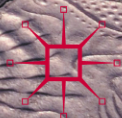




# THE GLOBAL CULTURAL CAPITAL

Addressing the Citizen and  
Producing the City in Barcelona

**MARI PAZ BALIBREA**



# The Contemporary City

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In recent decades cities have been variously impacted by neoliberalism, economic crises, climate change, industrialization and post-industrialization and widening inequalities. So what is it like to live in these contemporary cities? What are the key drivers shaping cities and neighborhoods? To what extent are people being bound together or driven apart? How do these factors vary cross-culturally and cross nationally? This book series aims to explore the various aspects of the contemporary urban experience from a firmly interdisciplinary and international perspective. With editors based in Amsterdam and Hong Kong, the series is drawn on an axis between old and new cities in the West and East.

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Mari Paz Balibrea

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*To my parents, in memoriam: Barcelonian lives without cultural  
capital*

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## Introduction: Still Paying Homage to Barcelona

Is there anything new remaining to be said about Barcelona? The city's international prestige is nowadays indisputable. It has become a commonplace in the *European Cities Monitor* – which lists the top European cities for business expansion according to the opinion of senior executives from leading businesses – to find Barcelona at the top of that list (Cushman and Wakefield 2010) in the quality of life category.<sup>1</sup> Equally, its stature as a tourist destination does not even require an argument. Desiring Barcelona comes for the potential visitor as naturally as breathing, its status endlessly validated by armies of preceding tourists left in awe by its charms. In more specialized circles, the ones this book now joins, saturation takes different forms. Barcelona's transformation in the post-Francoist period is widely considered among architects, urban planners, and local politicians around the world, as a model because of its perceived ability to reconcile economic restructuring with spatial regeneration and the widening of the citizens' right to the city (McNeill 1999; Kirby 2004; Marshall 2004a; Busquets 2005: 345–445).<sup>2</sup> As such, the Barcelona case has been widely studied in academic contexts and emulated across the world by policymakers and other local institutional agents (González 2011). But no less abundant have been the critical accounts of this transformation as the end of progressive urban life and the silencing of democratic voices at the service of global capital.

In joining such a crowded scene, this book pays, once again, homage to the exceptional Barcelona case and claims to illuminate previously untold