Barcelona was not an obvious candidate to become the ‘capital of the Mediterranean’. Until the advent of democracy in Spain in the late 1970s, Barcelona’s Catalan heritage had been suppressed and urban space planning had been neglected. Leaders were confronted by chronic industrial unemployment, a crumbling physical environment and endemic political instability. With these inauspicious conditions, Barcelona emerged as an urban role model of how to leverage a unique identity to achieve radical transformation and a new urban economic model. A generation of visionary leaders used the city’s identity to bind its people and institutions around a clear and confident notion about their future identity in a changing global economy. The city’s distinctive character also helped build a unified proposition to sell its products and services globally. As a result, Barcelona has enjoyed two decades of sustained success: it is the sixth most visited city in Europe – and which has witnessed a phenomenal rise in cultural diversity.

In the immediate post-Franco era, Barcelona did not possess the clear political, economic or social advantages to make a smooth or successful post-industrial transition. Although the city council had a stable tax base and symbolized power as capital of the Catalan region, its leadership was fragile, contested and soon quarantined. The city did benefit however, from a generation of highly capable and visionary municipal and business leaders who, in tandem with an engaged civil society, kick-started the process of internationalization.

This process began under Pasqual Maragall, the Mayor from 1982 onwards. Maragall’s stewardship of the city council’s administrative structure was overhauled. A more productive relationship with the trade union was forged through his personal involvement. Maragall created a culture of social democratic leadership to strategize. Some key elements were to deploy private capital and to strengthen civil representation and embrace citizen-based collaborations. With the help of experts in economics, society, and culture, he spearheaded the use of design as an urban re-invention method. In the first few years in office, Maragall brought about a shift from investment in large-scale infrastructure to support urban spaces and architecture. He also began the process of participation in urban symposia when creating the first inter-mayoral dialogue. This process has since embedded shared urban learning into the DNA of Barcelona’s governance model.

The award of the Olympics in 1992 accelerated investment into Barcelona’s built environment. A new platform, waterfront landscape and infrastructure, improved mobility and air quality. The Olympics, which were a well-executed global media event, helped Barcelona to present an attractive and stylish image to the world. Along with critical infrastructure and place-making improvements, the Olympic experience also set the pattern of collaboration among public and private stakeholders. In recognition of its role in promoting creative industries priority to the city’s can-do ethos – and which has proved successful in attracting international events, students and trade shows.

After the iconic Olympic fortnight in 1992, Barcelona’s leaders sought to capitalize on the exposure and to convert the city’s aesthetics and sense of collaboration into private sector Dynamism – and they did so with great success. In Barcelona, private business was invited to participate in the city’s re-invention method. During the mayoral term of Joan Clos, Barcelona committed itself to a framework of multi-lingual, business-friendly, municipal openness and management. The previous decade of investments into design, productivity and attractiveness were a prelude for the city to grow its时尚化, a regional gateway for entrepreneurs in new technological industries, dated by pioneering development agency Barcelona Activa.

CREDITS AND LINKS


Further information available at:

http://www.barcelonactiva.cat/barcelonactiva/en/all-about-barcelona-activa/who-we-are/

CONCLUSION

By the late 1990s Barcelona had become recognized internationally as an innovative and self-confident capital of media, art, education and tourism. Its unified pitch to tourists, investors, residents, students, and institutions had been achieved through the careful integration of assets, ideas, values, culture and aspirations.

INTRODUCTION

By the late 1990s Barcelona had become recognized internationally as an innovative and self-confident capital of media, art, education and tourism. Its unified pitch to tourists, investors, residents, students, and institutions had been achieved through the careful integration of assets, ideas, values, culture and aspirations.
In the post-Franco years, the city did benefit from a generation of highly capable and visionary municipal and business leaders who kick-started the process of internationalization.