

# DC.17-18

**AUTOR:** MARIE ANN PASCUAL

**UNIVERSIDAD:** MÁSTER HISTORIA, ARTE, ARQUITECTURA Y CIUDAD, 2007-2008, FPC

**TÍTULO:** POBLENOU (BUSINESS). CENTRAL PARK, BARCELONA

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** JEAN NOUVEL - DIAGONAL MAR - TUNNEL OF FLOWERS - BOTANICAL GARDEN - HISTORICAL REMMANTS - OLIVA ARTÈS FACTORY - 22@ BARCELONA - ST MARTÍ DE PROVENÇALS - 19TH CENTURY ARCHITECTURE - INDUSTRIAL ARCHITECTURE - LAYERS - JUST LIKE A DREAM

---

**NÚMERO DE PÁGINAS:** 8

**NÚMERO DE CARACTERES CON ESPACIOS:** 11.811

**SECCION:**

**04. TALLER LIBRE**

**ARTICULO:**

**04/4**



# POBLENOU (BUSINESS) CENTRAL PARK, BARCELONA

Marie Ann Pascual

Located at the heart of the industrial district Provençals del Poblenou, adjacent to the traditional business corridor of Barcelona which is Avenida Diagonal, the Poblenou Central Park is a recently created large urban business park measuring 58,000 square meters<sup>1</sup>. The main objective of its creation was to develop a favourable environment capable of promoting any business activity, especially those dealing with avant-garde technologies capable of boosting the Catalan economy.<sup>2</sup> The idea is to attract global business companies who consider establishing themselves in the city. This could not be possible in an urban area facing decline. It is for this reason that adequate spaces, like an urban park, and acceptable means of communications are required to suite their needs. The central park is envisioned to eventually be surrounded by office buildings.

The area is characterized by declining industrial land uses which is seen as a great potential for transformation. Evidenced by the presence of old factories, railway tracks and brick chimneys, these remnants of the past, which comprise the industrial heritage and identity of the district, will be preserved for the benefit of the city. Despite the transformation achieved, the original urban fabric was slightly altered. The park is one of the biggest in the city. It is delimited by the Carrer de Marroc, the Carrer de Bac de Roda and the Avenida Diagonal. Unfortunately, its interior is also sub-divided by the vehicular streets Carrer d' Espronceda, Carrer de Bilbao, Carrer Pere IV and the Carrer Cristobal de Moura. Although pedestrian traffic prevails on these bisecting streets and traffic density was reduced, these traversing streets still act like some sort of barriers which is not a common feature in Barcelona parks. To solve the problem, the Carrer d'Espronceda was covered and adorned with a "tunnel of flowers"<sup>3</sup> whose vines have not yet grown.

Designed like a botanical garden with 1000 trees, 5000 shrubs, almost 11000 vines, 35 palm trees and 5000 cactuses<sup>4</sup>, the park also presents urban leisure activities for the young and not so very young, with special attractions, restored historical remnants, an appreciation for the Catalan culture and a world of make believe and imagination. The urban park will be a mysterious space full of diverse surprises abundant with vegetations and a system of light and shadows that will vary depending on the seasons of the year. It will be a sunny park in winter. In springtime plants and flowers will begin to grow and then it will transform itself into a shadow-filled area during the hot summers<sup>5</sup>. This was the explanation given by Jean Nouvel during the inauguration of the park. Despite the good intentions, the park is not rid of errors.

1. Josep Moix, "El parque central de Poblenou", *Paisajismo. Revista Técnica para el profesional del Paisajismo*, 7, 2006; p.14.

2. 'Asociacion de propietarios del PERI Parc Central, in <http://www.salvemcanricart.org/documents/PROPOSTAPROPIETAT.pdf>

3. 'Central Park of Poblenou', in <http://www.geocities.com/medit1976c3/poblenou.htm>

4. 'Arte & Cultura,' in [http://www.abpress.net/Jean\\_Nouvel\\_Parc\\_Central\\_de\\_Poblenou.html](http://www.abpress.net/Jean_Nouvel_Parc_Central_de_Poblenou.html)

5. 'Arte & Cultura,' in [http://www.abpress.net/Jean\\_Nouvel\\_Parc\\_Central\\_de\\_Poblenou.html](http://www.abpress.net/Jean_Nouvel_Parc_Central_de_Poblenou.html)

## URBANISTIC PLANS

---

There are four normative plans created to regulate the process of rehabilitation of the Poblenou Central Park. These are: the Plan Especial de Protección del Patrimonio Arquitectónico de Sant Martí, approved in May 26, 2000; Modificación del Plan General Metropolitano en las Áreas Industriales del Poblenou, approved in April 28, 2000; Plan Especial de Reforma Interior del Parc Central, approved in October 29, 2001, and Plan Especial de Mejora Urbana de la Unidad de Actuación I del PERI del Parc Central, approved in March 21, 2003.<sup>6</sup>

6. 'Asociacion de Propietarios del PERI Parc Central. Parc Central de Negocios: Arquitectura de Vanguardia para una Ciudad de Vanguardia,' in <http://www.salvemcanricart.org/documents/PROPOSTAPROPIETAT.PDF>; 'Normativa,' in <http://www.22barcelona.com/content/blogcategory/39/125>

7. 'Un nuevo modelo de ciudad. Espacios públicos de calidad,' in <http://www.22barcelona.com/content/view/86/131/lang.es>

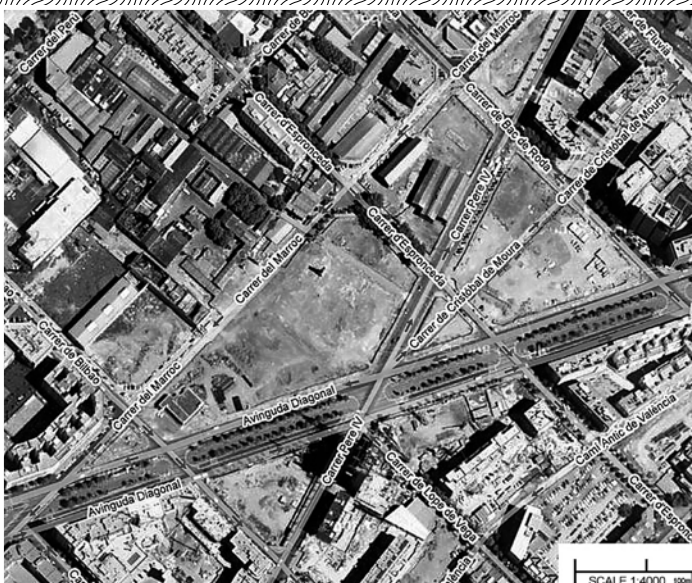
8. Josep Moix, "El parque central de Poblenou", *Paisajismo. Revista Técnica para el profesional del Paisajismo*, 7, 2006; p.14. Other data indicates an area of 60,000 square meters (<http://www.jeannouvel.com>); 55,000 square meters ('Arte & Cultura,' in [http://www.abpress.net/Jean\\_Nouvel\\_Parc\\_Central\\_de\\_Poblenou.html](http://www.abpress.net/Jean_Nouvel_Parc_Central_de_Poblenou.html)); 55.600 square meters. El Parc del Poblenou se estrenará sin riego,' in <http://www.arqui-news.com/obra/el-parc-del-poblenou-se-estrenara-sin-riego>

In 2001, the City Council of Barcelona approved a new urbanistic plan with the intention of transforming the old industrial area of Poblenou. This new plan will allow the requalification of old redundant industrial sites converting them into urban areas destined to accommodate technologically oriented business enterprises. Through these normative plans and through the urbanistic plan 22@Barcelona whose approval was based on the purpose of transforming a city sector, ten percent of former industrial land uses were given over to new public spaces and green zones. The majority of these industrial areas were privately owned. Through this intervention, an accumulated 114,000 square meters<sup>7</sup> area were designated to urban parks, plazas, pedestrian zones and pedestrianized streets. The creation of the Poblenou Central Park is one such case where it already occupies an area of 58,000 square meters<sup>8</sup> making it one of the major parks in the city.

The creation of the Poblenou Central (business) Park was not primarily intended as a gift to the city or to its inhabitants. Its creation had its own motives and it is to serve the needs of the interested prospective global business companies, together with their economy-boosting intensive knowledge-based activities and corresponding supporting infrastructures that the city of Barcelona will benefit from. They are the ones who will benefit largely from the creation of this botanical park while the citizenry in general takes second stage. But in the meantime, it can be considered the people's park. Easy access to any part of the city is primordial in business districts. This signifies the rehabilitation of deteriorated structures, provision of open spaces and the creation of access streets. True to the fact that green spaces are needed within the city, the economic factor of having a central park of such dimension should be considered. The price per square meter area of urban land rises ridiculously, thanks to real estate speculations. Together with this rehabilitation will be the inevitable construction of new office buildings and hotels that will surround the urban business park as an economic repercussion. This will definitely change the district's function and original identity despite efforts made in the conservation of some industrial remnants. The district's identity as an industrial area will remain only in its history.



01 ACTUAL PARC OF POBLENOU



02 CENTRAL PARK POBLENOU SITE PLANS. BEFORE AND AFTER



03 EVOLUTION OF THE OLIVA-ARTÈS FACTORY SITE

## THE OLD OLIVA - ARTÈS FACTORY

---

Poblenou was a Barcelona suburb within the district of Sant Martí de Provençals. Its origin was a nucleus that grew due to the influx of immigrant inhabitants attracted by the establishment of textile and machinery factories. Industrialization was initiated in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century through the exploitation of grasslands. By the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, various chemicals factories, ropes for ships factories, potato factories, three dye factories, five flour mills and various textile factories were registered<sup>9</sup>. This marked the identity of the district wherein names like *el Manchester Catalan* or *el Obrador de Barcelona*<sup>10</sup> were associated.

One of these factories was the Oliva – Artès Factory. Unlike its neighbours, this was a factory that produced motors and innovative machinery<sup>11</sup>. In the middle part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century it was converted into smaller shops by the workers cooperative union, but they decided to maintain its name. At the onset of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, this industrial activity was totally abandoned due to the creation of the 22@Barcelona urbanistic plan which involved the transformation of industrial areas to commercial and business areas. Since transformation did not occur overnight, the industrial sites and factories were abandoned leaving the place attractive to squatter settlements. This industrial site was immediately occupied by caravans, and the factory buildings were converted into barracks to house families of eleven children or so, per family. The place was filled with junks of all sorts which the squatter families could take advantage of by selling its parts. The Barcelona City Council began to evict the illegal occupants that by the year 2003 seventy families still remained<sup>12</sup>. Three years later, the site was cleared off the debris of industrialization and illegal land occupation except for two obsolete industrial buildings and an old brick chimney that still stands on the site. These are the remains of the old factory Oliva - Artès.

At present, this factory building was listed and considered valuable to national heritage, but just like any “container” it also has to be “contained”. Public pleas and mayor’s opinions varied from a public library, Barcelona’s Centre for Architecture, main office for the Colegio de Arquitectos de Cataluña, or of “a future use which will be coherent to the district’s future function capable of enhancing the social use of the park.”<sup>13</sup>

9. Fabre Fornaguera, Jaume; J.M. Huertas Claveria. *Tots els barris de Barcelona*. Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1976.

10. Fabre Fornaguera, Jaume; J.M. Huertas Claveria. *Tots els barris de Barcelona*. Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1976.

11. Blanca Cia. 'Fabrica de Oliva-Artes,' *El País*, Barcelona. 6 abril de 2008 in <http://www.e-barcelona.org/index.php?name=News&file=article&sid=8807>

12. 'Cercos a los asentamientos gitanos de Barcelona,' in [http://www.elpais.com/articulo/cataluna/Cercos/asentamientos/gitanos/Barcelona/elpepuespcat/20030201elpecat\\_1/Tes](http://www.elpais.com/articulo/cataluna/Cercos/asentamientos/gitanos/Barcelona/elpepuespcat/20030201elpecat_1/Tes)

13. Blanca Cia. 'Fabrica de Oliva-Artes,' *El País*, Barcelona. 6 abril de 2008 in <http://www.e-barcelona.org/index.php?name=News&file=article&sid=8807>; 'Inician la construcción del parque central del Poblenou, diseñado por Jean Nouvel,' in [http://actualidad.terra.es/provincias/barcelona/articulo/inician\\_poblenou\\_jean\\_nouvel\\_863091.htm](http://actualidad.terra.es/provincias/barcelona/articulo/inician_poblenou_jean_nouvel_863091.htm)



## NOUVEL'S PARK

---

The area designated for the park is bounded by major thoroughfares Avenida Diagonal, Carrer Bac de Roda, Carrer Pere IV and Carrer de Bilbao. In order to create the desired degree of accessibility, the streets Marroc, Cristobal de Moura and D' Espronceda were opened, strangely subdividing the park which was further isolated by perimeter walls of three meters in height. To compensate this "inevitable" error, the perimeter walls were intended to be covered with another security measure—red bougainvillea. This seasonal blooming vine grows aggressively and is characterised by hard thorns and prolific branches. It serves its purpose well as a natural barrier for security reasons. To integrate the park parcels separated by Carrer d' Espronceda, the street was lined with steel arches designed to hold the "tunnel of flowers" and lighting fixtures under which vehicles will pass at a reduced speed. Aside from this, the sidewalks were widened to a maximum of seven meters<sup>14</sup> to favour pedestrian circulation.

14. Un nuevo modelo de ciudad. Espacios públicos de calidad', in <http://www.22barcelona.com/content/view/86/131/lang/es/>

15. 'Arte & Cultura', in [http://www.abpress.net/Jean\\_Nouvel\\_Parc\\_Central\\_de\\_Poblenou.html](http://www.abpress.net/Jean_Nouvel_Parc_Central_de_Poblenou.html)

16. This is in contradiction to the statement presented by Garden Tona in 'El Parc del Poblenou se estrenará sin riego,' in <http://www.arquitectos.com/obra/el-parc-del-poblenou-se-estrenara-sin-riego/>

17. 'Inician la construcción del parque central del Poblenou, diseñado por Jean Nouvel,' in [http://actualidad.terra.es/provincias/barcelona/articulo/inician\\_poblenou\\_jean\\_nouvel\\_863091.htm](http://actualidad.terra.es/provincias/barcelona/articulo/inician_poblenou_jean_nouvel_863091.htm)

"It will be a sunny park in winter. In springtime plants and flowers will begin to blossom and then it will transform itself into a shadow-filled area during the hot summers<sup>15</sup>". This was how Jean Nouvel envisioned the (botanical) park. He added that the real inauguration of the park should be within five years time when the trees and vegetations have sufficiently grown to display the play of lights and shadows that he intended. He continued saying that he designed the park giving consideration to environmental criteria, that is, watering of plants will be done by droplets emanating from a big reservoir of groundwater (considering the water scarcity the city is facing). The brighter side of the picture is the principal tree specie he specified, the weeping willow. Aside from the poetic aspect of this specie, the beauty of which are the willows's graceful sweeping low branches that droop to create a charming dramatic canopy. Since the park needed a fast way of attaining character and value, this tree specimen is an excellent choice because it grows fast providing immediate shade—within a years time. It has a reputation of absorbing standing water or water in puddles. Although often seen near rivers or wetlands, this tree specie has a reputation of growing just about anywhere, capable of tolerating drought<sup>16</sup> and can help in the prevention of soil erosion. On top of which it is a litter-free tree.

Just like a dream, Nouvel designed an urban park linked to a world of imagination and child play (for now). He provided recreational equipments for infants, children and adults to serve as a link between the park and the city's inhabitants. Among these are the areas for infant play, table tennis, boxes for petanca, individual seats, a Sardana plaza, aromatic spaces, the well of the world, rocks ramp, the nests and sky wells, "cabañas under the rain", islands under a cupola. These names sound so fantastic in a dream-like world segregated from city life by bougainvillea-lined walls with peek-a-boo glass panels interrupting the harshness of the perimeter wall.

The park project costed some 18 million Eurodollars<sup>17</sup>. Aesthetically, the planned vegetation should cover all areas and grow to the desired effect the architect planned. He intended to create a place where people can sit, relax or read a book. Hopefully, the predestined "urban jungle" would turn out to be a beautiful park considering the expensive economical and ecological maintenance the park will incur in the years to come, despite all arguments discussed concerning sustainability.