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Montseny, a sustainable rural policy in the periphery of the Barcelona's metropolitan area

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**MONTSENY,
A SUSTAINABLE RURAL POLICY IN THE PERIPHERY OF THE
BARCELONA'S METROPOLITAN AREA**

ERSA 210 Jonkoping Congress 19/23 08 2010

Agàpit Borràs, municipal architect of Montseny / Rafael Balanzó, architect

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“Spain constructed more new houses in 2006 than France, Germany and the United Kingdom combined.

*The Spanish real estate in last decade becomes 10.5% of PIB and in Europe 3.9%.
This kind of urban growth is unsustainable and damage the resources the territory.*

Somebody becomes rich, but the territory becomes poor .The metropolitan area of Barcelona has growth hard, meanwhile rural areas lost there identity and his natural resources, agriculture and mountain livestock, becomes everyday more residual.

Is not possible an unlimited growth in a limited territory”

1 BACKGROUND

With a population of 4 2 million inhabitants Barcelona is the sixth metropolitan region of the European Union, just behind London, Paris, the Dutch Randstad, the Ruhr and Madrid. 1.6 of these inhabitants they are in the municipality of Barcelona rest in the metropolitan area.

It is very dense Metropolis, highly concentrate in the space with a population of 2.300 inhabitants/km², well ahead of London, Athens or Rome.

With respect to Spain, Barcelona is to be considered the second capital of the country.

Metropolitan Barcelona, represents 11% of the Spanish population, 14% of the Gross Domestic Product, 21% of industrial employment. If we compare it to Madrid, we have that the municipality of Madrid has 2.9 million inhabitants for 1.6 of Barcelona (but the municipality of Madrid 600 Km² and Barcelona a little bit less than 100). The metropolitan region of Madrid is 5 million and Barcelona 4.2

The city and metropolitan area of Barcelona reached its present size during a period of very fast population growth on the 1960 and early 1970, in which practically doubled its size. This growth was similar to the one of many European cities in that period of fast rural-urban migration.

But in Spain took a rather chaotic form. In this period, Spain was ruled by an authoritarian political regime, that wasn't particularly kind on implementing its own planning regulations and investing in cities for the general well being of the population.

The result was a chaotic growth that severely damaged the urban core and created poor peripheral areas.

2 THE SPANISH DICTATORSHIP

The Franco's coup d'état against legal Spanish Republic is the beginning of the Spanish Civil War (1936)

Franco wins the Spanish Civil War (1939)

In the post War European countries (1945) promote housing rent, social concept of property and housing cooperatives.

1936 – 1939 – 1945 – 1975 – 1979

But Spanish Dictatorship promotes the contrary. To be owner, not tenant, individual concept of property and all kind of cooperatives are forbidden.

Franco died in 1975 and new elections took place in 1979: that means 40 years of dictatorship and these main goals were **engraved in minds** of many future generations and allowed easier “new patterns” to waste territory.

1947 Marshall Plan Excludes Spain

1950 Factory SEAT (touristic Spanish cars society)

1951 International relationship with USA

1952 International Eucharistic Congress (Roman Catholic Church)

1953 American and Catholic Church Agreements / bases USA / first SEAT 600

1955 Spain become member of the ONU

1969 first Motorway in Spain

In the period 1960 – 1970, low cost of energy allows more currency of tourism, second residences and the new urbanizations waste maritime coastal and mountains of metropolitan area of Barcelona.

Housing + car + motorway + plot of land (mountain / coast) = SPRAWL

The “new modernity” of SPRAWL was the “modern pattern” for the Dictatorship

- a) **Housing divisions**
- b) **Shopping centers**
- c) **Office parks and business**
- d) **Civic institutions**
- e) **Roadways**

“Being so destructive, the Sprawl has continued for so many years.

The reason is its seductive simplicity.

The Sprawl model is made up of 5 components and each component is separate from the others and can be placed and organized inside the territory, any which way”

(Andres Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk and Jeff Speck, authors of Suburban Nation: The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream)

Metropolitan urban dispersion is clearly differentiated from some traditional habitats. Isolated rural communities have a high level of self-sufficiency and organization, whereas extensions of the metropolis are dependent on the provision of urban services and transport, which increases the energy cost from the point of view of sustainability.

Urban dispersion favours developers and the economic and political system, due to land prices, social control, speed of execution of development and the inhabitants' need for automobiles.

In the USA after the Second War, the national government and the automobile sector desired the creation of a dispersed urban model.

Thousands and thousands of isolated houses cover a huge amount of territory due to their low density and with a total lack of social cohesion among their inhabitants. No public transport network and the constant need to use a private vehicle for any type of transportation.

The American model is not so distant and if in the USA it was programmed and consolidated during the post-Second World War years, in Catalonia this took place during the nineteen-sixties, with the American aid of the nineteen-fifties, the industrialization of the country and the mass production of the Seat 600.

Moreover, the outskirts of Barcelona have become an urban sprawl, where the typical elements of American suburbia are being progressively installed.

Houses, shopping centers, business parks, motorways, theme parks and villages deformed by the suburban model of housing developments.

It is difficult to make an isolated analysis of bioclimatic architecture in these models of dispersed development.

The model is so unsustainable, the amount of land used is so considerable and the dependence on the automobile is so necessary, that suggestions of all kinds could be made.

3 SUSTAINABLE HOUSING

I like the quotation on sustainable housing from Brian Edwards and Paul Hyett, authors of the *Rough Guide to Sustainability*

“Sustainable housing is sometimes presented as a simple exercise in the design of low energy buildings, avoiding another facet, not less important, focused on the creation of sustainable communities

The fight against social exclusion and energy efficiency are more closely related to housing than to any other type of building.

The efficient use of resources especially energy, must be associated with spatial and social dimensions and with the creation of stable communities.

Far too frequently the combination of technological innovations and cut-price utopian thinking, has given rise to very inefficient housing in terms of social cohesion and sustainable development”

These opinions of Brian Edwards and Paul Hyett follow on the definition of the Brundtland Commission, the Un Commission for the Environment of 1987, led by Gro Harlam Brundtland, that set out the three dimension of a sustainable development: **environmental, economic and social sustainability.**

4 THE ECOLOGY HAS COME INTO THE POWER

Ecology has come into the power and the authorities have created everywhere and very rapidly, environmental departments and organizations for all levels of the administration. The authorities have wanted to control this process and they have consequently filtered and domesticated a good portion of the rigor of ecological planning.

I have always been surprised by the speed with which political powers assimilate the objectives and ideas of ecology and the environment that are markedly critical of the market economy system.

I believe that the ecology is the negation of the logic of the market economy. Ecology, due to the additional values that it introduces into economic calculations, constitutes a subversive discipline.

For capitalism, the only objective is profit.

Ecology, on the other hand, introduces extrinsic parameters:

Optimal use of natural resources, biological equilibrium, maximum durability of things, energy saving, carrying capacity of the land, long-term intangible returns, etc.

But the government, little by little,
Carefully dilutes all these concepts in order to control the process,
and finally, it does.

Ecological criticism of the market economy has been strongly mediated, not only in Spain, but also around the world with the direct intervention of the USA.

At the second great United Nations Conference held in Rio in 1992 the USA directly criticized the concept of **eco-development** and forced the United Nations to accept the concept of **sustainable development**, a politically correct euphemism removed from any criticism of economic liberalism.

The president of the USA, George Bush (senior), put it clearly at the Earth Summit in Rio 1992: **“The American way of life is not negotiable”**
Here, George Bush was directly defending the interests of economic liberalism and the big multinationals, **laissez faire, laissez passer**.

Nixon’s 1970 electoral speech already incorporated ecological and environmental arguments.

Meanwhile, the business world had already realized some time earlier how much the business of ecology was worth.

In 1970, Earth Day was celebrated in the USA, and alongside the government were the most well-known multinationals: Procter & Gamble, General Electric, Goodrich, DuPont, Standard Oil, among others, the same monopolies that create most pollution. Meaning that from very beginning the industry of environmental protection has participated in the ecological movement.
Government with its publicity campaigns provides free marketing and industries do business.

For example: Two partners can double their business, one pollutes and the other ones cleans up. The marketing is provided free by the government.

The debate is quite complex and must have a cure for the pretence of modernity and progressivism of this process. For this reason we need to be more rigorous. On the whole, the areas of ecology and the environment are profitable and popular, above all at political level, but it is not rigorous to remain on the periphery of the process.
Must we ask people to pay more to save the planet? Many people will not do this and in the majority of cases they cannot because they are too impoverished.

For the economy market, the Earth is, pure and simple, only a profit, a reason to get money. The companies are directly responsible for the pollution process.

According to Paul Hawken, if in 1984, President Reagan hadn't eliminated the efficiency standards for automobiles manufactured in the USA, this would have saved to the country more petroleum than they imported from the Persian Gulf region in 1991.

5 POST WAR TOWN PLANNING MODELS

At the beginning of 21st century, proposals that emerge from Ecology and Environment are still uncomfortable, and municipal town planning departments, reflect, in many cases, their nervousness in approaching environmental proposals. However the environmental contributions are quite interesting and innovative and we have already described them.

On the other hand, the contributions of town planning from the second half of the 20th century, after the Second World War, are long way from the richness and content of the proposals of Bauhaus, the Athens Charter, and the modernist movement at the beginning of the century. The post-war town planning models are quite banal:

Golf courses + hotels + apartments
Marinas + hotels + apartments
Ski resorts + hotels + apartments
Theme parks + hotels + apartments

These models greatly deform the municipalities located alongside, make territorial balance difficult because of their size and generate dynamics that are difficult to change. However, today, at the beginning of the 21st century, this model is still in many territorial proposals

6 DATA OF METROPOLITAN REGION OF BARCELONA

Some years ago a study carried out by the Centre for Territorial Policy at the Technical University of Catalonia (UPC), led by Josep Roca, analyzing the growth model for the metropolitan area of Barcelona between 1991 and 1996, found that between 1970 and 1980, the norm was that between 80% and 90% of the population worked in their home municipality. It was considered that if this proportion fell below 50%, the urban model posed serious problems to sustainability. In 1996, in the metropolitan region, 44% of the population worked outside of their home municipality.

These data clearly show the existence, within the metropolitan area, of the dispersed model, which is not functionally viable, ecologically or socially beneficial.

A study undertaken by the Barcelona Metropolitan Area Association of Municipalities (MMAMB) and the Technical University of Catalonia (UPC) analysed the changes in land use within the metropolitan area between 1977 and 2000, as well as another study carried out by professors Francesc Muñoz and Marc Sagues, of the Town Planning Observatory of the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB), include very interesting data for evaluating architectural typologies in the metropolitan region.

They found that low-density residential use makes up a large proportion of the metropolitan region. In 2000 it included 17.5% of dwellings in the metropolitan area

and practically 42% of the whole metropolitan region. At the end of 1970, a thousand dispersed housing developments occupied a quarter of the metropolitan territory. The majority began as second residences in isolated neighbourhoods and they have now become permanent dwellings.

Five out of 10 dwellings constructed on the last two decades at el Vallès Oriental are houses. In total 24,947 dwellings have constructed. The importance of what is happening with municipalities of fewer than 2.000 inhabitants – near then half of the municipalities in Catalonia – is critical, since growth in the number of houses can worsen further still the quality of the territory.

7 MONTSENY NATURAL PARK

The Montseny Natural Park has a surface area of 30,010 hectares, which stretch from the buttresses of La Calma to the summits of Matagalls and Les Agudes. It is considered to be a Natural Park thanks to both its natural wealth and its scientific interest. Additionally, it was declared a Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO. The Barcelona and Girona Provincial Councils manage this space in collaboration with the towns and willages within it.

Montseny (528 m / 320 inhabitants) is a little village in the periphery of metropolitan area, in the middle of Natural Park of Montseny beside Tordera's river.

This village lays over steep and rugged ground and forms the central part of the Montseny mountain range, encompassing the peaks of Les Agudes, Matagalls and Ouig Drau. The former Sant Marçal Benedictine monastery, dating to the 11th century can be found here.

Montseny will to carry out, a rural policy of sustainable growth.
Montseny will to share these projects with other experiences in the Congress of European Regional Science Association (ERSA 2010)

8 THE MUNICIPALITY OF MONTSENY: STRATEGY AND GOALS

Strengthen with facilities the centrality of the municipality inside the Montseny's valley

To take care of the population, his roots and territory's identity

Take part in territorial balance of Catalonia, as Catalan government carry out.

To avoid a dependency of economic sectors such as tourism, restaurants and weather seasons and create new economics sources.

To introduce and improve the basic facilities

Montseny needs to fix the people.

9 PROJECTS

Aiming to diversify the economic framework, Montseny will carry out these projects:

Nursery (it is a way to ensure a scholar continuity inside the rural village) (2010)

Scholar restaurant (to lunch together besides de primary school (2010)

Housing for young people (to help young people to get a house) (2011)

Central heating (take profit of natural resources and to save energy) (2014 -)

Offices for enterprising young people (foster training of young) (2010)

Slaughterhouse (It is a necessary tool for the municipal economy (2010)

Little shops (to improve the mix the urban uses of the village) (2010)

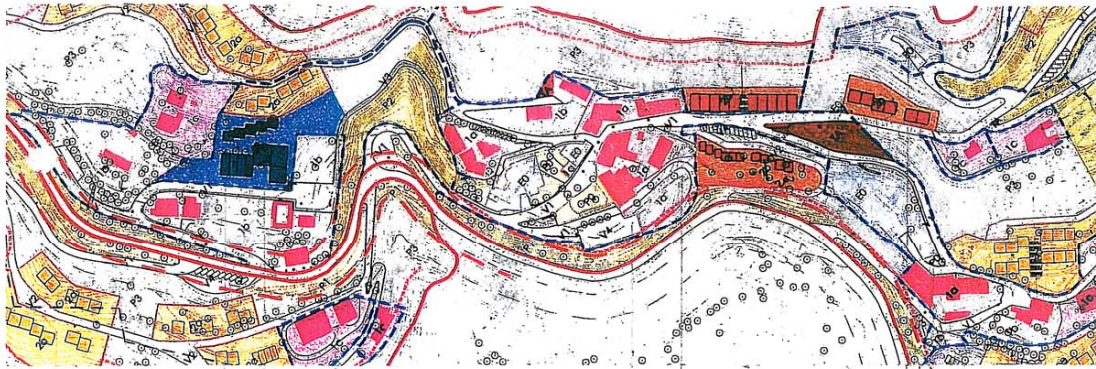
Agricultural shop (to sell agricultural foodstuffs direct to buyer (2010)

School of shepherds (to ensure the continuity of mountain livestock) (2010)

Project for megalithic monument (to protect the megalithic monument) (2010)

Old people's home (Geriatric) (to ensure quality of life for old people) (2011 -

Agàpit Borràs, municipal architect / Rafael Balanzó, architect
Montseny, January 2010



Housing for young people

megalithic monument

Nursery

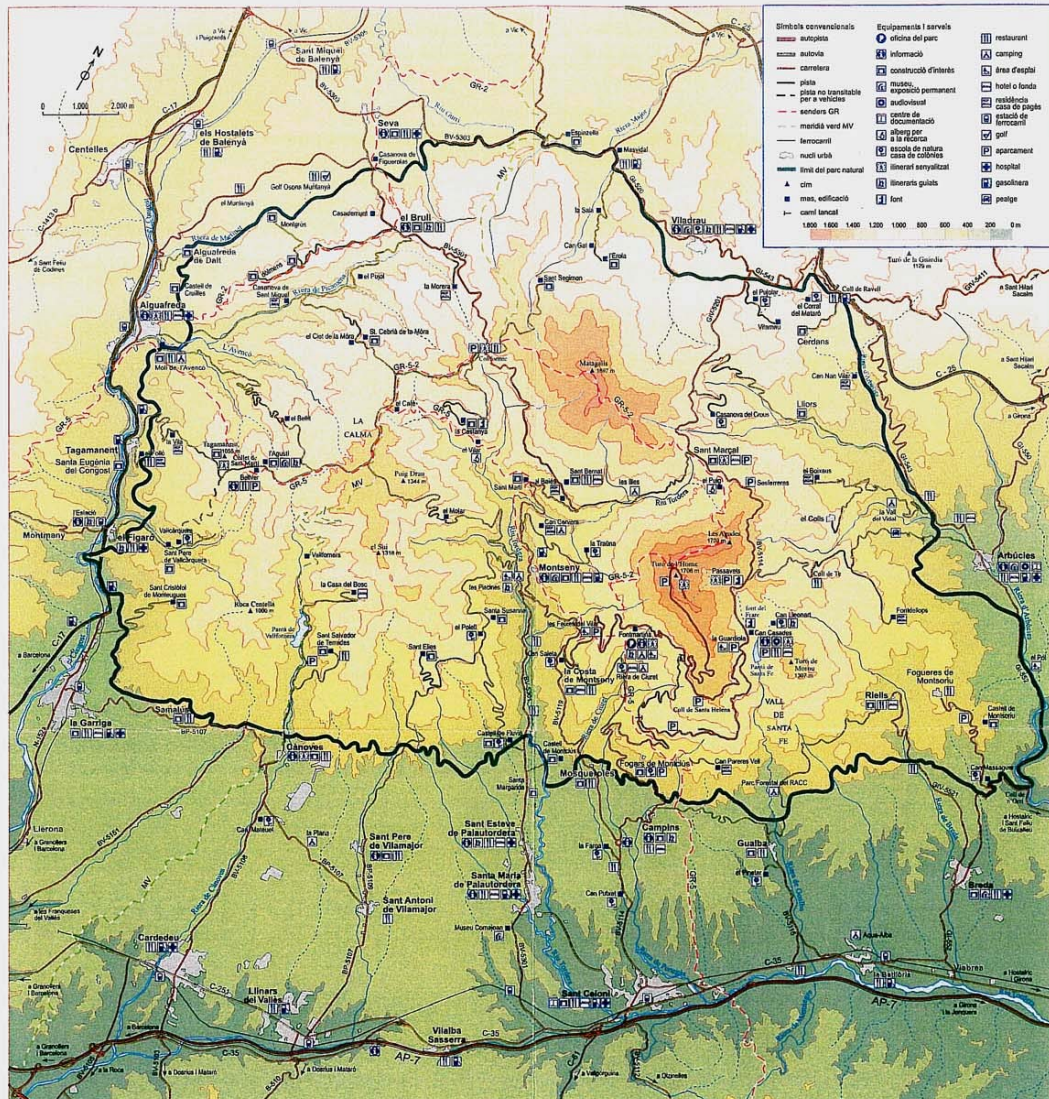
Offices for enterprising young people

Geriatric

Scholar restaurant

Agricultural shop

Slaughterhouse



Itineraris senyalitzats per caminar

1. **L'empedrat de Morou**
Punt inici: Can Casades – Santa Fe del Montseny
Longitud: 5.500 m
Durada: 2 hores
2. **El sot de l'Infern**
Punt inici: plana del Coll - Fontmartina
Longitud: 3.500 m
Durada: 1 hora i 30 minuts
3. **Collet de Sant Martí-Tagamanent**
Punt inici: collet de Sant Martí
Longitud: 480 m
Durada: 15 minuts
4. **Sant Marçal-Matagalls**
Punt inici: coll de Sant Marçal
Longitud: 3.800 m
Durada: 1 hora i 20 minuts
5. **Collformic-Matagalls**
Punt inici: Collformic
Longitud: 3.400 m
Durada: 1 hora i 30 minuts

6. **Font de Passavets-Turó de l'Home**
Punt inici: font de Passavets
Longitud: 3.850 m
Durada: 1 hora i 40 minuts
7. **Turó de l'Home- Les Agudes**
Punt inici: coll Sesbasses - Turó de l'Home
Longitud: 1.550 m
Durada: 40 minuts
8. **Sant Marçal-Les Agudes**
Punt inici: coll de Sant Marçal
Longitud: 4.500 m
Durada: 2 hores i 30 minuts
9. **Fontmartina-Turó de l'Home**
Punt inici: plana del Coll - Fontmartina
Longitud: 4.200 m
Durada: 2 hores

Senders de Gran Recorregut:

GR 2: passa pel sector septentrional del massís del Montseny.
GR 5: travessa longitudinalment el Parc Natural del Montseny per la seva meitat meridional.

