

Nou Barris Nord: community resistance in a highly vulnerable context

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Nou Barris Nord¹ is home to 14 000 inhabitants and is the name given to the urban system formed by the neighbourhoods of Torre Baró, Ciutat Meridiana and Vallbona. This 2.8 km² area is defined by its position on the periphery of the north-eastern outskirts of Barcelona, sitting just before the intersection with the next municipality, Montcada i Reixac. Its geographical placement is on one of the shady sides of the mountains of Collserola, facing the River Besos and without a visual connection with the rest of Barcelona. The northern area of Nou Barris is especially marked by a separation from the urban fabric of the rest of the city caused by the barrier formed by a motorway and its main junctions. This underlines a common sense of a place beyond, and not belonging to, the city – a place that has always been on the backside of Barcelona.

The main socio-urban features of this area are characterized by low-quality residential conditions, combining large housing estates in Ciutat Meridiana with a high index of residential self-construction, especially in Torre Baró and Vallbona. The most important morphological feature of this area is its altitude². The whole of the area is situated on the slopes of the Collserola hills.

La Plaça Roja [the Red Square] is the central and busiest point of Nou Barris Nord. The square was built along with the first housing blocks of the area, during the second half of the 1960s. The square's name is closely linked to the area's history and the difficulties that it has had to face. The area was full of shortcomings and failures, both of the public administration and of urban developers, and the neighbours felt cheated. They used to meet in the esplanade that forms the entrance to the area to discuss what solutions might be found. The Francoist political regime of the time took exception to this practice and, occasionally, sent police into the area. The meetings would then end in skirmishes that made the area known as a 'red neighbourhood' because of its political demands for better living conditions.

Ciutat Meridiana, with its 10 000 inhabitants, is the most populated and densest of the three neighbourhoods of Nou Barris Nord; it is also the most vulnerable. It was built in the 1960s as a result of the approval of an urban plan that allowed the construction of housing on land that had been discarded years before for the construction of the Collserola cemetery. In 1970, when the neighbourhood was only three years old, there had already been more than 300 complaints registered about damp houses. The neighbourhood was built to accommodate immigrants arriving from rural areas in other parts of Spain (Andalusia, Aragon and Navarra, among others). As Palomera (2014) has noted, Ciutat Meridiana was populated by many people who, in their first years in the city, had lived in precarious and informal housing conditions (barracks, sublet rooms, and barns and caves in mountainous areas of the city).

At the top of Ciutat Meridiana there are linear blocks with narrow gaps between them that act as terraces and spaces of social activity. In some areas of the neighbourhood these spaces are the only places in which it is possible to engage in social interaction. There are no commercial activities in the highest part of the neighbourhood. In the central zone of Ciutat Meridiana, there is a mixture of built blocks with commercial activities on their first floor, while in the lowest part we found the highest concentration of shops.

Torre Baró has a clearly distinct urban morphology. It is characterized by the predominance of informal, self-constructed houses. After several Garden City projects, which did not prosper because of the orographic difficulties, waves of immigration during the 1950s

and 1960s transformed Torre Baró into a self-constructed neighbourhood. During recent decades the City Council has developed a number of projects aiming to revitalize the area; for example, the recently-completed development of Eucalyptus Square. Through this project, Torre Baró has seen one of its most emblematic public spaces completely renovated and equipped with new seating, playgrounds, gymnastic equipment and trees – including a few eucalyptus trees, in tribute to the original square.

The final constituent neighbourhood of Nou Barris Nord, Vallbona, is physically separate from the other two. It was, in fact, originally part of another municipality, Sant Andreu. It is in a hilly area at the foot of the ridge that separates the municipal jurisdictions of Barcelona and Montcada i Reixac. After the Spanish Civil War, it was filled with modest homes, often self-constructed, and maintained a certain sense of ‘village life’. The construction of the motorways in the area in the late sixties left the neighbourhood practically isolated. In the late eighties the city demolished a set of damaged buildings and replaced them with new homes, facilities and services. The biggest improvement has undoubtedly been the physical reconnecting of Vallbona through the building of a bridge that spans the large railways lines and highways, arriving in Torre Baró, near the railway station. This bridge enables the separate passage of vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians. The latter have access in the form of ramps, stairs and elevators. The lower end of the district is occupied by farms, such as the Ponderosa and some others, which make up a landscape unusual in a city such as Barcelona. In this area, bordering the east side of the fields, Vallbona still retains a section of the traditional irrigation system from the tenth century.

1. A highly vulnerable urban area: unemployment, evictions and stigmatization.

According to 2014 family income data from the Barcelona City Council department of statistics, the three Nou Barris Nord neighbourhoods are among the poorest of the city. Of the city’s 73 neighbourhoods, Torre Baró is the 69th poorest, with a family income of around the 45.6 per cent of the city average. Vallbona is the 70th poorest with 39.9 per cent of the average, and Ciutat Meridiana is the 72nd with a 39.6 per cent. Only Trinitat Nova, a bordering neighbourhood, is in a worse situation with respect to this indicator.

City Council statistics also show that Nou Barris Nord has one of the highest registered unemployment rates³ of the city (19 per cent of the working-age population in 2012), almost double the level of unemployment in the city as a whole (10.2 per cent). In addition to this, the same source shows that in 2012 Ciutat Meridiana had one of the highest percentages of foreign residents in the city. The neighbourhood went from having a 5 per cent foreign population in 2001 to 36 per cent in 2012.

One of the principal phenomena that have affected this part of the city during recent decades has been demographic replacement. The descendants of the first wave of residents that had populated the neighbourhood during the 1960s have recently been replaced by new immigrants arriving in the 1990s and the early years of the 21st century. This happened in an especially intensive wave a few years before the bursting of the housing bubble. This population replacement has had direct effects on the structure of social ties between neighbours. In the 1970s and 1980s the neighbourhood enjoyed a strong sense of social

cohesion, it being a mobilized neighbourhood struggling in order to achieve improvements in services and resources. However, the recent socio-demographic changes have directly eroded these forms of collective mobilization and have weakened neighbourhoods' power to mobilize resources.

As both Blanco & Gomà (2016) and Palomera (2014) state, Ciutat Meridiana is one of the areas where cross mortgage contract speculations has been most intense and most devastating. Many foreign people, arriving from Morocco, Ecuador and Pakistan, purchased homes on a scheme of degrading mortgage conditions. During the years of the bubble more than 11 real estate companies were based in the neighbourhood and offered mortgages with extremely bad conditions based on overvalued prices. With the spreading of the crisis, people began to stop paying mortgage fees they could no longer afford having lost their jobs (a large part of the neighbourhood population was employed in construction, a sector hit particularly hard by the crisis). Since then, the neighbourhood began to be known as 'Ciudad Desahucio' [Eviction City].

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So these people arrive here, paying 42 million pesetas [€252.000] for a 50m² flat that has no elevator. Totally crazy! And 2008 arrives. The crisis hits. All these people are left without work and evictions begin. In 2011 we become aware that, maybe, 300 flats that had become property of the banks are empty. Then the phenomenon of occupying these flats starts to grow, because there are a lot of people without means (Ciutat Meridiana Neighbourhood Association, former Vice-president).

A low-income population, overcrowded apartments (mainly in Ciutat Meridiana) and housing that lacked the minimum conditions for habitability were already hot issues in the area before the beginning of the Great Recession. During the years prior to the bursting of the housing bubble in Ciutat Meridiana, it was usual to rent rooms in order to facilitate the payment of the mortgage fee. This not only resulted in overcrowded apartments but also had important effects on social cohesion and neighbourhood coexistence. Conflicts among neighbours and xenophobic behaviour rapidly multiplied.

With the outbreak of evictions resulting from the financial crisis, the neighbourhood communities of the area have seen worsening problems relating to overcrowding and informal dwelling. Many neighbouring communities are being affected by a situation in which most apartments have been emptied and then later occupied by evicted people. The occupation of empty apartments, linked to a dramatic lack of resources, is directly affecting coexistence within the neighbourhood. This is, in fact, probably one of the main social effects in Nou Barris Nord of the 2008 recession.

The structure of the community has found itself in a difficult period in the sense that it is difficult to say that we are like a community of neighbours. The neighbourhood community that we are is some apartments owned by the banks, some flats that we don't know who lives there, other apartments that are empty – that are bricked up or boarded up with iron sheets (Centre Cruïlla, Manager of Employment Projects).

The visible effects of the crisis in the neighbourhood, beyond the residential effects, can mainly be seen by looking at the high levels of unemployment, especially with respect to the absence of opportunities for youth employment. Representatives of civic entities aimed at promoting youth training, such as Centre Cruïlla, explain that they have received a much greater number of young people attempting to engage in educational processes. This increase in the number of young people in search of training goes hand in hand with their decreasing ability to enter into the labour market.

Every Monday at ten o'clock in the morning we do an information session for whichever young people come. We explain to them what we have, and if there is nothing here of interest to them, we refer them to other organizations, depending on their individual profile. You can see the effects of the crisis because there are no Mondays where no young people turn up, and this means that there are a lot of people struggling to find solutions. We have noticed that given that we run a space for finding employment, and now we work with many more young people than a few years ago. This is a product of the crisis situation we are in. There are a lot of young people that fail the ESO⁴ and that fail the Grau Mig.⁵ Many come here that can't keep going. They pass the ESO somehow, but then the Grau Mig hits them. The failure is spreading (Centre Cruïlla, Director).

Dynamics of unemployment and social exclusion in Nou Barris Nord aggravate the stigmatization of the area, a feeling which is also propagated among young people. Stigmatization is clearly visible with respect to attitudes to local schools. Neighbourhood schools are haunted by people that cannot think in commuting to leave their children to schools framed in other areas. Despite the fact that there are many engaged and committed teachers working in the area, the schools of Nou Barris Nord are perceived as ghettos serving poor families and suffering from an acute lack of resources.

We have schools where nobody wants to go. Only those people that have no other possibilities come here. For example, at the Picasso [school] teachers are trying to do a good job, but nobody who wants to improve their situation wants to go to the Picasso. At the Elisenda de Montacada [school], people who want to pull themselves up a bit don't want to go there. At the Mestre Morera [school] it's the same. Look, the teachers work hard, they give everything, but these places are ghettos. If I have a bit of money, or resources, or culture, I get out of here. The public administration is not ensuring that we don't have ghettos. (...) If we think that it's important that we avoid ghettos, then we have to put the best teachers here. But no, no, here isn't treated any differently (Centre Cruïlla, UEC⁶ Manager).

These neighbourhoods offer few economic opportunities. The commercial fabric of the area is limited to the lower Ciutat Meridiana. The commercial activities located there are oriented towards supplying a very low-income population. Food stores constitute the bulk of the commercial activities, along with some banks and some bars.

Neighbourhood associations and other community-based organizations complain about the lack of an integral, comprehensive, public and holistic project aiming to promote economic dynamism in the area. Ciutat Meridiana is a dormitory town with very low economic

vitality and without any project for business development. Entrepreneurship in this area is rare; those stores that have success, apart from those supplying basic goods, provide services to neighbours from other areas. The low purchasing power of the Nou Barris Nord population poses difficulties for any kind of policy for economic promotion.

One important aspect of economic revitalisation in Nou Barris Nord may be economic activities related to the area's older population. Some of our interviewees have argued that the large number of elderly people in Nou Barris Nord who live alone in upper-storey apartments and suffer mobility problems, opens up the possibility of an economic niche providing services to this group. Such an area of economic activity would, however, directly depend on either public investment or alternative and external financial sources oriented toward the attention of elderly people.

A further feature of the area which holds promise for economic revitalisation is its location on the Collserola mountain, particularly the Nou Barris Nord entrance to the Natural Park of the Serra de Collserola. From this perspective, Collserola is seen as an economic catalyst not only through the potential for the neighbourhood to promote access to the mountain through this part of the city, but also as an opportunity to promote public labour related to the forest and the mountains. Some members of neighbourhood associations have already developed a project exploring the potential benefits to the area of building a funicular from the Red Square to the top of the mountain. Importantly, this project would address one of the main geographical problems of the neighbourhood, its elevation.

2. Declining social capital, spoilt civic capacity

In the 1980s, Nou Barris Nord was, like other north-eastern suburbs of Barcelona, strongly identified with urban social movements mobilizing resources at a local level (Andreu, 2015). The self-supply of sewage systems and other amenities through methods such as local community work on weekends and holidays - known as 'Sunday urbanization' - is one of the most vividly recalled practices. Hi-jacking public buses in order to demonstrate that public transport could reach the area was another of the community practices that have defined the narratives of collective mobilization in this area. When analysing such practices, it is necessary to highlight the role of neighbourhood associations and parish leaders in both providing resources and services but also articulating ties of solidarity and cooperation among neighbours. Young technical professionals involved in various aspects of urbanism are also recalled as significant actors in that historical moment. Thus, social innovation is not a new phenomenon in Nou Barris, but is rather related to the origins of its neighbourhoods, their shortcomings as urban areas and the many basic needs that neither the state nor the market were able to meet. In Nou Barris Nord, neighbours fought for their social needs and they worked together in many innovative ways to build their own neighbourhood.

Once local democratic governments were fully established in Spain, the struggling character of the neighbourhood movement in Nou Barris Nord began to shift. Barcelona was transformed through the Olympic project and slowly but progressively new resources, services and facilities arrived in the city's urban peripheries. Although in Nou Barris Nord improvements were few and insufficient, social mobilizations in the area declined, the social fabric of the area gradually fragmented (particularly through processes of demographic

replacement) and only a small group of activist remained. ‘We are always the same people’, many of them often claim. Shortly before the 2008 recession, there was a degree of stagnation with respect to the people who were mobilized to improve the neighbourhood, and those engaged feared a lack of generational turnover. This stagnation among the individuals who make up social organizations and neighbourhood associations resulted in some egocentric conflicts between leaders. Thus, there prevails a sense that activists in Nou Barris Nord are characterized by few people, highly engaged and dedicated, but with some difficult relationships among them.

Ultimately, there are few organizations and the number of people highly engaged is much reduced. There is no associative movement. How many? Ten, fourteen people who have a more active role. Then there are also people working in the neighbourhood as social professionals or social educators (...). If you don't have a new influx of young people coming to contribute, then you have associations with the same people as many years ago, and interpersonal relationships also start to have an effect. Because in the end this is a neighbourhood, but it could also be considered as a small village. How we work, all the rumours – everything has more of a village than a city dynamic. Here we say “let's go to Barcelona!” – it's something special (Ciutat Meridiana Neighbourhood Association, former Vice-president).

The map of social organizations in Nou Barris Nord could be described as a heterogeneous network comprised of two worlds: three neighbourhood associations⁷ on one hand and several sectoral or very local organizations on the other hand. There are some weak ties between these two types of entity with some activists from neighbourhood associations also working with or participating in other social organizations.

Neighbourhood associations are organizations with relatively long histories and many older activists. There is one large association in each of Nou Barris Nord's three constituent neighbourhoods - Ciutat Meridiana, Torre Baró and Vallbona - which have historically led neighbourhood struggles for improved living conditions. Although these organizations have traditionally been characterized by a bonding form of social capital, this has changed during recent years as they have begun to work with the immigrant population. As a result of demographic replacement, Ciutat Meridiana in particular has become extremely diverse and fairly fragmented in social terms. This new and shifting social composition represents a big challenge in terms of organizational social capital. The sudden increase in foreign population and the loss of autochthonous residents has weakened social ties and some racial conflict has emerged.

Longstanding residents cope really badly with the new immigration. There is a terrible amount of racism! They feel they have built the neighbourhood and that now immigrants arrive and take all that they have given so much to create (Nou Barris Nord Social Worker).

Despite these latent conflicts, the work done by several social organizations and by the City Council to restrain such attitudes and to foster peaceful coexistence are keeping these social problems under control. In fact, the Great Recession stimulated new dynamics of civic engagement and community participation in Nou Barris Nord, bridging gaps between new and

old residents through grassroots protest and establishing ties of solidarity. In this context, the *Indignados* movement had a significant impact on grassroots activism in Nou Barris, with some neighbourhood associations understanding the benefits of work together with this new movement.

We come from a period of decline for neighbourhood associations. The Indignados movement represents the beginning of a new epoch. We have started a new period in the neighbourhood of citizen demonstrations inspired by and connected to the 15M movement (Ciutat Meridiana Neighbourhood Association, president).

The fight against evictions was a key issue in this process of symbiosis between different organizations. During the real-estate bubble a new social organization was founded in Nou Barris, called 500x20⁸, which has fought strongly not only against foreclosures but also against evictions of renters. Ciutat Meridiana Neighbourhood Association played a crucial role connecting the 15M neighbourhood assembly, 500x20 and the Platform for Mortgage Affected People (PAH). Although the PAH does not formally have a local assembly in Ciutat Meridiana, in reality the Neighbourhood Association in many ways acts as a PAH local assembly. Thus, Ciutat Meridiana Neighbourhood Association, which is recognized as the most important social organization in the area, acquired particular importance through its leadership in empowering local residents in their struggle against evictions. Among other activities, the association organized protests to prevent numerous evictions and is also taking care of evicted families that go to it for advice.

The Neighbourhood Association is leading the whole issue of evictions: dealing with families who have this problem, who are looking for expert guidance, and it is also stopping many foreclosures. They are families that are kicked out onto the street. Many of these families had work but now do not. They got involved with mortgages... The Neighbourhood association could have ignored the issue but it did not, and it is leading the response, and we continuously have evictions here, and they [the Neighbourhood Association] are there, doing their job (Centre Cruïlla, Director).

As noted above, beyond neighbourhood associations, there are other active social organizations in Nou Barris Nord that aim to promote certain aspects of community life. One example is La Indomable, a cultural nonprofit which organizes programmes of cultural events in the area. Another example is El Torrent, an association that manages a community intervention plan – funded by an important Catalan bank – with a special focus on promoting intercultural coexistence. Also noteworthy is the role played by some sport organizations, such as the local football club. There are other small nonprofits which have few resources but a notable presence nonetheless, such as El Petit Sol, a nonprofit that collaborates with the Red Cross to address the food emergency arising from the recession. Finally, one of the nonprofits most representative of the area is Centre Cruïlla, a socially innovative educational organization that will be analysed in depth in the following section.

There are many people doing things. And that is what, with the intervention of the public administration...because they have finally opened their eyes and, little by little, investment has arrived, not radically, as I think it should be – radical [investment] – but, gradually, resources have arrived (Centre Cruïlla, Manager of Employment Projects).

At the same time as social capital was declining in Nou Barris Nord, before the recession, social and community work in the area was, by contrast, improving. During the past two decades, social and community work in the area has increased and has been professionalized to a greater degree. In a manner similar to the early 1980s, when Barcelona's north-eastern neighbourhoods profited from the advice of young liberal professionals in the field of urban planning, nowadays the hopes of these neighbourhoods are to a large extent invested in professional social workers specialized in fields such as community services, social services, health or education.

The schools of the neighbourhood are also doing a really good job (...) We have a youth club, children's clubs. In Torre Baró we have an open centre like we have here, at the Morera [school] another. At the Elisenda de Montcada [school there is] a playroom for young children. In Torre Baró there is an initiative organized by parents and children, a 'familyspace', in which I also have participated. In Torre Baró a hiking group has been founded (Centre Cruïlla, UEC Manager).

These kinds of actors, who are not necessarily local residents but are in some cases, should also be understood as actors who are working for neighbourhood improvements and facing the challenges posed by the economic recession. Networking is highly present in the narratives of social innovation told by these actors. The value of networking with other actors and organizations is identified as a key factor by a variety of actors and organizations, whether they be neighbourhood organizations that have evolved to become third sector organizations (such as Centre Cruïlla), the Community Development Plan office, or schools engaged in tackling social problems through a community approach (such as Mestre Morera School). Nonetheless, coordination and comprehensiveness remains a huge challenge in Nou Barris Nord.

The [social] organizations have done a lot. And they are working hard. And everyone, in their area, has done a lot of things. And then there are the networks, I think they work. There is an employment network, a children's network, a community plan that encompasses a lot... and there is also another type of community intervention that works very well (Centre Cruïlla, Manager of Employment Projects).

Although the neighbourhood has carried out several social and public initiatives aimed at addressing the effects of the crisis, they have not been coordinated. In reality, public service delivery in Nou Barris Nord is not united in a comprehensive approach and, beyond some small initiatives; there is a lack of coordination even among public services and public policies in the area.



In this vein, the main issue we found in Nou Barris Nord was a clear lack of civic capacity, especially before the 2015 local elections. We did not find a community working as a whole but rather social initiatives contesting public institutions and attempting to survive in a highly vulnerable context. As Blanco & Gomà (2016: 159) report: *'Ciutat Meridiana is not an example of harmonic collaboration among public administrations and civil society organizations to face collective problems. Ciutat Meridiana is an example of how important social struggles are to attract public institutions attention, and to force them to be proactive responding to major social problems'*. This lack of civic capacity, linked to a historically hostile relationship between neighbourhood organizations and the City Council, constrains the potential that socially innovative initiatives could have to address the crisis in an effective way.

According to various stakeholders interviewed, the only space where governmental and non-governmental actors could coordinate their action (the Neighbourhood Council) is not proving useful for this purpose. Moreover, the relationship between the City Council and the main neighbourhood organizations was highly conflictive and characterized by distrust, at least until the change in municipal government in 2015.

Institutional mechanisms for participation in Nou Barris are obsolete, they are not working and they do not make pragmatic action possible (District Councillor, CiU government).

We have never had a good relation with the City Council; neither with this government (CiU) nor with the previous one. The District Councillor is incapable and incompetent! She doesn't represent us, almost nobody votes for her party in this district (Ciutat Meridiana Neighbourhood Association, President).

This lack of collaboration between the City Council and social organizations in Nou Barris has resulted in several episodes of conflict, especially in the post-recession environment during the CiU municipal government. On several occasions social organizations have used some formal participatory mechanisms, such as the Neighbourhood Council, to carry out demonstrations against the government. Furthermore, three episodes of building occupation should be noted. First, in May 2013, neighbours occupied a public housing building (containing 32 empty apartments) owned by REGESA⁹. This action prompted a bargaining process with the government and the neighbours were successful in keeping the apartments for evicted residents, who pay a social rent that can be no higher than 30% of tenants' incomes. Second, in August 2013, the Ciutat Meridiana Neighbourhood Association occupied the new Fab-Lab¹⁰ building in order to house their food bank. The City Council tolerated this use until a new location was found for the food bank. Two further more aims were also achieved through the occupation: an increase in levels of social services provided in the area and the modification of the Fab-Lab project according to a number of neighbour demands. Lastly, in October 2014 a group of residents bounce into Nou Barris Nord Social Service Centre protesting against what they perceived as an insufficient response to a social emergency. Some damage was caused and two community leaders are being prosecuted as a result of this action.

All of the neighbourhood activists interviewed in Nou Barris Nord claimed to be part of an area that has not received the attention from the public administration that they deserve. Public policies implemented in Nou Barris Nord are seen as small woven patches, rather than

comprehensive and radical investments. For example, Barcelona's subway system did not reach the area until 2003. In 2006, the Catalan regional government did fund a 4 year, €9 million program in the area through the Neighbourhoods Act. Among the most significant results of that invest were the refurbishment of the Social Service building, a community centre, the extension of a centre for elderly people and the opening of a new library located next to the Red Square. In addition, some infrastructural work was completed, such as a bridge connecting Vallbona to Ciutat Meridiana rail station. All of these improvements are highly valued by the community. However, these significant improvements are not the result of a comprehensive investment plan for the socio-economic revitalization of Nou Barris Nord. Rather, these measures are responses to longstanding demands regarding mobility, housing and cultural infrastructures – most of them longstanding demands going back to the 1980s – which have not resulted in a substantial change in the quality of life of residents; just as Nou Barris Nord was granted these improvements, the Great Recession hit and the three neighbourhoods were devastated anew.

The huge effects the Great Recession had in Nou Barris Nord turned broader public attention back to the area. However, most of the people we interviewed feel that their neighbourhood is now being subject of public policies only because grassroots movements succeeded in making visible their significant problems – such as the difficulties residents had in even affording food – which then caught tabloid media eyes.

These three neighbourhoods, the 'northern zone', has always been the area forgotten by the public administration. The public administration has done things, forced by our demands and, in recent years, by the success of the association in gaining a presence in the media (Ciutat Meridiana Neighbourhood Association, former Vice-president).

This current preferential attention is reflected, for instance, in the creation of several specific technical measures. In this vein, a Community Development Plan - managed by Centre Cruïlla since 2014 – was launched, or some resources were mobilized for some issues such as immigration or food subsidies. Rather than being satisfied by these new policy programs in the area, none of the interviewees believed that these measures would be effective; they feel they are not extensive enough.

The Community Development Plan, funded by the government but implemented through community actors, is another example of how difficult it is get different stakeholders working together in this area. The coordination of the Plan was eventually taken on by Centre Cruïlla after a failed attempt to implement it through the Ciutat Meridiana Neighbourhood Association. Carrying out the plan was a difficult process in which organizations and individuals found it hard to reach agreement. As a result, the Plan was unfruitful for a long time, bringing more conflicts and arguments than solutions and agreements. Eventually, the Plan was transferred to Centre Cruïlla, which is a professionalized nonprofit organization. Undoubtedly, community leaders in Nou Barris Nord are highly committed and their civic engagement is unquestionable. Everybody recognizes their task and they are also recognized and respected among them. However, as they are few in number and the general civic capacity is weak, personal issues and conflicts related to these attitudes easily emerge. Most of the social organizations are closely associated with specific individuals rather than easily identifiable as

collective actors. Consequently, interaction and cooperation among them often shifts to personal and conflictual relationships.

Nevertheless, there is now some hope in Nou Barris Nord that the recently elected municipal government of Barcelona (Barcelona en Comú) will increase public investment in this urban area. This is a hope that stems from the fact that active and prominent members of the Nou Barris neighbourhood movements – such as Manuel Cubero, who until recently was engaged in the neighbourhood association, the anti-evictions movement and other social struggles in the area – have become members of the new local government. As we have already seen in the Bushwick case study, civic capacity is a resource that could be transformed and built through the agency of neighbourhood stakeholders. A shift in the local government could, thus, be an opportunity to achieve such an increase, though it remains too soon to predict that with any certainty with respect to Nou Barris Nord.

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3. Solidarity and resistance to cope with crisis effects.

The Great Recession has transformed the ways in which citizen mobilization takes place and neighbourhood associations work. Even though the social fabric has been fragmented and social organizations have fewer resources, neighbours from Nou Barris Nord have been capable of articulating new responses to recession effects, based on solidarity and communitarian resistance.

As we have seen above, Nou Barris Nord has an historical trajectory of practices of solidarity between residents in order to mobilize resources and services. However, social mobilisation strategies and practices have shifted in response to recession. In facing the crises derived from the burst of the real-estate bubble, people do not fight in the same way as they did three decades ago. Nowadays, passivity and individualism are more prevalent in the community than before while, at the same time, new forms of collective actions are flourishing following the rise of the *Indignados* movement on May 15th 2011.

There is a process in which people, [because of] consumerism, the media, [and] individualism, do not participate in the neighbourhood association, do not participate in anything, [including] in the AMPAS¹¹. There is a compulsive apathy that makes this not only an economic poverty – which it is – but also a poverty of participation, to escape from the dynamic of [only] reaching the end of the month, which is very difficult. In the neighbourhood association there is an attempt to use the issue of the management of misery – escaping it, working on the issue of housing, on the provision of food – to try to promote activism in people, to find collective solutions, but it is really difficult (Ciutat Meridiana Neighbourhood Association, former Vice-president).

The social mobilization linked to the anti-evictions movement has revitalized the neighbourhood association of Ciutat Meridiana. This neighbourhood association has been highly active in collaborating with 500x20 to stop eviction processes in the area by promoting civic mobilizations. However, it is important to note that citizen participation is highly reactive, with no emphasis placed on making positive proposals and less-commitment to lobbying local politicians than in previous eras of mobilization. All of the members of civic entities

interviewed underline that participation, when compared with a few decades ago, is to a much greater extent limited to narrowly instrumental action.

What has changed is that people now go to stop evictions. But [to develop] a more political engagement, where there is participation in the management, this needs much more work and, simply, [people's level of engagement] is unexceptional, it is very instrumental. If I need to stop an eviction, I see [the reason for] this, but if anybody tells me that I have to go to the plenary session of the district [council], or that I should go to a demonstration against the increasing [the price] of public transport, in this case no... (Ciutat Meridiana Neighbourhood Association, former Vice-president).

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Blanco & Gomà (2016) and Alvarez (2013) have noted some examples of solidarity-based citizenship responses that have grown up in Nou Barris Nord following the 2008 recession: the social-wardrobe promoted by Sant Bernat de Clarevall's Church; the godparents support fostered by the Mestre Morera's School; a free-breakfast offered to pupils in the Pablo Picasso High-School in exchange for delivering an organic waste bag; and the financial assistance offered by 50x20 to the associations that are doing social work in the area. As we shall see below, 50x20 is proof that socially-oriented associations in the area are nourished by informal practices derived from a strong sense of citizenship solidarity.

Beyond 50x20, which is an economic thing, here in the neighbourhood there are other types of experiences of collaboration; 50x20 is not a mushroom [standing alone], rather people collaborate with neighbours, which is natural for this neighbourhood. When you work with a neighbour, the neighbour will work with another neighbour, and they will work with another neighbour. There are people giving lectures, volunteers doing food shopping for others. In Torre Baró, for example, we have struggled without buses and there were people taking other people up and down [in cars]. We cannot say that this is something that has emerged suddenly. This solidarity already existed. It already exists. People recognize it, and those that move here from other places are also welcomed into it (Centre Cruïlla, UEC Manager).

An interesting example is the response that emerged to address the stigma of youth unemployment in the area. A group of professionals working in the education sector in the neighbourhood came together to create a platform called 'Xarxa 033 Educa'. The platform is oriented toward working in the area through an educational project using a comprehensive perspective. This network, born in 2005, could be described as an example of a bottom-up initiative, spontaneous and self-managed, promoted by a group of education professionals in the neighbourhood. It includes, on a volunteer basis, school teachers, playschool assistants, and other professionals engaged in social work in the neighbourhood. The aim of the network is to develop coordinated actions to face the educational challenges of the area. This network has coordinated, among other activities, a race among all the schools of the neighbourhood, and several intergenerational activities between schools and the neighbourhood grandparents' centre. Although the network was created before the 2008 crash, it has proved to be extremely useful in helping to cope with the effects of the recession.

Another issue is how the actors that are mobilized to improve living conditions are linked with other agencies forming innovative alliances. The linkage with other neighbourhood movements, as well as with other associative networks, is mainly rooted in the larger district of Nou Barris. In the wider context of the bursting of the housing bubble and its consequences as a social emergency, many entities and social movements – such as 500x20, the network Nou Barris Acull¹², the platform Nou Barris Cabrejada diu Prou¹³, and the PAH Barcelona – have mobilised on various occasions in order to give support to Nou Barris Nord actors and activities. It can also be observed that the social actors of the neighbourhood have developed external alliances. It is often the case that actors from other neighbourhoods give support to initiatives in Nou Barris Nord; for example the being granted the use of Centre Cruïlla's catering services. In order to develop such bridging ties, the presence of neighbourhood social actors in networks and organizations beyond the neighbourhood is especially crucial.

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We will now analyse in depth two of the socially innovative initiatives that have emerged in Nou Barris Nord as responses to the effects of the crisis. The first, Centre Cruïlla, is an experience with a long history strongly rooted in the neighbourhood. The second, 50x20, is a newly emerged initiative spontaneously promoted by a group of neighbours.

3.1. Centre Cruïlla

Centre Cruïlla is a traditional nonprofit third sector organization tied to a religious community – Salesians Sant Jordi – operating through the church of Sant Bernat de Claravall. It began during the 1980s as a leisure-time educational project and has evolved into a second chance classroom. Since 1993 it operates as a youth-oriented centre devoted to offer leisure-time educational opportunities to low-income youths. In addition, since 1988 it has also been recognised as a Shared Educational Unit [*Unitat d'Escolarització Compartida – UEC*]; that is, a service that offers an alternative space for 14 to 18 year olds that have been expelled from or refuse formal education can temporarily follow Compulsory Middle and High School (ESO). As the centre has developed, many kinds of social and pre-workforce projects (focused on 18 to 28 year olds) have also been implemented. The centre aims to facilitate employability through courses in culinary techniques, beginner courses in various skilled trades, or promoting the learning of occupational skills. It has also launched courses oriented toward teenagers in order to develop concrete skills and personal education as sports instructors and leisure-time monitors.

The center has opened 72 places for children from 6 to 16 years old. There are three age groups; little ones, a middle age group, and older children. And then there is the UEC, those are ESO¹⁴ students from 14 to 16 [years old], (...) with 18 seats. Finally there is the whole issue of labour market insertion, the pre-work [module] where we deal with between 25 and 30 young people each year. They are specialized projects. We don't work all together. Then we have the PFI¹⁵ which works with 15 young people and is also part of the school curriculum. The 'Cruïna' project, in which we work with 25 [young people], this is more permanent (Centre Cruïlla, Director).

Centre Cruïlla's professionals are highly informed regarding what is happening in the community and what are the basic needs of the neighbourhood. From 2008 onwards, they clearly identified the youth of Nou Barris Nord as being dramatically hit by the recession as their access to the labour market became blocked. The young people that had followed Centre Cruïlla's programs became deprived of opportunities to enter into the labour market upon finishing their educational programs. To address this situation, in 2012 Centre Cruïlla launched an innovative program creating a new organization called 'Associació Xiula', which acts as a nonprofit temporary employment agency. The purpose of this new organization is to hire young people that are following or have been completed educational and training programs in Centre Cruïlla to do small amounts of paid work. These jobs are found in the catering sector or in other areas, such as removals or small jobs in maintenance and restoration. Thus, through this new program, Centre Cruïlla is going beyond its traditional educational focus and expanding into employment.

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We do caterings, removals, we also do screen-printing, home maintenance. We hire people, in a nonprofit scheme, doing contracts without profit margins. To be competitive, we 'swallow' the margin. We also carry out some services, such as carpentry, to change the doors of an apartment [for example]. [In such cases] we hire a professional carpenter from the neighbourhood, and a young person as an assistant. We buy the materials. And the cost of all that – plus a bit extra to cover administrative costs – is what we charge to the customer, along with the corresponding VAT. It's a way of gaining information (Centre Cruïlla, Manager of Employment Projects).

This experience has been very well received by other centres of the Salesian community working in similar situations in other deprived neighbourhoods. As a result, the initiative is being replicated in other social centres of the Salesian community under the umbrella of a common foundation (Fundació Jovent). Thus, the initiative is travelling geographically to other communities in a clear process of scaling-up. The diffusion of the tested model of job insertion developed by Centre Cruïlla across the network of second-chance school-centres of the Salesian community can be considered as proof of the scalability and originality of the project.

For now at least, the aim of the initiative is not framed as a workforce placement enterprise; however it cannot be ruled out as a future possibility, considering the potential for the project's evolution and that demand for its services is growing by the day. The social impact in the area of successful job placement has not yet been studied with quantitative data. It is, however, estimated that around 150 young people per year follow Centre Cruïlla's educational activities. With respect to social impact, the representatives of the initiative interviewed also stressed the infrastructure developed by the Centre over the years; the Centre has a set of spacious rooms suitably equipped for implementing educational programmes. A further indicator of social impact that was commonly highlighted was the attention garnered from external sources of investment, such as socially inclusive projects that became interested in the initiative as part of their philanthropic programmes (for example, Fundació La Caixa and Pro-infancia). Finally, the existence of ambitious projects for the future, such as the development of a school-restaurant for the experimentation of the students

framed on the culinary module, could be also an important issue to assess the vitality and social impact of the initiative.

From the outset, the main objective of Centre Cruïlla has been working with young people with the aim of fostering youth community development. The success of the initiatives of job placement developed by the centre has prompted a number of actors to suggest the extension of the programme to a wider group of beneficiaries, i.e. adults. The possibility has, however, been rejected and the position of the Centre has been to reinforce their commitment to young people. As described above, in addition to its specific work with young people from the community, the Centre Cruïlla also plays a central and key role coordinating Nou Barris Nord's Community Development Plan. The Centre Cruïlla has assumed the financial management of the subvention associated with this plan and is coordinating the engagement of the staff responsible for its implementation. This leading role is a reflection of the level of professionalization of Centre Cruïlla, which is clearly higher than the neighbourhood's community-based organizations. The Community Development Plan is based on fostering networks among all the stakeholders, neighbours and projects in the area.

Centre Cruïlla is a traditional community development nonprofit that has a formal and professionalized organizational structure: one director (CEO), three project managers and 25 social educators. All of its staff are paid and they do not have volunteers. Hence, even though it works in the community through using a networked leadership style (the Community Development Plan is a clear example of that), internally it displays a traditional organizational structure.

The linkage between Centre Cruïlla and the rest of projects and community based organizations working in the area could be described as a facilitating and collaborative relation. The fact that Centre Cruïlla is characterized by the professionalization of the actors that are leading the initiative enables it to steer clear of the personal conflicts typical of the neighbourhood associations and other community-based organizations which operate on a voluntary basis. Even though some of Centre Cruïlla's social educators live in Nou Barris Nord, most of them do not. What we found among these social workers is a profile of a committed educator, highly engaged and rooted in the neighbourhood, with direct knowledge and a participative attitude with respect to the grassroots movements in the area. Moreover, most of Centre Cruïlla social educators play an important communicative and informative role not only through Centre Cruïlla informal channels but also having an active role in the neighbourhood's social life. Thus, although Centre Cruïlla fulfils an important task working with young people through its programs, it also has an important role at the broader community level, networking different stakeholders and having good relations with all of them, including public bodies.

Relationships between Centre Cruïlla and the public administration are good and dynamic. There is a constant communication with the District authorities, which recognize the important role carried out by the Centre. By contrast, from the point of view of the Centre, the public administration in Nou Barris Nord is criticised for the absence of a comprehensive approach to the creation of public policies. The Centre stresses that various municipal governments have acted in the area without having an overall perspective, promoting isolated policies resulting from a fragmented approach. The recent application of an urban renewal project has been perceived by the Centre in the same way. It claims that the project has been

highly focused on the built environment and has neglected socio-communitarian issues. Even though the Centre is essentially a service provider and uses a very pragmatic approach, it is also producing a general discourse based on integrated approaches and specific discourses focused on youth development through both education and labour market opportunities.

The way in which Centre Cruïlla lobbies to gain influence on the public administration and its policies is based on the principle that claiming and protesting is always needed to achieve direct effects and public investment in the neighbourhood. One of the main principles invoked to justify the need for essential investment in Nou Barris Nord is the need to achieve equality with the rest of the city of Barcelona with respect to living standards and human development.

Finally, assessing the change in social relationships that are promoted through the Centre, we should highlight the empowering effects that its educational activities have for the youth that use them. In the same vein, those contracts launched by the initiative are also considered as empowering their recipients. The clearest dimensions of the changes in social relations that the initiative produces relate to the empowerment of its users. Thus, Centre Cruïlla programs clearly try to unlock the energy of young people through their human development and their empowerment through real labour opportunities.

This work experience – of a small labour contract, a few hours of doing tutorials, some hours working in a bar one weekend evening – these things give a small wage, in a regulated, formal and legal way, moreover, paying taxes, with a social security number... It is a project that encompasses all these things. It gives you your personal dignity and you take a salary back home. For that reason, in a family with socioeconomic difficulties, the fact that young family members can themselves bring a salary home, it is very important. And it is self-esteem for the youngsters as well. And it makes a big difference. These young people, after signing a contract and working, how they see life changes a lot. And their motivation too. Because they know it has purpose; we do things for a reason, not for nothing (Centre Cruïlla, Manager of Employment Projects).

To sum up, Centre Cruïlla is a long-established community-development organization, working in Nou Barris Nord since the 1980s, that has recently launched a socially innovative program to cope with youth unemployment following the recession. It works through external funding which is sought for each project carried out. Even though it is state-dependent – most of its funding comes from different levels of public administration (regional government, City Council, etc.)– it also receives philanthropic and private funding. The Centre does not use new forms of leadership, but rather achieves things through a traditional professionalized model. It is more pragmatic than transformative, although it is reframing some discourses in claiming for a comprehensive approach to social problems in Nou Barris Nord. Its members bridge differences by networking at a community level. Probably the most important aspect of the Centre's work is that it is unleashing the energy of young people in the neighbourhood, empowering them through training and labour opportunities. The professionalization of its staff and their proactive role with the public administration explain the relative success of the initiative, which has been replicated through other social centres of the broader Salesian religious community.

3.2. 50x20

In a public meeting held in Ciutat Meridiana in 2009, neighbours from various parts of Nou Barris Nord decided to carry out a new initiative to address the social emergency that the area was increasingly witnessing. Fifty neighbours decided to pay €20 each month in order to combat the social problems that public administrations was proving unable to solve. 50x20 was, therefore, an informal initiative conceived of as a self-managed and self-organized act of resilience in the face of collective problems. At the same time, however, it was an act of contestation demonstrating that neighbours were being forced to act to address a responsibility that public authorities were failing to fulfil.

Fifty people collecting €20 per person each month inspired the name of the new informal organization: 50x20. The initiative draws inspiration from both the evidence that the crisis was producing terrible effects in these neighbourhoods, and upon the evidence that neighbourhood associations and community based organizations, rather than public bodies, are the ones who are dealing with effects of the crisis in Nou Barris Nord.

The main objective of the initiative is to supply a *Caja de Resistencia* [emergency hardship fund] that serves to give financial support to needs identified by various actors working in the area. Different kinds of initiatives and organizations contribute to the identification of need of financial assistance, from schools to neighbourhood associations, which share the fact that they have daily contact with the effects of the social emergency facing the community. Thus, rather than develop the community through housing, business or social programs, 50x20 uses a community building approach, which emphasizes relationships, consensus building and voluntary action. In short, it aims to mobilize community assets.

In this context, 50x20 is committed to collecting, managing and giving a purpose to the money it gathers. All the money is deposited in a bank account from where it is delivered to neighbourhood social organizations depending on the needs identified regarding families and people that live in the area. The organizational idea behind the initiative is that the money it can offer to rapidly address family and/or individual needs is always managed by a social organization which first receives the money, meets the demand, and ensures the money is used correctly. In return for the money that is provided, each entity is encouraged to get some sort of socio-educational return from its beneficiaries.

There is always some citizen organization in between. The money is not paid directly to the person; it is paid to the dentist, the speech therapist... We have paid bills for the use of utilities, some rent, some doctor's fees. With the schools, through the AMPA,¹⁶ we paid for summer camps and something is asked of them in return. There are many African women in this area that speak English very well and, for example, the summer camps of their children are paid for and in return they are asked to give an English course. They participate in the AMPA through giving English lessons. This is edifying for a person; my son does not go to the camps for no reason, but because there is a kind of deal, an exchange (50x20, activist).

The organization of the initiative is led by a five person board, most of them social workers and professionals engaged with the community. Thus, it is a self-organized and self-funded initiative carried out by volunteers with high levels of education and professional skills. Even

though the initiative is managed in a very horizontal and transparent way, there is a small group of engaged people who lead the initiative. As they distribute money to social organizations, they strengthen links among them, bridging differences at a community level.

As we have said, transparency and accountability are two of their main principles. In order to preserve accountability, the management of the money is always done through bank transfers, never through cash transactions. In a blog, the organization publishes a record of all the assistance offered and analyses the destinations of its money by areas of use.

The area in which 50x20 has offered most support is school activities. During the first five years of the initiative, school dinner scholarships represented more than 60 per cent of the total budget. The school dinner scholarships provided by public authorities do not cover the total price of the dinners. As a consequence, many children left school during lunch hours because their families could not afford to pay the extra. Scholarships to attend summer camps have also represented a large part of the money donated by the entity to the schools of the area. Recently, following demonstrations regarding the social difficulties in the neighbourhood, the City Council has assumed the total costs of school dinner scholarships and scholarships for summer camps and sporting activities.

Regarding the relationship between the initiative and public authorities, it might be said that it is characterized by complexity and perplexity. From the side of the 50x20 initiative, it is believed that some actors from the City Council have felt themselves attacked by the role assumed by the association. The fact that 50x20 acts as an emergency hardship fund for the network of neighbourhood associations is perceived as evidence of public policy failure. However, it is not fair to accuse the initiative of promoting a negative vision of public policies; in fact, the role played by 50x20 remains low profile, and its members refuse to appear in the media. Their priority is to provide resources to the network of associations of the territory, reflecting a cooperative and collective leadership that aims to produce some kind of social transformation in the area.

Another of the related reactions developed by the District administration regarding the initiative is the recognition of 50x20 as an accredited interlocutor. Actually, the District has approached 50x20 to ask it to provide a diagnostic of the social problems in the area, and has even shown its availability to act following a dictation of the initiative's requests. This proposal has been also refused by 50x20.

The District Councillor has even offered that we, ourselves, do a holistic project. But she doesn't know what we are [already] doing. [Nou Barris Nord] needs a holistic response, I agree, but we cannot do this project. Firstly because we don't work on projects. (...) The first reaction of the public administration was, 'this is not possible, all this is paid for', but no, it isn't all paid for. In a second meeting the District Councillor said to us: I have an unlimited budget for whatever is asked of me in [Nou Barris Nord] (50x20, Activist).

50x20 does not renounce expressing opinions regarding how local policies could be better applied in the area. For example, regarding the Fab-lab project, set-up in Ciutat Meridiana in 2014, 50x20 has criticized the chosen location and advocates a more accessible and functional project which would be particularly focused on promoting socially innovative dynamics with the local high-school (IES Picasso) and fostering its specialization in the field of robotics.

Another example relates to funds for school dinners; when the public administration suggested that scholarships were being paid for, 50x20 provided evidence that a funding need was still outstanding. In any case, as their representatives suggest, 50x20 does not aim to replace public responsibilities; on the contrary it aims to stress the leading role that public authorities ought to assume regarding the area's challenges. Hence, they are highly pragmatic because they directly solve neighbours' social needs but at the same time are reframing the public discourse, pushing for comprehensive responses and for the administration to take responsibility.

The initiative has had a very limited material impact as the grants delivered could not be highly financially significant. The annual budget does not exceed €14 000 and 50x20 addressed around 130 cases in 2014 and 80 cases in 2015. However, if we look at more qualitative or intangible impacts, 50x20 representatives highlight that the most important aspect of their initiative is not the money delivered but the responsibilities assumed by those who receive the money. In this vein, the initiative is also a tool for social workers in the area to achieve some goals. The emergency hardship fund allows them to achieve specific objectives, such as parents ensuring their children's homework is completed, or going to school meetings because they have signed an agreement with the parents association to receive the money provided by 50x20.

Although the social impact of 50x20 is not huge, it has achieved some changes in neighbourhood social relations. For instance, some of the schools in the area have changed their perception of the initiative and are now using it to achieve significant results.

They found it very strange that there could be people giving money in an anonymous manner in order to help meet the concrete needs of people they didn't even know, and neither did they really know what work would be done [with the money], apart from the agreement that was made with the school; and they thought it was an odd group. In some cases we have not managed to change their point of view, for whatever reason. But many professionals have also become members of the initiative, which is also an extraordinary thing... (50x20, Activist).

In short, 50x20 offers new, alternative and community-managed solutions to basic social needs in Nou Barris Nord, changing social relations and building community networks. The initiative is small and, rather than working together with the public administrations, it acts as a resistance project, showing that public bodies are not doing all they should in the area. It has not expanded and it has limited effects, as the problems it faces are so big compared to its scarce resources. However, rather than be a permanent part of the solution, they are claiming for the need for more resources invested in the area and the taking of responsibility by the public administrations.

4. Conclusions

Nou Barris Nord has not overcome its vulnerability. It has been hit extremely hard by the effects of the Great Recession. However, to really understand what has happened in the area we should not focus on how the crisis has affected it (unemployment, foreclosures and so on) but on how these neighbourhoods were transformed prior to the crisis. Nou Barris Nord has

always been a disenfranchised urban area. Nevertheless, the real estate bubble multiplied its urban segregation as a result of a huge demographic replacement, and the poorest population in Barcelona became concentrated in this urban area. The social fabric of Nou Barris Nord was fragmented and its social capital declined, while civic capacity evolved into a general mistrust and hostility between, on the one hand, neighbourhood associations and, on the other, the City Council.

In this context the emergence of socially innovative responses to problems is not easy. When initiatives flourish, the lack of coordination and collaboration with public authorities hinders their potential social impact. Hence, we found few socially innovative initiatives in Nou Barris Nord and, in general terms, they were small initiatives achieving a low social impact. Rather than being transformative initiatives, the social innovation we found is clearly pragmatic, attempting to address concrete problems related to basic social needs. The residents do not want to solve their collective problems autonomously or using power-based models of social change. They tend to use community development or community building approaches and they essentially ask for greater public investment and the taking of responsibility by public bodies. So, the residents are not seeking to build an alternative society managed beyond the reach of the public administration. If they engage in such activities it is merely because they feel that public administrations are not doing what they ought to do. In short, community-based organizations' common discourse in Nou Barris Nord is based on making a claim for comprehensive responses to social problems in which the public administration would play a 'hands on' rather than a 'hands off' role.

At the same time, we also found in Nou Barris Nord a story of struggle based on the neighbourhood's tradition of collective action. Neighbours, neighbourhood associations and other community-based organizations have clearly responded to recession effects through solidarity and resistance. The anti-evictions movement is probably the best example of that, but we have also identified many other initiatives. Although there is only a small group of engaged neighbours who are fostering such initiatives, their role is essential not only in mitigating the effects of the recession in the area but also to foster coexistence and solidarity. Thus, despite latent racist behaviours evident in these neighbourhoods following the Great Recession, the role played by many social organizations, schools and other public entities has been crucial to limiting such attitudes.

Nou Barris Nord is, thus, not a favourable context for social innovation. However, we found interesting initiatives taking place in the area that, using different collective leadership practices, have achieved significant results. With respect to Centre Cruïlla, a traditional, professionalized leadership has produced a multi-stakeholder, governance-oriented model of social innovation. This model, based on community development, has become quite effective and has been replicated in other urban areas. In the operation of 50x20, on the other hand, a horizontal, small group leadership has produced a self-organized community-building model of social innovation. It has been effective in contesting how public administrations are dealing with crisis effects in Nou Barris Nord while achieving little social impact with respect to effectiveness and scalability.

The Nou Barris Nord case study shows us that extreme conditions of vulnerability in a historically socially organized neighbourhood can produce collective responses based on solidarity and resistance. Most of these responses are not highly innovative but they are useful

in mitigating the social effects of the recession. At the same time, though, Nou Barris Nord also shows us how extremely negative historical and geographical contexts (such as physical isolation, sloping terrain, insufficient public investment, demographic replacement, social fabric fragmentation, and so on) constrain not only the emergence of social innovation but also its effectiveness and its scalability. In this vein, the lack of civic capacity found in Nou Barris Nord is a clear handicap for success in social innovation. Nevertheless, as we already know, civic capacity is something dynamic that can be changed, built and transformed. It remains to be seen if the new municipal government in Barcelona will be able to achieve such transformed social capital in Nou Barris Nord, as some of the stakeholders interviewed stated.

Finally, as we have already noted, despite the fact that the context has not been favourable for social innovation in Nou Barris Nord, we have also seen how some leadership practices could make such innovation as possibility. The Centre Cruïlla initiative, using public administration resources and coordinating with several governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, exemplifies such socially innovative action. Again, the coordination between governmental and non-governmental actors appears as a key factor in understanding why some socially innovative responses have greater social impacts than others.

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Notes

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- 1 The name 'Nou Barris Zona Nord' is used by the City Council as a specific unit of public service delivery in the Nou Barris district.
 - 2 One of the main social problems derived from the area's altitude is the fact that in Ciutat Meridiana most of the buildings do not have elevators. This produces enormous difficulties for, principally, elderly people and has inspired some social service programs specifically oriented toward enabling elderly people to get out of their homes. Beyond the absence of elevators in the most buildings, the problem of altitude is also expressed at the urban level in the geographical isolation of the high areas of Ciutat Meridiana and Torre Baró. Accordingly, one of the historical demands of the neighbourhood movement has been the provision of public elevators. Actually Torre Baró neighbourhood association is proposing to construct a cableway connecting Plaza Roja with the top of Torre Baró's neighbourhood at the entrance of the Collserola Park.
 - 3 It should be noted that this figure is the registered unemployment, and that real unemployment was probably higher.
 - 4 Compulsory high school, between ages 12 to 16.
 - 5 Vocational track of optional high school, between ages 16 to 18.
 - 6 Shared Educational Unit [Unitat d'Escolarització Compartida].
 - 7 One association in each neighbourhood: Ciutat Meridiana, Torre Baró and Vallbona. Ciutat Meridiana's Neighbourhood Association is the largest of the three.
 - 8 500x20 is an anti-evictions platform that has achieved a certain degree of citizen support because of its emphasis on defending the interest of those people affected by eviction processes regardless of whether or not they were related to mortgage contracts.
 - 9 REGESA is a public agency created by the Consell Comarcal del Barcelonès.
 - 10 A Fab-Lab is a laboratory producing small-scale objects through digital technologies. The City Council fostered this Project in Ciutat Meridiana in an attempt to bring a high added-value activity into the neighbourhood.
 - 11 Parents' associations [*Associacions de Mares i Pares*].
 - 12 The network Nou Barris Acull is devoted to promoting the welcoming of migrants and to give support to the civic associations of the area in order to meet the challenges related to the fact that Nou Barris is a district that receives a considerable inflow of foreign inhabitants.
 - 13 This platform emerged in 2009 in order to denounce how austerity measures have specially affected to this district of the city.
 - 14 Middle School [*Educación Secundaria Obligatoria*].
 - 15 Employment and Training Program [*Programa de Formació i Inserció*].
 - 16 Parents' association.