

A shared hope
Popular Ateneu 9 Barris
25 years

PART ONE
Building an identity

When different neighborhood communities, like that of Nou Barris, demanded the construction of popular Ateneu, they were recuperating the imagination of a paradigmatic past of popular culture, which had lived its glory years over the first three decades of the twentieth century. Everyone was thinking about the hundreds of workers Ateneus, libertarian Ateneus, popular Ateneus, popular clubs, encyclopedic Ateneus, cultural clubs, recreation centers, which at that time had spread rapidly throughout Catalan towns and cities. There had been a great range of cultural and educational centers promoted by, and for the service of, the underprivileged classes, centers which were later shut down and banned under Franco's dictatorship.

With the end of Franco's dictatorship new expressions of culture, just like those of other European countries, incorporated new elements thanks to the new political environment—the Spanish transition, the sociological environment—the baby-boom, tourism, May of 1968, counterculture, the sexual revolution, new urban cultures, new social struggles...—and the economic environment—the cultural marketplace.

The demand for centers of popular cultural did not respond to an overall desire in Europe to create another culture far from official culture, closer to the people. In the Spanish case, in the face of strong political and social activism that preceded the first democratic elections, the new governing bodies had to cool down social movements and, at the same time, increase the role of the brand new democratic public powers. In order to consolidate the new political posts it was vital to control the new cultural centers that were sprouting up due to the communities' demands (civic centers, clubs, cultural salons, etc.). These new participatory spaces became places for privileged contact with social movements. The institutions that opened under the power's responsibility, perhaps had a bit of a complex about their actual fragility within the new democracy and exercised almost complete control over these new participatory spaces, due to fear, due to insecurity. This control encouraged inactivity, clientelism and dependency within social and cultural movements.

Keeping in mind the recent history of Nou Barris, it is not at all surprising that a group of neighbors from this part of Barcelona demanded, back in 1977, a popular Ateneu. This was just one more thing on an interminable list of demands from the neighborhood association. And no wonder. Due to the migratory phenomenon of the 1950's, during the last decades of Franco's rule, Barcelona underwent a frenetic and messy growth of outlying neighborhoods destined to be bedroom communities, far from the centers of production, home during the day to housewives, children and retired people, and at night to ghosts of forgetfulness and to absolute abandon. No one dared complain. Many workers, in their free time, didn't see any other way out than building, for themselves, the sewer system, bridges and streets, in the midst of vineyards, junkyards, high-rise apartment buildings and a lot of misery.

Little by little a new spirit of reclamation spread throughout neighborhood movements. For many it was change of mentality: someone had to demand what was just, and demand that City Hall provide the non-existent services. This new vision was very important for the future development of Nou Barris.

In 1970 the *Asociación de Vecinos Nou Barris* (Neighborhood Association of Nou Barris) was founded as a way to fight against the *Plan Parcial* of Torre Baró, Vallbona and Trinitat. Those closed nuclei were broken and the neighborhood social centers founded were coordinated by

the area assembly. People worked for urban struggle: each section had autonomy and all the sections met at a general assembly of all the neighborhoods. In the midst of the neighbors' demands other worker struggles moved about. The worker movement acted a revolutionary agent especially among the youth. The slogan: aside from just fighting to improve the neighborhoods, we have to fight the ideological fight. In Nou Barris leftist political parties found a good place to spread their ideological programs. The debates at the heart of the urban movements pivoted between direct action to solve problems at the most local level and the ideological debates in the background. Meanwhile, City Hall established itself as the black beast, the Franco-following enemy guilty of abandoning the working-class neighborhoods, and the object of the urban movements' wrath.

Together, these citizen movements collectively built schools of civility, with an identity based on common values like solidarity, liberty, social justice and equality. Within these movements and their context we would find the antecedents of the birth of the *Ateneu Popular de 9 Barris*.

Like other years, 1976 was filled with urban struggle in Nou Barris. One of these battles centered around an asphalt plant that City Hall had authorized a few meters away from the residences of the neighborhood of Trinitat Nova. The objective was to make asphalt for construction underway in the area. It was a highly pollutant industry located very close to apartment buildings while the guidelines for such installations called for a distance of at least two kilometers from any inhabited area. Furthermore, the plant occupied plots that before the *Plan Parcial of the Mayor Viola*, had been considered forest area. The complaints originally revolved around petitions addressed to Mayor Viola and later on to Mayor Socías Humbert, asking that the plant be moved and that the area be used for public facilities like schools, community centers or hospitals. Since they received no answer, the neighbors continued with the signature campaign, demonstrations, assemblies and concentrations on Sundays at the plant itself. Finally Mayor Socías-Humbert promised to put filters in the plant, in order "to solve" the problems of noise and smoke. The next day, by a majority vote, the assembly of neighbors decided to dismantle the plant.

Sunday, January 9, 1977 while a group of community members assembled at the entrance of the asphalt plant, a group of picketers entered inside, locked up the guard, cut the phone lines and with sledge hammers and cords destroyed the factory. The fumes had stopped forever.

The story was big news in the local press for weeks. On the one hand, the example of direct action set by the neighbors of Nou Barris, and, on the other hand, all the irregularities surrounding the construction of the plant appeared in the press which had been covering the earlier negotiations. At first, the Socías government did not punish the acts. The overall panorama of complaints and struggles was distressing and besides they had to do what they could to give an impression of open willingness toward the social movements. When all was said and done, the neighbors were right, the plant had been illegal. So they were on the road to negotiation. They agreed to the definite relocation of the plant, the provisional concession on the neighbors' part to a warehouse and some storage areas, the creation of a joint commission made up of representatives from Public Works, Citizen Promotion and the Neighborhood Association of Nou Barris with the goal of doing a study within a defined time period on a cultural center for the district which would include "adequate services".

In the 1970's, just like now, culture was on the back burner in terms of demands. In fact, in the mobilizations that came out of the fight against the asphalt plant the primary demands were ecological and sanitary in nature, and it was in the aftermath that the issue of the popular *Ateneu* came up. A post-destruction assembly decided that that land had to be used for cultural centers. The winning proposal was to create a popular *Ateneu* in the space where the warehouses had been, and to build sports, cultural, and leisure facilities along with a wooded park. Cultural representatives from the neighborhood association and other groups and people from surrounding neighborhoods formed a pro-*Ateneu* coordinator. Soon they decided to hold a

big event: 30 uninterrupted hours of shows! What had been the asphalt plant became a paradigm of a culture constructed by the people themselves. The Popular Ateneu took care of the demand for a heterogeneous collective made up of urban struggle activists, people from the neighborhood associations and groups of amateur artists. Everyone wanted a neutral, open space for culture, a space that would embrace all of that plurality without leaning toward an ideology or concrete political banner. The Ateneu built this space.

From the first months of 1977 on, the pro-Ateneu Coordinator began to meet in assemblies every Sunday at the asphalt plant. The core group amounted to about 15 to 20 people. A creative process began that was never left behind.

The Ateneu itself began working out of two liberated spaces, the porches and a small warehouse that was minimally adequate for activities. In that space they held musical and theatrical performances, movies, workshops, debates and cultural weeks such as the Community Life Week or Literacy Week, and a party with a celebratory call for a 30-hour work week .

From its inception the idea of the Popular Ateneu included the idea of self-management. The weekly assembly became the decision-making body, but it was also a space for on-going debate about the running of the center. As a result, a very rich creative process came about in which the participation of community members acted as a motor for the circulation of publicity about the project and as the central axis for the operative development of the initiative. This new collective process, the will towards self-management, debate, critique and innovation were never to be abandoned over the Popular Ateneu's 25 years. Constant innovation has made it an alternative space.

PART TWO

The Ateneu takes shape (1979-1990)

It was precisely the arrival of democracy that caused the activities, for the most part, to stop. This phenomenon affected the majority of the social movements of the era. With the first municipal elections in 1979 many social activists (neighborhood associations, platforms, watch groups) fled to the electoral ballots of political parties or took posts in the new democratic city councils.

This crisis for the Ateneu and the associative movement in general coincided with what might have been the culminating point in the campaign of pro-Ateneu neighborhood associations. Aside from the demand for the recuperation of exceptional neighborhood spaces such as old factories, movie theaters, farmhouses, palaces and markets there was also an explosion of participation in civil society. People were enthusiastic about entering a new stage of democracy after 40 years of Franco.

After the first democratic municipal elections in 1979 the city of government of Barcelona risked developing a hybrid that embraced the interests of all parties: the cultural model of the popular Ateneus, defended by the neighborhood movements, and the instrument of institutional decentralization and management that City Hall was looking for. On the one hand, the Italian model of the *centri civici* —a fundamental paradigm of action for local leftist policies in central and northern Italy during the 1960's and 70's— was a good tool in the processes of decentralization and citizen participation. And, on the other side, content from proposals of the popular Ateneus was incorporated into the style of workshops, courses, debates and various artistic activities. With this new formula civic centers were opened in spaces that citizens had once claimed as popular Ateneus.

City Hall's definition of civic center did not adapt to the demands of the group of young people who were the driving force of the Ateneu Popular 9 Barris. The civic centers were seen as

bureaucratic apparati controlled by City Hall, without actual community participation, with an uncreative activity program, enclosed in the building, without any contact with people on the street. Furthermore, with the institutionalization of critical alternatives the development of the civil society was coming to a halt and heading towards homogenization. Despite opposition from community movements in Nou Barris, City Hall opened several civic centers in the district.

However, even though the model of the civic center began to be implemented the Ateneu became a popular alternative and lot of people got involved. Secondly, the government of the Nou Barris district saw the dynamic role that the Ateneu was playing in the area in a positive light and they played with a strategy of dialogue and ambivalence. They maintained this strategy for years and it would end up favoring the interests of the Ateneu. The strong character of Nou Barris has stood out over time due to its active citizens wrought with some identifying features based on solidarity, social justice and participation.

Despite material shortages, the Ateneu began to work on bringing together lots of people who wanted to get things done. Little by little, they went along defining groups and increasing their components and the Wednesday assemblies of the pro-Anthem coordinator became richer and richer. During 1983 and 1984 these meetings had to handle an Ateneu that was doing more and more things. At the Wednesday meetings they coordinated action, solved conflicts and problems, made consensus decisions, generated debates.... That's where the plans were made, like the need to get the Ateneu and its activities known in the neighborhood, collaborate with other entities, strengthen popular festivals, as well as to continue to call for a new building. There must have been profound debates about forms of organization, self-management, participation and political culture.

During those years the Ateneu tried hard to promote the cultural movement in the area, and they did so by pushing collective demands, the recuperation and promotion of popular folk festivals and by collaborating with the initiatives of other groups.

During the mid-1980's, despite intense internal confrontations, debates enriched the project. People reflected on the general social framework, urban culture, and self-management. For the first time, people seriously tried to justify and define the Ateneu, as well as some guidelines on management and criteria for programming. They talked about values, region, the professional-volunteer binomial, civil society and utopia. The Ateneu was defined then as a focal point of the vanguard, a critic, and a promoter of active participation, capable of constantly questioning itself, of always being in the street and of being self-run... The Ateneu defends an idea of culture that gives people more freedom to change society's values in the hopes of creating a model of a radically different society.

During those years the Ateneu began an artistic program without precedents in Nou Barris or in many other Barcelona neighborhoods. The hall up filled with all that was alternative in the city. A program began that revolved around all the paratheater arts with the best artists of the era. The program included paratheater arts and was complimented by children's performances, flamenco, theater, cinema, exhibitions and a variety of musical styles: rock, hip hop, jazz, salsa, folk, classical, punk...

The circus activities merit special attention. Young people kept coming and the activities expanded. Starting in 1984 adult courses were offered in acrobatics and stilts. The following year other disciplines were added such as juggling, tightrope walking, etc. There was an absolute lack of materials and the teachers had to build their own pedagogical tools until some artists began to buy supplies on trips abroad. More and more students from various origins began to come to the workshops. They began to go the *Encuentros Estatales de Malabaristas* (State Meetings for Jugglers) and, in February 1991 the *Associació de Circ de Catalunya* (Circus Association of Catalonia) was born.

Finally the *Plan de Actuaciones del Distrito de Nou Barris de 1984* (the Plan of Action for the District of Nou Barris) allocated 10 million pesetas¹ for the renovation of the facility but it was not until March of 1991 that the Ateneu closed for construction. The District's investment was divided into four stages between 1991 and 1994 and the total expenditure was close to 500 million pesetas.

PART THREE

The Definitive Ateneu (1991-2002)

Over the 1980's and 90's Nou Barris underwent an urban surge that reconfigured the district. Slowly but surely the healthcare, education, and social service networks became a reality. In the cultural terrain the Ateneu added a network of youth centers, civic centers, libraries... But many services were still missing, like facilities for the elderly, public transportation, social workers, community educators, immigrant support...

Many of the community's demands became reality thanks to a struggle, which in many cases, like that of the Ateneu, had gone on to strengthen their content, their quality of service, participation, and the commitment between neighbors and administration. Here they have been slowly phasing out the weight of the demands, with the hope of building a community commitment that can play an integrating, participatory and supportive role.

The Ateneu wanted to guarantee that the project continued during the construction so they rented another space and continued to hold activities in the street. With the "Traveling Ateneu" a program of itinerant shows was developed for festivals, cultural centers and the streets of Nou Barris.

In October of 1994, after four years of exile and 17 years of waiting, the new space for the Ateneu of Nou Barris was inaugurated. The building was conceived as a symmetrical structure based on the plant as the central axis. The horizontal, linear layout reproduced the shape of the old warehouse of the asphalt plant. The whole did not diverge from the previous forms with the exception of the 18-meter scenic box rising like a lighthouse at the northern extreme of the building. Overall, the distribution of space allowed for polyvalent play, opening the whole space or just a part to the public, depending on what was needed.

PART FOUR

The Ateneu today

Certainly, we can say that it has been the Ateneu's political significance that has gained it legitimacy as a public space and maintaining that dimension is absolutely necessary so that the Ateneu remains legitimate in the future.

The association that personifies this collective project, *Bidó de Nou Barris*, defines the Ateneu as a public cultural center where cultural and artistic action serve as instruments of cultural transformation. It is an ambitious goal, and it takes time to activate processes in the long run. These processes will create, within the Ateneu, artistic, cultural, social and educational activities aimed at improving creativity, participation, solidarity, and social cohesion amongst people from different frames of mind, and magnifying ideals of independence, effectiveness and transparency.

In terms of art the *Bido de Nou Barris* aims to achieve wide-spread circulation, strengthen creativity and promote artistic training from a non-commercial viewpoint. They want to be committed socially, in the spirit of supporting young people's creativity and emerging cultures. In the socio-cultural context, mainly in the district of Nou Barris but in other areas as well, the *Bidó*

¹ About 60,000 euros.

also aims to promote solidarity and social commitment among citizens through the stimulation of citizen participation and the dynamic process of cooperation among entities.

The principles and objectives that gave life to the project are still alive today. The *Bidó de Nou Barris*, responsible for running the facility, is also a main player when it comes to defining objectives and priorities and it also bridges the present to the historical process of the project.

A series of values and points of view that serve as a base for action have taken shape and have helped people to reflect on how to act from within the Ateneu. These values are present in every aspect of the project.

Participatory democracy. The open assembly of members guarantees a certain level of democracy, making decisions that map out the work needed to achieve goals like passing the budget or electing the council members.

Participation. Different channels of participation must be present in all spheres of action that take place in the Ateneu. The *Asociación Bidó de Nou Barris* is one of the main transmitters of participation, but other associations and groups— the Ateneu Council, etc. — also make up the Ateneu project. In order to achieve the maximum level of participation a high quality of information is needed to create informed opinions.

Autonomy / Responsibility. This does not refer to working alone but rather to guaranteeing a decision-making system without interference. Autonomy is the best way to establish commitment to and identification with the project and to move toward a responsibility that allows people to imagine possible futures.

Sustainability / Historical memory. Cultural diversity, the right to cultural survival, is vital to the survival of the planet. In the case of the Ateneu, the sense of responsibility steers the project towards the preservation of the historical memory of Nou Barris as a necessary value in order to understand the present and strengthen the future.

Art and culture as instruments of transformation. Nowadays art is considered by many as a product with a market value. This places a determined vision of art within the spiral search for benefits and very close to the high levels of power and the elite. For many people, art and culture, high culture, are displaced in their lives, and only “well-educated” people can enjoy or understand art. But art and culture are expressions of the community and they can be expressed in any way, as a result of their exceptional quality and richness. There is no difference in value between so-called masterpieces of high culture and any other cultural expression of the community. Therefore, art and culture are not the rare objects of a minority but rather widespread practices vital to people’s individual and communal development.

Innovation. Opportunity to find new paths. From the socio-cultural and artistic perspective it is necessary to understand any activity as a proposal for progress, for rethinking, and for a constant quest for better conditions. In the artistic terrain, with the quest for new languages, new forms of expression or the promotion of multidisciplinary proposals and their connection to all human dimensions. In management, seeking more agile and participative formulas. Throughout the area forming networks and relationships. In general, constantly rethinking the project allowing for advancement toward new solutions in order to achieve established commitments.

Quality. Directly linked to innovation, a high level of quality in the services offered by the Ateneu. It has to be shown time and time again that management by a not-for-profit organization is not incompatible with rigor and quality service.

Solidarity / Justice / Social Cohesion. The Ateneu is born out of contact with and relationships to the reality that surrounds it. It promotes support of the community movement of Nou Barris as well as projects with a wider dynamic that try to improve the society around us. Networks are a good instrument for such tasks.

In general, the entire project has been nurtured by values which continuously shine through. It is a system based on trusting one another, and this is proven by the base of established relationships among people and by the use of the services and materials.

The set of values, new and old, are the life preserver that has allowed the project to survive—patience, for example, has been key during long waiting periods, when it came time to negotiate a conflict or reach a goal—and in order to get the support of the most active and committed movements in Nou Barris.

When it comes down to it the project is an amalgam of people with varied interests developing a collective project out of the Ateneu. A network of over 300 people who sometimes have conflicting interests is a reflection of the complexity and richness of the dynamic that has made the Ateneu a reference point for people who have had the opportunity to come in contact with it.

The Ateneu's audience is very heterogeneous. The activities draw people of all ages, origins, of various backgrounds and interests: neighbors from Nou Barris, from the rest of the city, artists, students, and people from other communities and other countries.

The service that draws the most people is the meeting space/cafeteria/bar. It's the place everybody ends up passing through, audience members from shows, people from groups and entities, students, young people from the area, neighbors, artists, parents, children, workers. The existence of this service is vital to making the center work, especially when we keep in mind the location of the Ateneu, far from bars or restaurants.

The shows in the theater or in other spaces attract a large audience. With an average of 25,000 spectators a year, the Ateneu has become an important space for artistic movements not just in Nou Barris, but throughout the city and metropolitan area.

The facility, today, is conceived as a space open to multidisciplinary activities, as a place with an unconventional, polyvalent use. Like the majority of industrial, recycled spaces for cultural use, it is a symbolic environment loaded with history and with a special configuration, able to construct a perfect creative outlet for art and culture.

The total space of the Ateneu is 1500 square meters plus an additional 600 square meters of circus tent located in the exterior since the year 2000, which is where most of the training activity takes place. It's a tent equipped for the *Asociación Escola de Circ Rogelio Rivel* (Rogelio Rivel Circus School Association), and surrounded by a camping area for caravans. The whole looks like mini-circus-city.

The Ateneu is currently known, overall, for its wide-range of action in two fields: socio-cultural and artistic. These two fields have blurry boundaries. In fact, when artistic objectives share social, economic, or political ends we have to revert to broad cultural interpretations, to holistic ones. From this premise we can understand the cultural action of the Ateneu differentiated in these two fields. We can also distinguish between three focuses that act transversely, focuses which are present, or at least people hope they are, in the whole set of activities. These focuses are: the circus, networking and applied sustainability.

The social area includes those dynamic environments that favor participation. Volunteers and collaborators, that's to say, everyone interested in contributing time and energy to some part or to all of what's to be found at the Ateneu, constitute the backbone of the project. .

The exceptional historical process that has contributed to this facility, beyond the recent program developed by *Bidó de Nou Barris*, has provided an important group of participants who participate in the project, in almost all its forms. A diverse collective, that works under the influence of diverse motivations and interests. Only this generous and constant work has allowed the Ateneu to evolutionize toward the position it holds today. Volunteerism is promoted in every initiative. The work groups, the commissions, the associations— all of them plan for the active participation of volunteers.

There is a network of groups linked directly to the regular management of the Ateneu: the Ateneu Council, the Programming Commission, the Magazine Council, the Web Commission, the Training Commission, the Week-end Volunteers Group, the Children's Circus School, the Theatre Tech Team and the Residents Group (the campers) and there are also groups and commissions that are organized occasionally, based on a certain issue or concrete necessity. A series of artistic groups or informal groups establish agreements, rehearse regularly, are in-residence, or maintain a stable link with the Ateneu. The groups have a series of obligations which are listed in the agreements between the groups and the Ateneu, and which range from participating in the shows to collaborating on specific tasks (distributing propaganda, fixing-up the Ateneu, etc.).

The community project area is made up of the participation of the Ateneu in the area projects, together with other agents and facilities, and the involvement in the calendar of festivals in Nou Barris.

The artistic field is based on a system of checks and balances that makes the Ateneu the creative machine it is today. Contagion and contamination are the base for renovation and creativity and the Ateneu opts for an artistic environment open to change, mixture and fusion, as a guarantee of its own existence. So we have a door open to improvisation, a sensibility towards everything that people may bring. That sensibility is a rule here in the artistic field as well— another consequence of the participatory awareness that runs through the project.

The triangle of circulation-creation-training, is defined enough to house artists and projects, but enjoys enough ambiguity to guarantee a creative space, and, to contaminate the project as a whole.

In the Ateneu, the programming of different artistic disciplines becomes a creative act itself and acts as a catapult for mixture in the audience. It's a breeding ground for transversality, and not just in the artistic terrain. Being multidisciplinary allows for creation and the crossing of different levels of participation as well as for playing with various elements.

The circus is the main training activity in the Ateneu. It is project for children and adults. Methodologies, organization, contexts, physical structures have been developed...a colossal effort in order to create the only offer of its kind in Catalonia and in Spain. The majority of young Catalan circus actors have, at some point, gone through a training project at the Ateneu.

They have built their own artistic dynamic out of the plurality and the interaction among the synergies that are born in this space and those which contaminate it from the surroundings. It is an interaction between artists, disciplines, regions, social agents, amateurs and professionals. A creative mix is responsible for an undefined style that characterizes the center and makes it one-of-a-kind. It is, without a doubt, a porous process that transpires in the area, and among those artistic disciplines which have the Ateneu as a reference point. Without understanding these dynamics it would be difficult to fully capture the creative process that has taken place over the years.

It would be inappropriate to think of the Ateneu as a conventional production space. Certainly, the role of producer is present. The artistic practices, the set of agents dilute the role of producer within a wide framework that has the advantage of enriching the endogenous dynamics and of being able to work from the autonomy to which the center circumscribes.

Beyond the spontaneous creative processes of the center itself, there is a series of regularly scheduled productions throughout the year related to the circus.

The *Circ d'hivern* (Winter Circus), the main production, began in 1996 with the intention of consolidating a stable production related to the circus, theatre, dance and music. The production includes shows for all audiences and aims for productions along the lines of the new circus, a circus for conventional theaters and adaptable to circus tents or outdoor spaces, with a mixture of expressive languages.

The Circus Combinations are key to the creative processes of the Ateneu. The combinations have been an authentic revolution in experimentation and in the consolidation of artists and groups. They have had the virtue, within their ephemeral role, of bringing multiple proposals to the stage, not only circus performances but musical and choreographic ones as well, always mixing styles and disciplines. The combinations are montages, always experimental in nature, in which diverse artists present short skits which all have a connection and form a theatrical script.

Outside of its immediate surroundings, the Ateneu has had the opportunity to play a complex regional role. Its historical role as a catalyst in the community has given thousands of people access to art and culture. The Ateneu has constructed a cultural bridge between the metropolitan area and Nou Barris. With its participation in the TransEuropeHalles network that bridge has extended throughout many European cities and the rest of the world.

FIFTH PART

Looking towards the future.

So that the management can continue to be as successful as it has been up until now, complete autonomy must be preserved when it comes to the decision making process. This has been one of the basic objectives since the project began. This implies acting independently in regards to public administration and the private agents involved without contradicting the principle of subsidization that currently regulates the relationship the project has with the Nou Barris district of the Barcelona City Hall.

Oftentimes the activity is so dynamic that it becomes difficult to find a space for debate and analysis. In general, action is more seductive than reflection. But it is necessary to constantly revise the project with the involvement of the participants.

Resources have been the big problem over the last 25 years, and the problem has yet to be solved. In the future the administration should dictate laws that facilitate the management of these types of projects, making it easier for citizen groups to give non-biased financial support without trying to exercise control beyond what is necessary to justify their donations. We can't forget that these projects provide a public service and that their main financing should come from the public administration, although the Ateneu always tries to strike a balance between institutional donations and those that come from the economic returns of the center itself.

Positive and much needed support should also come from patrons, foundations and other agents with ample economic resources that come from their social activity at the Popular Ateneu 9 Barris, which has been making culture out of participation, commitment, independence, efficiency and transparency for the last 25 years.

It's important to have some focal points of intervention as keystones for the global project. The most important part of the Center's activity revolves around these focal points and it's important that they be marks of distinction. In the Ateneu these focal points are, aside from the circus, the networks, the sustainability and the socio-cultural field.

To dare to make culture with the intention of intervening and influencing the society that surrounds us, and with the social commitment and solidarity as instruments of social transformation, through the active participation of citizens. From ideals of independence, commitment, efficiency and transparency.

Direct action in the development of new cultural platforms is the best way to participate in the making of a public space. With platforms with against social exclusion, in favor of cultural diversity and social cohesion, platforms formed autonomously and from a collective spirit, citizenship is born.

On an artistic level, the quest for new languages, new forms of expression, and the promotion of multidisciplinary and alternative proposals. Another one of its riches. Up against rising cultural homogeneity we dare to defend diversity, mixture, interchange...The periphery as an alternative to centralism, a different way to do things, from the perspective of inter-relation among different groups: artists, musicians, technicians, administrators, people who publicize...All together working around an artistic event that will facilitate, within them, a social change, a change in perception about work, the action of doing, of creating, empowering that collective against individualism.

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more info : ateneu.coor@telefonica.net