



## The Construction of the Example in the Transformation of Contemporary Barcelona

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Barcelona Extension proposal, the Example, by Ildefonso Cerdà is undoubtedly the most important urban transformation of contemporary Barcelona. These days, the vast area of the Example is the largest and densest symbolic center of activities. It is a key piece that unites contemporary Barcelona and its metropolitan area. Its layout, zoning, real estate, urban development and trees lining form a characteristic urban landscape, endowed with an order and a clear internal cohesion, which is clearly distinguishable from the old city, and from the bordering neighborhoods.

Although the current celebration of the 150th anniversary of the adoption of Cerdà's project is prompting new and important contributions in the line of investigation conducted in recent decades that have greatly enriched our vision of the project and the formation process of the Eixample, there tend to remain some misconceptions that significantly distort the most common readings.

The first misconception is caused by forgetting that the order and cohesion of the project not only emerge from the project, but also from the collective practices and continuity of the processes. Hence, the Example is often considered as a designer work. This assumption betrays Cerdà's own ideas. He was fully aware of the limitations of the project as a tool for the construction of the city, and in an extraordinary forward-looking, analytical effort, he did not try to define a finished definitive project. Rather, he tried to understand the practices and forces that would likely build the city to consider the devices that would regulate an open process of formation, which would lead to the establishment of operating principles of a topographical, technical, legal and economic nature with a capacity to adapt to changing historical circumstances, and that would be fulfilled in the ways of building the city, as governed by the Laws of Extension.

The second misconception arises from the current perception of the landscape of the Example, which almost naturally overlaps and associates Cerdà's project with the many "modernist" architectural features that today characterize its most significant core. When one considers the flaming belligerence in the decades at the turn of the century from the anti-Example and anti-Cerdà modernist generation, we realize that this association greatly distorts historical reality. It can be said without exaggeration that the works of Gaudí, Domènech and Montaner - now World Heritage sites - and of so many contemporary architects are authentic manifestos against Cerdà and against his Example.

The objective of this proposal is a critical review of the process of urban transformation of Barcelona throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century's, which will analyze the process of urban, architectural, cultural and social shaping of the Example, with the intention of dispelling the admitted familiarities to which we have referred. Moreover, we will search for a better understand both the project and the process of the shaping of the Example. We will also seek to understand how, in the 1960s, the current account of the Example and about Modernism was constructed, which nearly inevitably incorporate these misconceptions in our way of perceiving.

**KEY WORDS:** Example, Ildefonso Cerdà, Barcelona, urban transformation, collective practices, continuity of the processes.