

Barcelona City Council's educational renewal and its photographic diffusion (1908-1936)

La renovación escolar del Ayuntamiento de Barcelona y su difusión fotográfica (1908-1936)

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Abstract:

Barcelona City Council's actions in the framework of Catalonia's educational renewal movement of the early decades of the twentieth century were very significant. They involved a series of measures to improve education, hygiene, and childcare provision, and to create schools and introduce innovative educational methods. All of these activities were promoted in a series of publications in which photography played a vital role. The aim of this article is to analyse the iconic and visual discourse that Barcelona City Council tried to disseminate regarding its schools policy and educational renewal plans using photography. In essence, we intend to examine how, through its visual message, it attempted to implant in the public imagination the main ideas behind its educational renewal project, ideas that coincided with the scientific pedagogy of those years. The historical method was used to carry out this study, working with photography as witness. The aim is to demonstrate how preventative hygiene, physical exercise,

active learning processes, the importance of the natural environment, the need for modern buildings and well-lit and ventilated schools, and attention to diversity comprised core values in the dissemination of the discourse that is the subject matter of this research¹.

Keywords: School renewal, Barcelona, Culture Commission, photography.

Resumen:

La actuación del Ayuntamiento de Barcelona en el marco del movimiento educativo renovador que vivió Cataluña en las primeras décadas del siglo XX, fue muy importante. Consistió en un conjunto de medidas para la mejora de las atenciones educativas, higiénicas y asistenciales de la infancia, y en la creación de escuelas e introducción de métodos educativos innovadores. A toda esta actuación se le dio publicidad mediante un conjunto de publicaciones en las que la fotografía adquiere un papel esencial. El siguiente ar-

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título pretende analizar el discurso icónico y visual que, mediante la fotografía, trató de difundir el Ayuntamiento de Barcelona sobre su política escolar y sus planes de renovación educativa. Básicamente, pretendemos indagar cómo, a través del mensaje visual, se trató de incorporar al imaginario colectivo las principales ideas inspiradoras de su proyecto de renovación pedagógica, que coincide con la pedagogía científica de aquellos años. Para efectuar este estudio se ha utilizado el método histórico y se ha trabajado con la fotografía

como como testimonio. Se pretende poner en evidencia como la higiene preventiva, el ejercicio físico, los procedimientos de enseñanza activos, la importancia del medio natural, la necesidad de modernos edificios y espacios escolares iluminados y ventilados o la atención a la diversidad, constituyeron valores primordiales en la difusión del discurso que es objeto de estudio en esta investigación.

Descriptor: Renovación escolar, Barcelona, Comisión de Cultura, fotografía.

1. Introduction

From the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, Barcelona City Council found itself obliged to respond to a significant increase in demand for schooling resulting from strong population growth. To meet this demand, the Council of Barcelona, within the limitations of its limited competences in this field, sought to build on the modern educational theories that were spreading at that time in Europe and the USA. The reformist ideas in education of the Institución Libre de Enseñanza (Free Educational Institute), modernised with those of the Escuela Nueva (New School), boosted an ambitious plan to build school buildings and open-air schools, reorganise support for people with disabilities, and generally promote and intensify activities to improve children's conditions.

This effort was recorded in some seventy books and pamphlets, extensively illustrated with photographs. The collection of these photographs is an extraordi-

narily valuable documentary corpus for uncovering the characteristics of the initiatives implemented by Barcelona City Council and seeing how a visual discourse was constructed to emphasise these reforming ideas superiority over traditional ones.

Those examining the work performed by Barcelona City Council in this era can rely on a pioneering work by Jaume Matas (1977). Following this, books by Cañellas and Toran (1982) on Barcelona City Council's school's policy between 1916 and 1936 were published as well as one by Salvador Domènech (2008) on the school groups created by the School Board during the Republic. Some monographs analyse more specific aspects, such as those by Alfred Pérez-Bastardas (2008) and Raquel de la Arada (2008) on the special culture budget of 1908. Domènech's work (1995) covers Manuel Ainaud. The book by Gonzalez-Agàpito, Marquès, Mayordomo, and Sureda (2002) provides an overview of the actions of Barcelona

City Council in educational renewal in Catalonia in this era.

Several works have been published in recent years regarding methodological questions, the possibilities of photography as a historical-educational source, and the debate around the techniques required for interpreting it (Pozo, 2006; *Educació i Història*, 2010). Other publications have more specifically explored the role of photographs in the dissemination of renovative ideas in Spain (Comas, Motilla, and Sureda, 2011) and in Catalonia in particular (Comas and Sureda, 2012; Comas, Motilla, and Sureda, 2014; Sureda, Motilla, and Comas, 2014).

2. The educational work of Barcelona City Council

Barcelona City Council actions in the framework of Catalonia's educational renewal movement in the first decades of the twentieth century were very important. They involved creating schools, renewing teaching methods and, in general, improving education, hygiene, and childcare provision. The impetus that the City Council proposed giving to schools and childcare coincided with the influence in Catalonia of the ideas of the New School, adopted by the Catalanist right to lay the foundations for a programme of social reform and for building a new national project for Catalonia. The Catalanist right, representing the industrial bourgeoisie, and groups from the republican centre-left agreed on the need to modernise education, especially from the start of the second decade of the twentieth century, albeit with disagreements and differences

on details. The reforming activities of the Catalanist right in education, as in other fields, occurred in particular in the combined governments of the provinces of Catalonia from 1914 in the *Mancomunitat de Catalunya* (Commonwealth of Catalonia). At the same time, in Barcelona City Council, not without tensions and confrontations, a fruitful collaboration developed between republicans and Catalanists enabling a wide-ranging plan for school buildings and for modernisation of teaching and institutions providing for children, such as school camps, children's canteens, and urban parks for play. The educational reformism of Barcelona Council was part of this will to modernise the city, improving hygiene conditions and services. The plans for new school buildings responded to both the pedagogic and aesthetic criteria of the period.

The initial impulse for the educational programme of Barcelona City Council owed much to Hermenegildo Giner de los Ríos (Cadiz, 1847-Granada, 1923) who was the brother of the founder of the Free Educational Institute, was committed to Krausist ideas, and for twenty years from 1899 to 1918 held a chair in psychology, logic, and moral philosophy at the *Instituto de Segunda Enseñanza de Barcelona* (Barcelona Institute of Secondary Education). Ever since his youth, he had sympathised with republican ideas and was elected as a councillor for the *Unión Republicana* (Republican Union) party in the municipal elections of November 1903, a position he would hold on several occasions. In the council, he enjoyed great prestige, even among his political rivals who respected his opinions on educational

matters and supported his proposals on schools policy. His propositions, influenced by the Free Educational Institute, took shape in the plans to build open-air schools, such as the one in the woods of Montjuic, conceived in 1906 but not inaugurated until 1914, the municipal school camps that were launched in 1906, or the school canteens that were created following the first one in the Hostafrancs district, which was run by the educationalist Celestina Vigneaux i Cibils. Hermenegildo Giner also believed it was vital to improve teacher training and so encouraged the provision of grants, funding for travel, and assistance for initiatives such as the private school for teachers created by Juan Bardina in 1906 as an alternative to the traditionalism of the official Escuela Normal teacher training centres (De la Arada, 2008, pp. 242-244).

The ideas of Hermenegildo Giner, the basic principles of which were shared by all of the republican movement and by many of the educationalists from the Catalanist right, shaped Barcelona City Council's culture budget proposal of 1908. A Council with a republican majority and a Catalanist minority decided to allocate part of its budget to building four school groups that were to follow principles of educational renewal and would be run by an Institución de Cultura Popular (Institute of Popular Culture). Republicans close to the Free Educational Institute were involved in setting the foundations for the project, such as Luis de Zulueta who was to be the commissioner of the new institutions, or Pere Coromines along with Joan Bardina, also with institutional influences, a friend of Giner and a

pioneer of active schools in Catalonia. The budget plan was criticised by the association of public teachers, which felt it was inappropriate to create model centres while not meeting the needs of all schools. The Church opposed it because of its lay focus and support for coeducation. The radical republicans eventually withdrew their support as a consequence of its defence of teaching in Catalan and because the project could come into conflict with the network of schools created in the republican clubs and associations. Eventually, only the Catalanist republicans still supported it and the project was finally cancelled by the civil governor who, under pressure from its opponents and following instructions from the government in Madrid, claimed that the Council's proposal exceeded its authority.

In 1916 Barcelona City Council – now with a greater presence of the Catalanist right, meaning that the republicans had lost their dominant position – created a Culture Commission, thus giving a new impulse to the creation of educational centres and activities related to childcare (Cañellas & Toran, 1982, pp. 61-85).

Despite the political changes, the Free Educational Institute's ideas, complemented by those of the New School with the support of conservatives and republicans alike, continued to shape the Council's schools policy. To support the actions of the Culture Commission, a Technical Commission was created with the participation of various professionals. Its management was entrusted to the educationalist Manuel Ainaud i Sánchez, who had travelled around Europe to discover the experiences of the New School. As well as the

educational section run by Ainaud, there were two other sections: the school architecture section, entrusted to the architect Josep Goday, and the school hygiene section, led by the paediatrician Enrique Mias. The professional standing of the commission's members helped it operate with a certain degree of autonomy, giving continuity to the municipal educational actions. Furthermore, Ainaud surrounded himself with prestigious collaborators like the poet Ventura Gassol, with whom he worked until the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, or Artur Martorell, who assisted him during the Republic, continued his work, and preserved the testimony of the educational work of Barcelona City Council during Franco's dictatorship (Domènech, 1995).

Barcelona City Council's Culture Commission, at the suggestion of the Technical Commission, managed the *Escola del Bosc de Montjuïc*, which was created in 1914, and in 1922, also with a clear hygiene focus, founded the *Escola del Mar* on the beach in la Barceloneta. The *Escuela del Parc del Guinardó* was opened the following year, again as an open-air school. Similarly, the Council, with the occasional assistance of donations from individuals, constructed buildings of great quality and aesthetic value in the city's neighbourhoods to house centres with model educational methods.

The architect Josep Goday planned various educational centres, influenced by the intellectual, aesthetic, and educational ideology of the Catalan middle-classes. The first was the *Baixeras* school group, which opened in 1922 and was followed the same year by the small *La Farigola* school. In a brief period, other large school

groups were planned and building work started on them: *Milà i Fontanals i Lluïsa Cura*, *Ramón Llull*, *Lluís Vives* and *Pere Vila*. Other school buildings designed by Goday, either as new builds or renovations, were: *Dolors Monserdà*, *Baldiri Reixach*, *Jacint Verdaguer*, *Carles Aribau*, *Francesc Pi Margall* and *San Raimon de Penyafort*, which were completed and opened in 1931, shortly before the proclamation of the Second Republic (Gonzalez-Agàpito, Marquès, Mayordomo, & Sureda, 2002, pp. 142-143).

The Council only had powers to create special schools, such as the *Bosque de Montjuïc*, *el Mar*, or *Vilajoana* schools, but not to intervene in the running of ordinary schools. With the aim of being able to have more impact on the renewal of teaching methods, Manuel Ainaud with the government in Madrid managed the creation of a Schools Board in which the Ministry and the Council would jointly participate. This board was created in 1922 for the *Baixeras* and *La Farigola* school groups and these two centres operated as schools for practices attached to the Escuela Normal de Maestros teacher training centre. Furthermore, their teachers, who continued to be paid by the government, could be selected by the Board. This was but a small advance in control of the school system by the Catalan institutions (Domènech, 2008). With the introduction of the Second Republic, the Schools Board also started to manage the new school groups inaugurated in 1931.

Along with the construction of school groups, the Culture Commission also supported the implementation of the methods of Maria Montessori, which in that

era received much support from Catalanist groups and from the autonomous institutions they controlled (Comas and Sureda 2012). This fact caused reservations among the republicans, reservations that did not, however, prevent the Council from providing grants in 1914 for four teachers to attend the course on the Montessori method in Rome or providing resources for another course to be organised in Barcelona during 1916. In 1914 Montessori's method started to be applied in an official centre with the Council's support, run by Celestina Vigneaux and in 1916 two more municipal Montessori nursery schools were created.

The educational experimentation implemented by the Culture Commission was also reflected in the scientific basis of the special schools, which were reorganised and integrated into a single institution named the *Escola de Cecs, Sordmuts i Anormals* for children who were blind, deaf and/or mute or had learning difficulties, located in the Vilajoana house in Tibidabo (Puigdemívol, 2015). The *Escola de Bosc*, the *Escola del Mar*, and the *Guinardó* school were open-air schools prioritising physical exercise and activities in nature to improve the health of their pupils. Although they were created to help students with health problems, an educational approach with a marked renovative character was soon imposed. Several New School methods were tested in them, in particular the methods of Ovide Decroly. These open-air schools served as an example for other initiatives in Spain (Moreno, 2005, p. 214).

The will to improve Barcelona City Council's childcare provision in those

years was also expressed in the creation of school canteens in various districts of Barcelona and in the impulse of school camps, semi-camps, and bathing in the sea. With a comprehensive view of children's needs and the aim of making the city a more pleasant place for children, the Culture Commission also intervened in the design of children's playgrounds and play areas. Furthermore, the Culture Commission also took an interest in enhancing professional studies, in 1917 putting forward a plan to improve their operation² (Alberdi, 1980; Monés, 1991). Barcelona City Council also took an interest in the education of women, supervising the *Escola municipal de Labors i d'Oficis de la Dona* (municipal school for women's work and occupations) created in 1913, the activities of which were reported in a book published in 1920.

3. Barcelona City Council's publications about its educational efforts

Between 1909 and 1933 Barcelona City Council published almost seventy works including books and pamphlets about its educational activities. The most comprehensive collection is held in the Biblioteca Artur Martorell of the Instituto Municipal de Educación de Barcelona and can be consulted online³. The rest of the works, which we are aware of thanks to the lists prepared by González-Agàpito (1978) and Cañellas and Toran (1982), can be consulted in a variety of libraries (Biblioteca de Catalunya, Biblioteca Rosa Sensat, Biblioteca de Montserrat, Biblioteca Nacional de España, etc.). The table below lists the books published by Barcelona City

Council about its school and childcare activities between 1909 and 1936. The many forms, advertising leaflets, invita-

tions, and programmes for activities and events organised by the Council for the pupils have not been included.

TABLE 1. List of publications by Barcelona City Council (1909-1936).

No.	Title	Year	Lang.	Loc.
1	Report on the school camps organised by Barcelona City Council in 1906, 1907 and 1908 / Childhood Hygiene Committee	1909	Spa.	B.C.
2	Summary report on the school camps organised by Barcelona City Council in 1909	1909	Spa.	B.C.
3	Schools from District VI: history, organisation, and teaching methods [G. Gili]	1912	Cat.	Cited in Cambeiro (2006-07)
4	Municipal school for children who are blind, deaf-mute or have learning difficulties. By its staff	1912	Spa.	A.M.
5	Educational activities of the school camps and woodland schools commission	1914	Spa.	A.M.
6	Regulations of woodland schools	1914	Spa.	B. C.
7	Municipal school for children who are blind, deaf-mute or have learning difficulties	1915	Spa.	A.M.
8	The school camps of 1915	1916	Spa.	A.M.
9	Operational rules for school camps	1916	Spa.	A.M.
10	The school camps of 1916 and 1917	1917	Cat.	
11	Laying the first stone of the Baixeras school group	1917	Cat.	B.C.
12	Vallcarca streamed school for boys (laying the first stone)	1918	Cat.	A.M.
13	Municipal school canteens: January 1915 to December 1917 / [Celestina Vigneaux]	1918	Spa.	B.C.
14	Primary technical education schools	1918	Cat.	A.M.
15	The school camps of 1918 and 1919	1919	Cat.	A.M.
16	Lluís Vives streamed school (laying the first stone)	1920	Cat.	A.M.
17	Sea bathing for pupils from Barcelona's schools	1920	Cat.	A.M.
18	The nursery schools	1920	Cat.	A.M.
19	School for blind children	1920	Cat.	A.M.
20	School for deaf-mute children	1920	Cat.	B. C.
21	School for women's work and occupations: Ronda de Sant Antoni, nº 19	1920	Cat./Spa.	A.M.

No.	Title	Year	Lang.	Loc.
22	Open-air schools in Montjuic park	1921	Cat.	A.M.
23	Sea school	1921	Cat.	A.M.
24	Mobile school libraries	1921	Cat.	A.M.
25	Book of the sea	1921	Cat.	A.M.
26	Normal course in domestic teaching for female primary school teachers	1921	Cat.	R.S.
27	Normal course in technical teaching for female primary school teachers	1921	Cat.	B.C.
28	Opening of the Vilajoana schools	1921	Cat.	R.S.
29	School buildings in Barcelona. Collection of studies, plans and other preliminary materials held at City Hall to solve this problem	1922	Cat.	A.M.
30	Pere Vila i Codina school	1922	Cat.	A.M.
31	Ramon Llull school	1922	Cat.	A.M.
32	Milà i Fontanals i Lluïsa Cura schools	1922	Cat.	A.M.
33	Publications of the Culture Commission	1922	It.	A.M.
34	Reports from the Vilajoana school for children with learning difficulties: presented at the Paris Mental Hygiene Conference	1922	Fr.	A.M.
35	The mission of Barcelona City Council in the cultural work of the city [Lluís Nicolau d'Olwer]	1922	Cat.	A.M.
36	A short report on the school groups: «Ramon Llull», «Lluïsa Cura i Milà i Fontanals», «Lluís Vives» and «General M. Primo de Rivera»	1929	Spa.	A.H.C.B.
37	Short course on education for scouting and camping techniques	1930?	Cat.	B.C.
38	Exhibition by the Escola Massana managed by the Association to Encourage Decorative Arts: July-August 1930	1930	Cat.	A.H.C.B.
39	School festival held in the woodland schools of Montjuic park, in honour of the national teachers of Seville, Friday 27 June 1930	1930	Cat.	A.M.
40	School festival held in the woodland schools of Montjuic park, in honour of the national teachers of Seville, Friday 27 June 1930	1930	Cat.	A.M.
41	The work of school camps and sea baths	1930	Cat.	A.M.
42	Start of works for the «Escoles Casas»	1930	Cat.	A.M.

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No.	Title	Year	Lang.	Loc.
43	Open-air educational institutions	1931	Fr.	A.M.
44	Short advanced course for nursery teachers from the school groups	1931	Cat.	A.M.
45	Exhibition of educational essays, school works and works to complement the school	1931	Spa.	A.M.
46	The school groups of Barcelona	1931	Spa.	A.M.
47	Culture Commission publications: 1930-31	1930/31	Cat.	A.M.
48	Report on the competition between national teachers to fill the teaching posts of the new school groups	1932	Cat.	
49	A record of the festival to celebrate the opening of the canteens of the Hermenegildo Giner de los Rios school group located in the area of low-cost houses of the Turó de la Peira Horta	1932	Cat.	A.M.
50	A record of the festival to celebrate the start of work by the Hermenegildo Giner de los Rios school group located in the area of low-cost houses of the Turó de la Peira Horta	1932	Spa.	A.M.
51	A record of the unveiling ceremony of the bust of Antoni Nicolau that the Municipal Music School has erected in its building in homage to its honorary director	1932	Cat.	A.M.
52	The 16th festival of the sun / Organised by the Astronomical Society of Spain and specially dedicated to the children of the schools of Barcelona	1932	Cat.	A.M.
53	Instructions for teachers at school camps	1932	Cat.	A.M.
54	A tribute to Barcelona [Jaume Aguadé i Miró]	1932	Cat.	A.M.
55	The start of work on the Berga permanent school camp	1932	Cat.	A.M.
56	The start of work on the «Collaso i Gil» school group	1932	Cat.	A.M.
57	The opening of the Forestier nursery	1932	Cat.	A.M.
58	A brief history of the plaça de la República that the Culture Commission offers to the pupils at the city's schools to celebrate the first anniversary of the proclamation of the Republic	1932	Cat.	B. C.
59	The work of the school camps, sea baths and semi-camps for pupils from the schools of Barcelona 1906-1931	1932	Cat.	A.M.
60	Culture Commission publications: 1930-32	1930/32	Cat.	A.M.
61	The teaching work of Barcelona City Council	1932	Fr.	A.M.
62	The «Turissa» school camp	1932	Cat.	A.M.

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No.	Title	Year	Lang.	Loc.
63	Spiritual life at «Vilamar»: a lecture given by Pere Vergés in the conference room of the Casa de l'Ardiaca, on 31 October 1930 to exhibit the activities of the children at the school camps	1932	Cat.	A.M.
64	Summary of the organisation of the school holiday camps, semi-camps, and baths of 1932	1932	Cat.	A.M.
65	A visit to the new school camps	1932	Cat.	A.M.
66	Culture Commission publications: 1932	1932	Cat.	A.M.
67	Instructions for teachers at school camps	1933	Cat.	A.M.
68	The public school in Barcelona and the Montessori method	1933	Cat.	A.M.

Source: Own elaboration. [Abbreviations used: Location (LOC.); Biblioteca Artur Martorell (A.M.); Biblioteca de Catalunya (B.C.), Rosa Sensat (R.S.), Arxiu Històric de la Ciutat de Barcelona (A.H.C.B.). Languages: Catalan (Cat.); Spanish (Spa.); French (Fr.); Italian (It.).]

Most of these works were written in Catalan, although thirteen are in Spanish, one is in Spanish and Catalan, three are in French, and one is in Italian. The use of Spanish is most common in the early years, up to when the Culture Commission was created and took over publication of the works. The use of languages other than Catalan shows the will to disseminate the efforts of Barcelona City Council outside Catalonia. For example, *Rapports de l'Institut d'anormaux de Vilajoana: présenté au Congrès d'Hygiène mentale de Paris* was published in 1922, featuring texts, photographs, maps, and illustrations concerning the care people with disabilities received in the Vilajoana institute. In 1931 the work *Institutions scolaires en plein air* was published, describing the experiences of applying new methods in the open-air schools. Also, in 1932 a book was published in French with the title *L'oeuvre d'enseignement de la Municipalité de Barcelone* which was given to

attendees at the «Sixième congrès mondial de la Ligue internationale pour l'éducation nouvelle» held in Nice that year. The item published in Italian in 1922 is just a catalogue of the publications that the Culture Commission had on sale that year.

4. Photography in Barcelona City Council's publications

Photography plays a fundamental role in these publications by Barcelona City Council. In this era, technological advances made it easy to include photographs in periodical publications and books. While the photographers are only very occasionally mentioned in the corpus analysed, we know that in these years many photographers from Barcelona worked with the public institutions, which regularly commissioned photographs of public events from them. In the photographic archive of Barcelona City Council, we can find the same or similar photographs of the school

institutions taken by photographers like Jaume Ribera or his son Francesc, Adolf Zerkowitz, Pérez de Rozas, Josep Domínguez who in 1924 held a post as photographer in the City Council, Jordi Calafell, Josep María Sagarra, and Josep Gaspar, among others (Domènech, 2007).

Over a thousand photographs can be found in the body of works published by Barcelona City Council. The publications with the greatest number are: *Publicacions de la Comissió de Cultura: any 1932* (320); *L'Obra de colònies escolars, banys de mar i semicolònies per als alumnes de les escoles de Barcelona 1906-1931* (135); *L'Oeuvre d'enseignement de la Municipalité de Barcelone* (94), which is very much a photograph album; *Publicacions de la Comissió de Cultura: anys 1930-31* (88); *Institutions scolaires en plein air* (51); the remainder have fewer than fifty.

We have noted that photography takes on highly important role in these publications, not just because of the number of images but also because in many cases the image is more important than the written text. Photographs consequently acquire an important part of the narrative burden and are used as the principal element for transmitting information in synergy with the written text. All of this leads us to believe that Barcelona City Council, in its will to disseminate its work on educational renewal, understood that with the image it would be much easier to depict, demonstrate, represent, and transmit its work and the principles that inspired it. In fact, the corpus of photographs, taken as a whole, clearly comprises a discourse showing a specific image of the model of school and educational practice that the council wished to establish. In

order to spell out the discourse to which we refer, we will now analyse the classification of photographs we find among these over a thousand photographs.

As a percentage, the largest number of photographs in the collection correspond to the ordinary activities of school camps, woodland schools, sea bathing, and nursery schools. Among these photographs, the most numerous are those relating to «health, hygiene, and physical education». The significance this type of matter acquired in the everyday life of school camps, woodland schools, and sea bathing is well known and is a matter that is corroborated by collating the number of images included in the publications. The hygiene movement, in its relations with education and the simultaneous physical development of the child as a basic principle for correct mental and intellectual development, had by then been recognised for some time and would acquire a vital role in the work of Barcelona City Council during the period analysed.

This concern with health favoured, among other things, the promotion of sport and physical activity to care for and improve the physical condition of the participating boys and girls. Consequently, within this broad category of photographs, the largest sample corresponds to images relating to physical exercise: children practising gymnastic exercises, participating in sporting games, performing physical activities on the beach and in the mountains, taking baths, performing breathing exercises, sensorial education exercises in the case of children with certain types of disability, Swedish and rhythmic gymnastics exercises, and so on.

PHOTOGRAPH 1. Title: Unos niños bañándose (some children bathing).



Source: *Banyes de mar per als alumnes de les escoles de Barcelona* («Sea bathing for pupils from Barcelona's schools») (1920), p. 16. Collection: Artur Martorell.

The way these physical activities were organised is made apparent by photographs, from which relevant information can be extracted. The photographs of schools generally show the new or eye-catching, and often represent what is least ordinary but is deemed most relevant, important, prestigious, and/or worthy of being publicised and recorded (Comas, Motilla, and Sureda, 2012). It is worth noting that in this case, while we also find staged compositions that fulfil the previous principle, there are also often images that have been taken without

excessive preparation. In other words, these are photographs that show spontaneity and reflect in a fairly real and precise way what happened during these sessions of physical activity, bathing in the sea, and exercise in natural settings. We see in these, for example, groups of children on outings to the beach running freely to enter the area allocated to them, an area identified with a letter and a flag of a particular colour. The beach was divided into sections with ropes and bunting to enable teaching staff to organise the exercise session. We see boys and

girls wearing their swimming costumes, in a lighthearted mood, and clearly enjoying the open-air exercise and the sea; the place towards which head the ropes that guide the children who are always overseen by the teachers when it is time to bathe, an activity that was understood to prevent or cure numerous illnesses (see Photograph 1). However, it was not just the sea that was used for physical exercise; there are also many photographs showing the gymnastics sessions that the children often did in the camps. As a general rule, this type of image shows a careful and well-organised positioning of the children doing exercises in unison imitating the movements shown by the teacher, displaying a clear influence of the principle characteristics of Swedish gymnastics: static positions, correct posture, and performing parade exercises, working the arms, legs, and trunk, and jumping, climbing, and doing skills exercises.

As well as physical exercise, hygiene, and health, we also find sustenance, medical inspections, bath or shower time, and times of rest and repose clearly depicted in another four categories of photographs, which are less numerous than the previous ones. Regarding the first category, it is known that one of the basic premises of all these educational initiatives was to provide healthy and appropriate nutrition to alleviate the weak condition and symptoms of illness of some children. To illustrate this, some of the publications reviewed contain photographs that show the moment when lunch is distributed (see Photograph 2) and meals at the beach. As for medical

inspections, there are some photographs in which we see the staff taking the children's measurements and weighing them. The children's bodies are covered only by their underwear — or on occasions they are even naked as can be seen in one photograph published in *Escoles a l'aire lliure del parc de Montjuïc* — as they await their turn, so the staff can obtain data that can subsequently be seen in several of the publications. Thirdly, bath time is another activity photographed, showing the importance given to this activity for improving the quality of life of the children. The photographs show communal showers where boys and girls, wearing either special clothing for this purpose or in their swimming costumes, wash themselves under the water. This type of shower is sometimes installed in enclosed interior spaces, as in the case of the open-air schools in Montjuïc park, and sometimes in partially open or roofed-over areas built on the beach, as in the case of bathing in the sea. In the latter case, we have found a photograph which reappears several times in various publications (see Photograph 3). Finally, there are photographs of rest or repose, where we see children sleeping the siesta under pine trees or canopies, or resting on loungers set out on the beach. In summary, the importance of sleep, correct cleanliness, good nutrition, and medical monitoring of the children's physical condition, everything that comprises preventive hygiene, accompanied by regular physical exercise, were some of the main variables that a clear effort was made to express in the visual discourse of the photographs published.

PHOTOGRAPH 2. Title: Repartiendo el almuerzo (distributing lunch).



Source: *Banyes de mar per als alumnes de les escoles de Barcelona* (Sea baths for the children of the schools of Barcelona) (1920), p. 17. Collection: Artur Martorell.

PHOTOGRAPH 3. Title: Banyes de Mar. Escola del mar. Les dutxes després del bany (Sea bathing. Sea school. Showering after bathing).



Source: *L'Obra de colònies escolars, banyes de mar i semicolònies per als alumnes de les escoles de Barcelona 1906-1931* («The work of the school camps, sea baths and semi-camps for pupils from the schools of Barcelona») (1932), p. 130. Collection: Artur Martorell.

PHOTOGRAPH 4. Title: Una clase en pleno bosque (A class in the woods).



Source: *Escola de Cecs* («School for the blind») (1920). Collection: Artur Martorell.

Another sizeable group of photographs depicts the educational work. This category covers all of the photographs relating to teaching-learning tasks and work. So, for example, at the Vilajoana school for blind children we can see through the image the innovative teaching process through typing sessions, Braille reading and writing classes, touch activities, and a whole group of activities aimed at sensory education in the open air (see Photograph 4). There is a large group of photographs from the open-air schools in Montjuïc park, taken in outdoor spaces and showing arithmetic, geometry, drawing, or manual activ-

ities classes (see Photograph 5). In the case of the municipal Montessori school, images were taken and published of the children in the open air performing reading, writing, and sensory shape and letter recognition exercises, working with frames and caring for domestic animals, among other activities. Each of these photographs tries to capture the essence of the particular school, what makes it characteristic, special, and different, and the modern educational methodology used to educate the children. And we believe that, from the set of photographs analysed, this objective was overwhelmingly achieved: they capture the «real

soul» that would drive each of these initiatives in their own moment. A common thread to all of them is perhaps the proof of the children's active education as they are dynamic participants in their own learning. In all the images we see

them touching, trying, putting together, taking apart, accomplishing, and so on. Meanwhile, the figure of the teacher is also depicted, very much present but with a clear secondary role.

PHOTOGRAPH 5. Title: Escuela al aire libre de Montjuic (Montjuic open-air school).



Source: *L'Oeuvre d'enseignement de la Municipalité de Barcelone* («The teaching work of Barcelona City Council») (1932), p. 64. Collection: Artur Martorell.

In this group of images there are two other basic topics: play and music. Both are very much present in the activities used by these educational initiatives and they also appear frequently in the photographs published. Play is an important way of learning, a mechanism with which to generate bodily movement, a tool with which to foster a good environment and joy amongst the children. Playing in sandpits, slippery

poles, playing in the woods, and so on, are captured in the photographs (see Photograph 6). Music, closely related to aesthetic education, is also commonly represented in images relating to musical recitals and sessions, music teaching, interpretations of songs through gestures, and everything relating to animated artistic expression, especially in the Escola del Mar and the Escola de Bosque.

PHOTOGRAPH 6. Title: Parque infantil de Hostafrancs. Juegos en los cosos de arena. Cría de animales. (Children's park in Hostafrancs. Playing in the sand pits. Raising animals.)



Source: *Els jardins dels infants* («The nursery schools») (1920), p. 33. Collection: Artur Martorell.

Buildings, spaces, and facilities are another of the most photographed topics. As the large number of these images shows, it is possible to infer a clear effort on the part of the Council to provide visual evidence of its achievements with regards to the construction, renovation and improvement of the facilities. In fact, there are some volumes in which this is precisely the aim of the municipality; for example, in 1922 it would publish *Construccions escolars de Barcelona. Recull dels estudis, projectes i altres antecedents que existeixen en l'Ajuntament per la solució d'aquest problema*, with outlines, plans, studies, drawings, and 17 photographs of the construction works of different schools; and *L'Oeuvre d'en-*

seignement de la Municipalité de Barcelone (1932), with a format very similar to a photo album in which a total of 9 photographs appear, with identifying captions, almost all of them of buildings, spaces, and facilities. The grandeur of some of the school buildings stands out, with their large porches and entrance lobbies, modern facilities and furniture, the size of the outdoor playgrounds, the height of the spaces, the light from large windows, and so on, as well a series of very well-chosen elements that transmit to the viewer a very clear image of the Council's extensive quality work in educational matters (see Photograph 7, one of the most reproduced photographs). Classrooms, canteens, kitchens, reading

rooms, dormitories, infirmaries, rooms for anthropometrics, offices, gardens, and

playgrounds also appear in the photographs.

PHOTOGRAPH 7. Title: Edificio de la Escuela del Mar (Escuela de Mar building).



Source: *L'Obra de les colònies escolars i banys de mar* («The work of school camps and sea baths») (1930), p. 7. Collection: Artur Martorell.

As well as all of this, there are group photographs, images that attempt to serve as a record of the people who formed part of a given institution at a specific time. These are found most often in the publications dedicated to school camps, always taken outdoors with a minutely calculated arrangement of the group so that all the children can be seen and identified, and with the teacher present to complete the intended image of a group identity. These images are planned, organised, and have a well thought-out arrangement of the children. As a general rule, they wear the same cloth-

ing, but their settings vary frequently (on a mountainside, in front of a car or a building, on a stairway, in the woods, in a playground, and so on). The fact is that both in photographs of ordinary activities and in group shots a common identifying thread can frequently be found: an outstanding presence of the natural environment. Open spaces, beaches, mountains, and nature provide the backdrop to most of the photographs. In this way, an issue is reflected that, for Rosa Sensat, would be of fundamental importance: the creation of initiatives with not just hygienic or therapeutic ends, but also as a form

of introducing students to the study of the natural environment (Bernal, 2000, p. 177).

Finally, there is a varied series of photographs and a smaller number that correspond, for example, with portraits

(Josep Collaso i Gil, Pere Vila i Codina, Lluís Marian Vidal, Evarist Fàbregas i Pàmies, Eugeni Maëder, and Hermenegildo Giner de los Rios) and with moments relating to school transport (see Photograph 8).

PHOTOGRAPH 8. Title: Los pequeños escolares son transportados gratuitamente a las escuelas de los suburbios (The little children are transported for free to the schools in the suburbs).



Source: *L'Oeuvre d'enseignement de la Municipalité de Barcelone* («The teaching work of Barcelona City Council») (1932), p. 46. Collection: Artur Martorell.

5. Conclusions

Barcelona City Council's publications about its educational work between 1909 and 1936 form a very important historical-educational record. The wealth of its written and visual content is undeniable, and the photographs are excellent sources for research into the history of schools, educational renewal initiatives, and the development of childcare practices in general.

The photographs in this collection clearly represent a very specific way of conceiving public schools and centres intended to improve the physical, hygienic, welfare, and health conditions of a major part of Barcelona's children in the first third of the twentieth century. As we have noted on other occasions, the photographs in the publications studied exemplify the efforts of the Culture Commission of Barcelona City Council to construct a very

specific narrative discourse, in this case one relating to educational renewal and to implementing innovative actions. The set of photographs form an iconic discourse that corresponds with the principles of the New School that the creators of the education policy of Barcelona City Council in those years had assumed completely.

Aspects like the educational importance of the natural environment, the need to have decent and appropriate facilities, the importance attributed to physical exercise, play, and spontaneous activity by the students, a new understanding of the role of the educator, the need for an integral education that includes aesthetic and civic education, the support of co-education, attention to diversity and people with disabilities, and the value of basing educational practice on experimentation are principles that are expressed in the photographs included in the publications of Barcelona City Council that we have studied.

Notes

- ¹ This project was carried out in the framework of the R&D project, reference EDU2014-52498-C2-2-P, «La fotografía publicada como representación de los cambios y las continuidades en la cultura escolar (1900-1970)» (Photography published to represent the changes and continuities in educational culture, 1900-1970), funded under the National Programme for Fostering Excellence in Scientific and Technical Research, National Sub-Programme for Creating Knowledge, in the framework of the National Plan for Scientific and Technical Research and Innovation 2013-2016 (Ministry of Economy, Industry, and Competitiveness and the Spanish Research Agency, FEDER and European Union funds).
- ² The reform proposal and its rationale are included in the book *Institucions d'ensenyament tècnic primari* (1918).

- ³ See: <http://mdc.cbuc.cat/cdm/search/collection/tasca>

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