key data on childhood and adolescence in Barcelona', such as the demographic and educational situation, uses of time, health, poverty, protection, and violence, the article seeks to answer a question that is key for the present and future of urban society: are the changes to children's and teenagers' lives temporary and a mere product of the exceptional context created by the pandemic? Or should we see them as changes that are becoming consolidated that will characterise or structure future generations?

Other aspects of the impact of Covid-19 are not as measurable or quantifiable. The pandemic has also had a serious influence on relationships and communities, especially in terms of cultural management, promotion, and consumption. With this in mind, the fifth article examines the participatory nature of community cultural management spaces and their key role as frameworks for promoting a kind of governance of local ecosystems that favours economic democratisation, community resilience, and ecosocial education. Based on contributions from various debate groups, the article describes the impacts of Covid-19 on this community ecosystem, from the most immediate effects – like spaces closing and cultural projects being put on hold – to more long-term consequences on self-organisation and governance dynamics in these spaces, like the proposals linked to the Network of Community Spaces (XEC, by its initials in Catalan).

Our sixth article investigates one of the other dimensions most affected by the pandemic: mobility, travel, residential ties, and housing. Is it true, like many say, that part of the urban population chose to move to towns and villages outside the big cities or to second homes? The article analyses these mobility patterns, studying cities like Madrid, São Paulo, Mexico City, Buenos Aires, and Barcelona, and reveals the importance of certain factors, like collective action and community initiatives to ensure well-being and provide mutual support, in these residential relocation processes. In particular, the article asks to what extent the pandemic alone can explain changes in residential and urban mobility trends, without other processes that were developing long before Covid-19 (financialisation, gentrification) being taken into account.

Finally, in the seventh article, the author explores the different theoretical, regulatory, and practical implications of the discrimination experienced by various groups in the urban space and the relationship between the right to non-discrimination and local policies. The focus is on analysing the roles played by municipal governments and citizens themselves in the quest to achieve truly inclusive urban spaces. Discrimination, the article explains, is a multifaceted concept that manifests itself in multiple ways in areas like gender, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, religion, migration status, socio-economic situation, age, and state of health. It is a practice led by various agents and institutions and is present in many spaces, though it can also take on a systemic or structural form. The article scrutinises various standpoints and occurrences relating to the right to the city and the principle of non-discrimination included in regulations and international case law and evaluates how these concepts can be applied on a municipal level through local governments. To achieve this goal, the text looks at some examples of municipal initiatives and provides recommendations based on accumulated experience in local spheres and spaces.

It is impossible to provide an exhaustive analysis of all the repercussions of Covid-19 on the city through seven articles. Nonetheless, these contributions do offer useful data and reflections on some of the spaces, groups, areas, and policies that have been most affected. Accurately predicting the long-term consequences of the pandemic on the world and the city is a difficult task. The supposedly temporary impacts on labour markets and the economy, cultural production and consumption, relationships with and approaches to gender, social policies, and the role of municipal governments, to cite just a few examples, have now become structural and even permanent in many instances. The Covid-19 virus may have been fleeting, but its consequences are here to stay. The articles that make up issue 29 of *Barcelona Societat* represent an invaluable tool both for understanding this fallout and for preparing for similar crises that cities might face in the future.