

Why do we want to win back Barcelona? Principles and commitments to guide the way

We, the residents of Barcelona, love our city. Its diversity, its friendly and open spirit, its vitality and the activist character of its people. But we don't like a lot of what's gone on in recent years: the growth in inequalities and job insecurity, the infringement of hard-won rights, the irresponsible sale of public assets, and the lack of an exciting collective project. **We're losing Barcelona and we want to win it back.**

To do this successfully we need a process that involves many people and that allows us to base our work on concrete goals. This process can't start with a closed political manifesto. **Proposals to transform the city and its institutions must be drawn up collectively**, through existing initiatives and through others that we'll build along the way with the best voices of the social, neighbourhood and union movements, with professionals and workers from different sectors, with political organizations, and with contributions from citizens.

We are, nevertheless, very clear about **some of the key principles and commitments** that characterize our project:

1. Winning to guarantee basic rights and a decent life for all.

There are a growing number of people in Barcelona whose most basic needs are not being met. We can't allow this. Municipal institutions have to harness all of their powers and resources to end this situation. **The right to quality healthcare can't just be a privilege of the few.** Barcelona has more powers than other cities to prevent this. Free, universal, equitable and efficient healthcare must be guaranteed in every neighbourhood, and it shouldn't be run for profit. Nobody should be denied healthcare because of their

administrative status: public health depends on the health of each and every person. We must act to end avoidable waiting lists and to increase the economic and human resources available to primary healthcare and public health in general. We want healthcare that is more human, fair and personalized, focused on people's real needs and not on unnecessary medicalization and use of technology.

The city's future depends on quality public education. As a consequence of the cuts, the number of teachers and classroom and special needs assistants has fallen. Staff absences are covered late and inadequately, and class sizes have grown.

If we want the right to education to be a right that is accessible to all, the City Council has to demand that the Catalan Government increases the economic and human resources for public schools and that it corrects the favourable treatment currently given to private schools that receive state funding (*escuelas concertadas*).

We want a city without segregated schools. A city that invests in music schools, sports academies and educational leisure activities, and that adopts the Agenda 21 for education as its own. We want to reverse the privatization of nursery schools, create new ones, and enable their management by families and communities.

A decent life is impossible without decent housing. In the current context of economic crisis, the City Council mustn't use its resources to collaborate in the eviction of people from their homes. We want a municipal policy that prioritizes public, rented, and cooperative housing, as well as the use of vacant buildings. We want an exhaustive list of

empty apartments and effective sanctions for banks and real estate companies who adopt antisocial housing practices. Our demands for housing, healthcare and education must be applied to all social services and other basic needs.

The City Council should support **local wellbeing** with policies that combat social exclusion, serve socially and relationally vulnerable groups, and promote individual autonomy.

We don't want a city where people suffer from malnutrition, are forced to live without electricity or suffer extortionate rises in the price of public transport. The powers and resources of the City Council should work to ensure that all Barcelona residents enjoy a **minimum income, adequate food and a sufficient supply of water, electricity and gas**. Mobility by metro, bus, tram and bike across the whole metropolitan area must be improved, and at affordable prices.

We want everyone, from children to the elderly, wherever they live, to be able to enjoy public spaces and friendly, safe and inclusive neighbourhoods.

2. Winning to push for a socially and environmentally fair economy

It will be impossible to guarantee rights and a decent life for all without transforming the current economic and production model. In recent years, the costs of the economic crisis have been borne by ordinary people, while public policies have benefited large financial, real estate and tourism interests.

This trend is destroying the region and producing an economy based on speculation.

We want to reverse this situation and promote a social and sustainable economy that serves both current and future generations. The transition to a new economy requires new forms of work, production, consumption, distribution and community life.

Rethinking the model of tourism is one of the first tasks at hand. Around 7.5 million

tourists visit Barcelona each year, but while the profits from tourism are concentrated in a few hands, the costs are suffered by the great majority of the men and women of the city.

It is necessary to comprehensively change this model with the participation of everyone involved. Employment in this sector can't be precarious and unsustainable. The trends towards the closure of public spaces and the expulsion of the most economically vulnerable from their neighbourhoods must be stopped.

We must prevent the city's essential nature from being changed. We don't want a theme park. We want liveable, inclusive cities and neighbourhoods that provide decent work, just as international human rights organizations demand.

Municipal fiscal policy must be progressive and ecologically oriented. Sanctions against empty apartments, rebates for premises using renewable energies, tourism taxes, tax measures against land speculation, increasing block tariffs for water consumption, and pay-as-you-throw waste policies are essential tools to achieve this goal.

The transition to a socially and environmentally fair economy must be seen as an opportunity for, rather than as an obstacle to, development.

The refurbishment of housing; the development of energy efficiency measures, urban agriculture; care and support services for children, the elderly and other dependent people; the promotion of cultural activities and research into ecologically sustainable technologies can be a source of both decent employment and healthy lives for all.

We don't want a city that sells its urban heritage to the highest bidder. We want institutions that evaluate the social and environmental impact of public procurement decisions. We want to move towards the municipalization of water provision and the re-localization of energy production. We want to protect local trade, promote social entrepreneurship and reinforce cooperative networks as part of the identity of our city and as a way of generating sustainable jobs.

3. Winning to democratize public institutions and decide what kind of city we want

None of our proposals can be achieved without changing the rules of the game. We have to ensure that public institutions respond to the will of the people rather than to the interests of major economic powers or a handful of leaders used to working behind closed doors.

Decisions must be taken, whenever possible, by the people themselves. When it is necessary for decisions to be taken indirectly, this should be done by representatives subject to oversight. **Effective oversight of institutions requires transparent and accessible information and mechanisms to combat corruption.**

Relevant data held by public institutions should be made public. They should be easily accessible to everyone. We want independent citizen audits with the ability to launch judicial proceedings if irregularities are found. Citizens must also participate in the oversight of municipal budgets and debts.

All municipal bodies and management positions must be audited immediately.

Many municipal institutions are necessary to guarantee the wellbeing of citizens, but expensive and opaque public bodies that serve special interests also exist. An independent plan must be drawn up to streamline tasks, increase transparency, review the executive salaries of all municipal services and bodies, and set salary ceilings.

Citizens have the right to make decisions about the things that affect them.

We want a complete reform of the mechanisms of citizen participation to make them effective and to include criteria of gender parity and equality. We want district councils to be directly elected. Local consultations, initiatives and public meetings must be heeded. All decisions that have a significant impact on public budgets, such as urban remodelling and macro-projects, should

be subject to binding public consultations.

Democratizing the city also means recognizing and promoting local initiatives and networks of self-managed public goods and services. From cultural and social centres to consumption cooperatives, community gardens, time banks and early childhood facilities for families. Public institutions should give these groups spaces, resources and technical support while respecting their autonomy and not instrumentalizing them.

4. Winning to make an ethical commitment to citizens

To take back the city from the elites who have taken it hostage, it won't be enough to propose new public policies. We need a fundamental change in the way of doing politics. In a democracy worthy of the name, **all citizens, men and women, should be able to take on roles in public management and political representation.** The municipal level, as the level of government closest to the people, is the perfect place to put this ideal into practice.

The defence of a closer link between citizens and their representatives starts with combating the illusion that we can do things better because of our individual qualities.

Anyone who becomes a representative must be held accountable and work within set limits. If not, they will be susceptible to pressures and corruption by the powers that be.

We want people who aspire to represent us in public office to make a **binding ethical commitment.** This contract between citizens and their representatives should bring politics closer to the people and recover its most noble meaning.

Limits on salaries and terms of office must be set. Representatives of the popular will must be appropriately compensated for their work and responsibilities, but they shouldn't enjoy unnecessary privileges. Their income and assets should be regularly published.

We believe that setting a two term limit for all elected officials would prevent the professionalization of politics and allow the involvement of a wide variety of people in the running of our institutions.

The unnecessary accumulation of multiple positions and functions must be prevented.

This measure is essential to prevent the concentration of power in the hands of a few, as well as to guarantee representatives' full dedication to their public roles.

Elected representatives must be held accountable by the people and govern in a transparent way.

We want elected officials to explain their political decisions and subject them to debate. They should also publish, without exceptions, the contents of their diary of meetings and work agenda. Citizens must be given mechanisms to denounce representatives who fail to meet their commitments without having to wait to vote in

the next elections. To do this, methods such as recall elections for councillors and mayors must be introduced.

If we want to do politics differently, election campaign spending must be reduced drastically.

We must also do away with loans from financial institutions that generate debts that are incompatible with political autonomy.

Any elected official who leaves public office must be able to go back to their career in the best possible circumstances and under the same conditions as other citizens. However, **the revolving door of the municipality must stop.** There must be a moratorium of five years on taking up senior positions in major companies related to the sector in which representatives have held public office and a complete ban on taking up positions on the boards of such companies.