

Barcelona City Council Commons Policy: Citizens Asset Programme and Community management of public resources and services

Introduction

Barcelona City Council wants to promote new forms of interaction between the public municipal institution and community citizen initiatives, based on the recognition of the right to public management and use of public resources by the people.

The transfer of public assets' use and management to non-profit collectives has been a common practice, although without a clear and coordinated commitment between different areas and districts of the municipal administration.

The City Council of Barcelona has responded to the demands of the citizens to have public spaces and resources managed in a participatory manner, with the cession of public assets, through both ad-hoc actions and policies such as Civic Management (Gestió Cívica) or the BUIITS plan for the communitary management of city voids.

Up to now, the municipal policies haven't answered all the challenges that the citizens raise, and the institution does normally react, case to case, to the new citizens claims. The Barcelona City Council has now the will to go from "reactive" to "proactive", developing a new policy that, being built on the foundations of existing experience, could promote a broader openness to citizens participation in the management and use of public assets and services.

This proposal is based in the belief that communitary management does not substitute the public management, but becomes a democratization element in municipal public management and policies, thanks to the impetus of citizen practices wherever they exist.

In order to advance in this proposal there's a need for a new policy framework that includes different municipal policies and practices, generating common criteria and vision that will guarantee mechanisms for universality, accessibility, sustainability and transparency.

This is being done within the Barcelona City Council since 2016 with the promotion of the Commons Program. This program is built on the consideration that the public goods and services can become the "commons" by promoting new forms of interaction between the municipal public institution and community citizens initiatives, based in the recognition of the value and right to community management and use of public assets and services by the people. With this program the municipality aims to democratise the management of public assets, and build transparency, participation and accountability mechanisms.

Citizens Assets Programme

Within this framework, the city has developed in 2017 the Community Use and Management of Citizen Assets Programme (Programa Patrimoni Ciutadà d'Ús i Gestió Comunitària). The Programme, known as Citizen Assets (Patrimoni Ciutadà), aims to "support, promote and consolidate the use and community management of municipal public resources, through the construction of an institutional and regulatory framework that allows recognition and promotion of citizen experiences of community management of the public assets". Citizen Assets include premises, buildings, facilities or public spaces being the use and management of which has been granted to non lucrative organisations. By community management we understand the utilities and governance structures of the organisations and their projects, which have to be democratic and open, so the use of the public assets is guided by the links with the territory, the social impact and return of the project, democracy and participation of the project, and the priority for the care of the people's processes and environment.

In collaboration with community spaces in the city of Barcelona, the programme has set criteria to define the framework that regulates access to, and transfer of, municipal assets and created a new self-evaluation mechanism, the 'Community Monitor' (Balanç Comunitari). The programme also includes the development of a census of public assets (plots and buildings) in order to create a catalogue of properties that are managed by the community. The initiative was made possible by the establishment of the Citizen Asset Board, a joint municipal body with the role of coordinating the most important municipal departments related to the cession of municipal assets to non-profit organizations.

Citizen Assets Board: is conceived as a municipal internal organ that guarantees coordination of the most significant municipal units related to the cession of municipal assets to non-profit associations. This body must guarantee the coordination of these units, as well as promote the development of the policy for the promotion of Citizen Assets through the definition of common criteria that give coherence to the different municipal actions in relation to community management and use of municipal resources. The Citizen Assets Board will follow up all the agreements with communities and non-profit associations within the programme, and for this purpose it will adopt a protocol for the granting process and evaluation, together with a set of criteria and indicators be equipped with a project of award and evaluation, and a system of criteria and indicators for the evaluation of applications and monitoring of cessions of municipal assets to non-profit entities. The Board will also promote the preparation of a **Citizen Assets Catalog**.

Community Monitor: The Citizen Assets Program has developed a series of criteria or principles that define what we understand by community management and use. These criteria should allow us to define, evaluate and justify that we are dealing with a social, open and participative use of a collective resource, managed democratically and communally by associations and projects that pursue the common good. The criteria also represent the framework for regulating the access mechanism to the community management of these public resources, as well as constructing a new self-evaluation mechanism in the form of a Community Monitor (Balanç Comunitari). This self-evaluation mechanism has been developed and agreed with the communities involved in the experiences of community management, to facilitate the monitoring of these experiences and (self) assessment of their impact, in a way that helps to measure their community work. The four areas in which these criteria are divided are:

- Bonding with the territory

It values whether the project is oriented to the needs of the territory (neighbourhood) and to what extent it contemplates activities with the different actors of the territory: associative, social or cultural; productive or commercial and institutional agents (social and cultural facilities, schools, municipal services, etc.). The relationship with existing platforms or networks in the territory and / or the sector is also taken into account.

- Social impact and return

The indicators assess to what extent the project responds to community interest and / or is oriented towards the common good, as well as what is the community impact and the expected positive externalities and whether there are beneficiaries external to the project.

- Internal democracy and participation

The indicators look at the mechanisms to make democratic internal governance possible; what channels of participation are planned to promote the capacity of users and neighbours to make proposals and the degree of openness and accessibility of the project. The degree of transparency of the project and the areas of accountability are also taken into account and that to what extent does the project comply with the transparency law. The existence of public ethical code and public statutes, the operating rules, and the existence of clear information about the decision making and use of spaces are valued.

- People, processes and environment care

The commitment with fundamental ethical principles and values of labor quality, Human Rights and the promotion of diversity is valued. The degree of gender equality and parity, evaluating also the incorporation of the gender perspective in the definition of the objectives and actions envisaged. Commitment to the values of environmental sustainability is valued, as well as whether the project envisages measures of energy saving and environmental sustainability. Sustainability and economic self-sufficiency of the project, if it provides or provides for economic and non-economic resources to guarantee its viability.

Citizen Assets Programme

Granting of premises, buildings, facilities or public spaces for its use and management by non lucrative organisations

Citizen Asset Board

Municipal administrative body with the role of coordinating municipal departments and promoting the cession of municipal assets to non-profit organizations, under shared criteria, and through a transparent and clear process

- Green commons
- Void spaces
- Buildings and premises

Renewed pact

Renewed agreement between communities and Citi Council to establish the conditions of the assets' granting and the projects' follow-up

Community Monitor

Auto-evaluation tool that helps measuring the social impact of community managed projects

**Citizen Assets
Catalogue**

**Citizen Assets
Office**

Participatory Space

Governance and accountability body participated by associations and communities in order to provide citizens follow-up to the citizen assets programme

From civic to community management

Beyond the granting of public spaces to non-profit organisations, Barcelona has a long term experience in citizens management of public facilities and services. These experiences are developed through a programme called Civic Management (Gstió Cívica), that has its juridical foundations in the municipal charter and the municipal rules of participation. Civic Management entitles a non-profit association the management of a public facility, and implies the indirect management of a public service. It allows to build a public-people partnership, in front of the public-private usual framework.

Civic Management has been developed since the 80s of the last century, around facilities and services from different units of the City Council and in all the districts. At present there are 63 facilities under this programme around the city, being managed by non-profit organisations. They are cultural centers, creation factories, community centers, youth centers, sports facilities or historical heritage, among others.

The public municipal administration, as guarantor of common goods, it is committed to public-people partnerships, avoiding privative uses and interests of common resources. In this sense, the management taken on by citizens, through non-profit organizations, is not the target, but a tool that, together with others, should facilitate these practices to be empowering for communities, and help articulate the social and citizen net.

Among the groups and communities that identify their projects with community management / community spaces, there is a growing demand to beyond just the use and management of

a space or facility, but they demand the recognition of the community management of public services. These are claims go from the take on of the management of existing public services by the community, to the proposal of new services that until now did not exist, that are born from and offered by the communities, and that aspire to be recognized as public services.

These new demands also coincide with the need, expressed by the entities that manage resources under the umbrella of civic management, to deepen the transition from this program to the promotion of a community management model. From Civic management to Community Management is not just a tittle's change, but a change of perspective, that recognises the additional value of community management in terms of social and cultural impact in the territory. The new model should apply, according to this claims, mechanisms of transparency and Community Monitor (Balanz Comunitari) that have been developed within the framework of the Citizen Assets programme. The Barcelona City Council has now the challenge to respond to this growing demand regarding the community management of public facilities and services, together with the need to decide under what model should the municipality support and accompany the new proposals of services, made by communities and social sectors.

One of the challenges is to define, in a more explicit and ambitious way, which kind of services may be amenable to community management and under what circumstances, when supporting the creation of a new municipal service at the proposal of the communities or what criteria and procedures the community management should develop. It is necessary to (re)think also about the type of support that administration has to give to these "new services" and what is the framework of co-responsibility towards which both agents, communities and administration, must advance.

Conclusions: a new Commons programme

The Barcelona City Council has now the need to define a common framework that a common framework that includes the different municipal policies and community practices under which participative management of resources, spaces and public services are developed, generating shared criteria, values and vision that guarantee mechanisms of universality, accessibility, sustainability and transparency.

Beyond the political will, the proliferation of experiences and the diversity of cases makes it essential to arrange the criteria, procedures and modalities under which collaborative agreements about the provision of services are being carried out by non-profit collectives. Far from willing to homogenize (the experiences are indeed very diverse), it is necessary to provide with common criteria that can guide the decisions to allocate resources to community management, based on indicators and objective data, which allow to assess the social impact and return of the entity to the territory, as well as the community dimension of the proposals to be developed by the communities in these municipal resources. This new framework, that includes the Citizens Assets Programme as well as a renewed proposal for Community Management of Facilities and Services, constitutes the Barcelona City Council Commons Programme.