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CITIES COMPETITION, PLACE MARKETING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH EUROPE: THE BARCELONA CASE AS FDI DESTINATION

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ABSTRACT
The aim of the article is to focus on the especially interesting area of South Europe and to present and points out the strategic development process, in one of the most representative examples of its successful implementation, which is the city of Barcelona. Barcelona, which in the last 20 years, managed to increase its competitiveness becoming one of the most attractive investment destinations on international level. The city's economic dynamism, its strategic position in the South of Europe and a clearly-consolidated international projection have turned the economic area of Barcelona into an international platform of economic activities, a driving force behind development in Southern Europe, especially oriented towards new, emergent, competitive and international sectors with an uninterrupted growth of their foreign markets.
Key words: Cities competition, economic development, strategic planning, Barcelona.

1. INTRODUCTION

Globalization and the intensified competition which is integral to it have brought about a massive restructuring of regional and urban economies. It can also be argued that globalisation; advances in information technology and far-reaching structural change have altered the terms of competition between cities (Jensen-Butler et al., 1997; Santos, 2000). The concept of competitiveness has grown significantly in the past two decades and it is now common for cities, regions and nations to assess improve and promote their competitive images in competition with other places. The attainment of a high position in the urban hierarchy system constitutes a primary goal. In the urban, European environment the global metropolitan centers of London and Paris as well as the large cities of Central Europe (Frankfurt, Amsterdam, Brussels) predominate (Heenan, 1977; Meyer, 1986; Friedmann and Wolff, 1982; Rubalcaba-Bermejo and Cuadrado-Roura, 1995; Beaverstock et. al., 1999; Derudder et al., 2003; Smith and Timberlake, 1995, 2001). These areas are estimated as the most appropriate agglomeration centers of knowledge and innovation, while at the same way; they constitute attraction poles of specialized human resources with skills and talent (ESRC, 1997; Meijer, 1993; van den Berg et al., 2004). At the same time, the dynamic of other cities is brought out, such as cities of the European south (Barcelona and Madrid), or cities of central-eastern Europe (Warsaw, Prague, Budapest) (European Cities Monitor, 2001-2006).

The aim of the article is to focus on the especially interesting area of South Europe and to present and points out the strategic development process, in one of the most representative examples of its successful implementation, which is the city of Barcelona. Barcelona, which in the last 20 years, managed to increase its competitiveness becoming one of the most attractive investment and culture destinations on international level.

2. CITIES COMPETITION AND THE NEED FOR "COMPETITIVE IMAGE"

Several authors have noted the increase over the last fifteen years or so in competition between cities to gain investment and to promote themselves (see, for example: Harvey, 1989; Cheshire and Gordon, 1995). Cities are becoming more exposed to global forces, as the nation state becomes more open to capital and trade flows (Kaothien and Webster, 2000). Urban regions (through local government, public private partnerships, or the local private sector) typically have considerable influence over local infrastructure and amenity, industrial estates, office complex development, community networks / forums, etc (Webster and Muller, 2000). With the establishment of the Single European Market and the increase of cities' competition phenomenon in Europe (Cheshire, 1990; Cheshire and Gordon, 1996; Lever and Turok, 1999), several attempts have take place to map the changing economic space of Europe in the level of cities (Taylor and Hoyler, 2000). Especially in the '80s, these studies focus their analysis on the definition of new urban hierarchies, by using a variety of traditional economic indicators (GDP, unemployment, production structure, etc) (Cheshire et al., 1986; Cheshire and Magrini, 1999). These studies constitute a first attempt considering some of the theoretical and conceptual problems associated with the construction of composite indicators designed to measure spatial economic and social differences. The analysis focused on the development of a methodology that measures the comparative incidence of urban problems in the largest 117 Functional Urban Regions (FURs) of the European Community (EC). The results showed that between the 70's and the 80s' the most competitive cities were the administration poles (Brussels, Strasbourg, Bonn) and a number of cities in Germany, Denmark and Northern Italy, joined with a small number of cities which benefited mainly from the development of tourism (Venice, Palma, Brighton). In the '90s, the studies focus on the use of soft indicators (quality of life, leisure, growth promotion policies) (Wong, 1998; Cuadrado-Roura and Rubalcaba-Bermejo, 1998), recognizing the significance of these factors on cities development and competitiveness.

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Most research on competition among places builds upon Porter's (1990) 'diamond' model of competitiveness (Healey and Dunham, 1994; Kresl and Singh, 1995). Porter's "diamond" used three main building blocks, namely global competitive environment, competitive strategy and organizational structure to explain the competitiveness of firms. From their point of view, Kresl and Singh (1995) identify a dichotomy between "economic" determinants (factors of production, infrastructure and similar) and "strategic" determinants (policy factors and institutional design). According to them, the individual city's government and private sector entities can enhance a city's competitiveness and enable it to achieve the most desirable economic outcomes possible. To Duffy (1995), officials and politicians have to increase involvement of sectoral interests. Co-ordination between groups with very different institutional arrangements is a key issue, that is, "civic co-operation" is very important.

In opposition to the approaches above, Krugman (1994, 1996) supported that competition does not take place between cities/countries, but among enterprises, which are located in these areas. Along with this view, comes an older thesis (Porter, 1990), which agreed with Krugman 's position, but sets as a main subject the grouping of economic activities – as long as the enterprises act collectively – of the existing enterprises and the character of influence on cities' / regions' competitiveness.

Evaluating the above approaches, we can suggest that the concept of city or region competitiveness cannot be defined single-dimensionally. Consequently, a commonly accepted definition should involve all the parameters that formulate a city's or a region's competitiveness. Namely, a city/region can not be characterized as competitive without taking into account the role and the dynamic of its business environment, nor can we support that its degree of competitiveness is defined mainly by the businesses that act in it. In addition when our focus is clearly on the city, the notion of competitiveness must be altered to reflect the reality of an urban economy and its capacity for action.

In this framework, places (towns, cities, regions) have been, characterized by a plurality of efforts, to shape or to reconstruct their images, based on the analysis and evaluation of their distinctive characteristics (Johnson, 1995; McCarthy, 1998; Beriatos and Gospodini, 2004). New place/city marketing schemes also orient both to image building and repackaging the 'place product' by emphasizing the uniqueness of local identity (Ashworth and Voogd, 1990; Metaxas, 2006). Furthermore, the production of a positive and competitive image as a 'final provided good' is not something that is accidental. According to Lofgren (2000) the main focus of cities (especially the global and the metropolitan ones) is to create a high level of competitiveness as a response to globalization. There are a number of cases of cities in Europe and the rest of the world that have implemented promotional policies in order to support their images effectively. One of the most interesting and representative example of efficient city image promotion, especially in the area of business, is the one of Barcelona that is follows. More particularly, a strong orientation to become the city a competitive and attractive business destination has already set up over the last two decades

3. PLACE/CITY MARKETING AND URBAN IMAGES

Some of the most representative supporters of place marketing argue that a place-marketing framework assists in understanding connections between the satisfaction of users of place products and also the development of these products. Place marketing involves regarding places as a collection of products, with their planning and marketing being guided by a strategic vision and related goals, and also by the need to satisfy the requirements and demands of identified target markets, which are selected according to the strategic goals (Ashworth and Voogd, 1990; Bramwell, 1998).

The understanding of Place Marketing procedure is based on the understanding of Marketing as a science and as a practice (Short and Kim, 1998). Place marketing supporters identify local economic development and place competitiveness as goals, attributing the concept of "product" or "good" to the place itself (Goodwin, 1993; Paddison, 1993), knowing at the same time that place image promotion constitutes something more complicated and multi-dimensional. The image of a place, related with the identity character (strong or weak), as well as the distinctive characteristics constitute the main elements that contribute to each place's uniqueness. The economic rationale behind these efforts is to attract investments, human resources as well as, new production activities, tourists and residents in order to replace declining former manufacturing economies (Bradley et al., 2002). Place marketing involves the adoption by the place's community (internal forces), identification of the place's vision, partnerships between enterprises - public / local authorities / residents, the existence of a public (or private) place's promotion office together with the relevant financial budget, annual financial support from enterprises, the setting up of primary development goals, SWOT-PEST analyses, strategic image management (SIM), the ranking of primary development actions, a feasibility study per action, market research and target market segmentation, using methodologies per action (cost-benefit analysis, Delphic method, Critical Path Method, etc.), the creation of the promotional package (based on the city's distinctive characteristics), strategic planning per action (using alternative scenarios) and feedback procedure performance (Metaxas, 2003, 2009). Promotional strategies planning include the 'excellent' strategies per goal, alternative strategies and finally tactics, which in fact are the steps of implementation of strategies. Thus, city marketing cannot operate in isolation. It can operate only through the participation of and a contribution from all the place's internal forces.

The international experience shows that place marketing can operate effectively through the promotion of the image of a place as a 'final provided good', in order that it becomes attractive and competitive in the potential target markets (Dahles, 1998; Waitt, 2000; McCann, 2002; etc). For instance, Wooley (2000) and Page and Hardymann (1996) used the combination between place marketing and town centre management as a main tool of development and competitiveness in UK cities, while Hubbard (1995) referring to the city of Birmingham, examines the relation between urban design and local economic development in order to create an attractive city image as a key strategy for encouraging investment and business activities. In addition, Chervant-Breton (1997), analyse and compare the promotional activities of the metropolitan cities London and Paris in a global and competitive context, while Cochrane and Jonas (1999), referring to Berlin case, support that the emphasis of place/city marketing is aiming to the ways that the cities become dominated in order to achieve the greatest perceptions of urban success. Cases of cities traditionally industrial, such as Glasgow, Bilbao, Bradford etc., which showed signs of decline during the deindustrialization period, reinforced their image, their development and their competitiveness through planning and implementing marketing action schemes. Table 1 presents some representative examples of place marketing implementation.

TABLE 1 - DIFFERENT TYPES OF PLACE MARKETING POLICIES IMPLEMENTATION

Cases	Main goals
Lexington (Kentucky) (McCann, 2002)	Identification of the relationship between culture and local economic development, in order to develop urban policy actions
Studying the role of museums on cities development in Amsterdam and Berlin (Aalst and Boogaarts, 2002)	Focusing to the emergence of the museums role on cities economic development in order to increase cities attractiveness
Coimbra and Aveiro cases in Portugal (Balsas, 2000)	Seeking for cities centers economic development and re-imaging
Bilbao (Gonzalez, 1993)	Analysis of the relationship between culture, citizens and the quality of life (focus on the role of culture in strategic planning)
Amsterdam (Dahles, 1998)	Re-imaging the city as a tourist destination by focuses on the evaluation of tourists' behavior.
Barry Island in South Wales (Selby and Morgan, 1996)	Reconstruction of place image
Bologna (Bloomfield, 1993)	Planning and development of cultural policies and actions: Culture as a production field of urban economic development
The Rocks (Australia) (Waitt, 2000)	Analysis of consumers needs and demands in the case of heritage tourism
Bradford (Hope and Klemm, 2001)	Transformation of the city in order to become a 'tourism pole' through the creation of an effective image (in this case Bradford is a 'difficult area' of tourism development)
North-Rhine Westphalia (Ache, 2002)	Examine the relation between the vision and the creativity

4. THE BARCELONA CASE

4.1. Profile of the city in brief

Similar to many other fields, the study of Spanish cities has changed in the last few years (Feros, 2007). There is a plethora of scientific studies concerning Barcelona and its development in the last twenty years (Guimera, 2003; Serra et al., 2002; Luna-Garcia, 2003; Gutierrez, 2001). Barcelona, in the North-East of Spain, on the shores of the Mediterranean, is one of the largest cities in Europe and the centre of an extensive metropolitan region covering more than 217 towns, housing 4.6 million inhabitants. It is the economic, cultural and administrative capital of Catalonia; it provides work for more than two million people and, together with Madrid, concentrates 41% of all qualified jobs in Spain. It is at the forefront of an emerging area of economic activity in Southern Europe, home to 17 million inhabitants and 444.410 companies in the province from Barcelona and 578.340 to Catalonia. This Euro-Mediterranean region, which includes the Balearic Islands, Valencia, Aragon and the South-East of France, is mainly oriented towards new strategic, competitive and international sectors and is becoming internationally consolidated as one of the main European cities. The town planning strategy, which today is known internationally as the Barcelona model, brings with it economic growth which is considered to be fairly important. The metropolitan GNP per capita has grown from 83% of the European Union in 1996 to approximately 117,5%.

FIGURE 1: THE PORT OF BARCELONA
Source: www.apb.es/ca (access date: 5/8/2009)

In addition, the Port of Barcelona (Figure 1) is still at the forefront of all European ports as regards the increase in seagoing traffic, because it is the one with the highest total traffic and general cargo rate, surpassing Amberes, Rotterdam, Hamburg, Marseilles, Genoa and Valencia. As far as container traffic is concerned, Barcelona is the fastest-growing port in the Mediterranean and the third-largest in Europe in volume, after Rotterdam and Hamburg. For cruise liners, Barcelona is still by far the number one port in Europe. Furthermore, thanks to the agreement to expand the Barcelona Containers Terminal, the Port will operate 5 million TEUs in 2008 (www.apb.es/ca/).

4.2. FDI and a competitive business image

The creation of an attractive investment image constitutes one of the main priorities of places globally (Head *et al.,* 1999; Christiaans, 2002) and especially in Europe the last decades (Stubbs *et al*., 2002). Every region / city looks to raise its 'investability' so as to gain advantage in this intense competition as the attractiveness of an area is basically defined from this criterion (Chervant- Breton, 1997).

In the case of Barcelona, the city's economic dynamism, its strategic position in the South of Europe and a clearly-consolidated international projection have turned the economic area of Barcelona into an international platform of economic activities, a driving force behind development in Southern Europe, especially oriented towards new, emergent, competitive and international sectors with an uninterrupted growth of their foreign markets. Barcelona is the capital city of the most important industrial sector in Spain and leads strategic, high-tech sectors. The economic area of Barcelona concentrates 70% of all Japanese companies in Spain, and more than 50% of all the German, French and North-American companies. However, the model of growth of the 19th and 20th centuries based on industry has decreased over the years, with services taking the lead both in terms of GDB and employment. New companies are now largely concentrated in the tertiary sector and new projects are more knowledge-intensive and employ highly qualified workers. We could say that Barcelona is undergoing a transitional process towards advanced tertiarisation (Barcelona city Official site, 2009).

Barcelona's potential for capturing foreign investments is internationally recognised by the main and most reputable analysts. According to FDI, Foreign Direct Investment (Financial Times group), Barcelona is the best European city to invest in (2004). The Paris Chamber of Commerce believes that Barcelona is the second most interesting region in Europe for foreign investment (2003) and Ernst & Young acknowledge that Barcelona is number two on the list of European cities for implementing foreign investment projects (2003). Furthermore, Barcelona has been considered the European city with the best quality of life for professionals for six consecutive years (Metaxas, 2006).

For investors, the high quality of life and the favourable prospects for growth in Barcelona are combined with a reasonable cost of living, very competitive prices for basic utilities for industrial and tertiary use and moderate salaries, making it one of the most accessible and attractive cities in Europe, according to the surveys conducted by William Mercer and the Union des Banques Suisses, among others. Tables 2, 3 and 4 present some very important rankings about Barcelona as an attractive and competitive investment destination (European Cities Monitor, 2000-2009).

TABLE 2 - THE BEST 15 EUROPEAN BUSINESS DESTINATIONS (2001-2009)

Cities	1990	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Change 1990-2009
London	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	-
Paris	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	-
Frankfurt	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	-
Brussels	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	6	4	5	-
Barcelona	**11**	**6**	**6**	**6**	**6**	**5**	**4**	**4**	**5**	**4**	**+7**
Amsterdam	5	5	5	5	5	6	6	5	6	8	*-3*
Madrid	17	8	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	6	*+11*
Berlin	15	9	8	9	9	8	8	8	8	9	*+6*
Munich	12	10	11	10	8	9	9	9	9	7	*+5*
Zurich	7	7	10	11	10	10	10	13	10	13	*-6*
Milan	9	11	8	9	11	11	12	10	13	10	*-1*
Dublin	-	13	12	12	12	12	11	11	15	18	*-5 (2001)*
Prague	23	21	16	17	13	13	13	14	19	21	*+2*
Lisbon	16	16	17	15	16	14	15	15	16	17	*-1*
Manchester	13	14	19	13	14	15	21	18	14	16	*-3*
Düsseldorf	6	17	13	16	18	16	14	16	12	15	*-9*

Source: European Cities Monitor (2000,2001,2002,2003,2004,2005,2006)

TABLE 3 - EXISTING REPRESENTATION OF BUSINESSES IN EUROPEAN CITIES

Cities	2002 (%)	2003 (%)	2004 (%)	2005 (%)	2006 (%)
Paris	45	45	40	40	40
London	42	42	34	34	36
Barcelona	**31**	**31**	**30**	**30**	**30**
Madrid	34	34	29	29	29
Milan	31	31	25	25	28
Brussels	27	27	23	23	19
Frankfurt	21	21	18	18	19
Prague	19	19	19	19	18
Moscow	17	17	17	17	18
Amsterdam	21	21	20	20	16
Rome	18	18	15	15	16
Lisbon	19	19	18	18	16
Warsaw	22	22	20	20	16
Berlin	19	19	19	19	15
Zurich	10	10	13	13	15

Source: European Cities Monitor (2002,2003,2004,2005,2006) – Author elaboration

More particularly, Table 2 presents the best 15 up to 30 cities to locate a business over the last nine years (2001-2009) related with the period of 1990. Barcelona has increased its position 7 places over the last sixteen years, among other traditional business destinations such as Dusseldorf and Manchester, which are faced rapid decrease the same period. This research concerns the evaluation of the top 30 European cities, by Senior Executives from 506 European companies. Senior Executives evaluate cities with a number of criteria (i.e. qualified staff, easy access to markets, external transport links, promotion and improvement of cities etc) that companies take into consideration in their decision to locate new business. A representative sample of industrial, trading and services companies was included. The scores shown for each city are based on the responses and weighted according to nominations for the 'best', 'second best' and 'third best'. Each score provides a comparison with other cities' scores and over time for the same city.

Relevant to this view is the picture of Table 3 that provides the existing representation of businesses in European cities available for the period 2002-2006. Barcelona holds the 3rd position during this period, after the two world cities (London and Paris), competed all the traditional metropoles of '*Blue Banana*'corridor. In addition is one of the 10 best cities in terms of government climate (Table 4), together with Budapest, Warsaw, Buharest and Glasgow, with best city Dublin, for the period 2002-2008 with some significant changes to some cities (i.e. Budapest and Prague) for 2009. The whole view of these cities represents a general option of the awareness of some particular cities that belong to the '*Red Octopus*'area, as it had already been mentioned by van den Meer (1998).

TABLE 4 - THE BEST 10 EUROPEAN CITIES IN TERMS OF GOVERNMENT CLIMATE OF BUSINESS CREATION

Cities	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Dublin	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Budapest	4	6	4	3	2	6	4	10
Prague	9	2	2	2	3	3	9	Geneva (2)
Warsaw	9	5	3	4	4	3	2	3
London	2	3	6	6	5	2	5 (with: Geneva)	4
Madrid	4	6	5	5	6	8	7	Glasgow (6)
Bucharest	-	-	-	-	7	10	11	5
Barcelona	**6**	**8**	**8**	**8**	**8**	**5**	**8**	**9**
Zurich	7	10	7	6	9	7	3	10
Brussels	8	12	10	9	10	10	9	7 (with: Amsterdam)

4.3. Marketing policies implementation and improvement of city image

Table 5 presents the best cities ranking at the top 10 positions, in terms of *promoting themselves* available for the period 2002-2004 (Metaxas, 2006) and *improving themselves* for the period 2003-2009, mainly as business locations.

In terms of making improvements in cities where companies are already represented, transport issues are what companies call for most. Transport links with other cities is the single most demanded improvement, followed by improvements to traffic circulation within the city and public transport provision. In addition, companies were asked how they arrive at a shortlist of cities when considering new locations. The recommendation of other companies located there, and consultants' advice are the two most frequently mentioned factors, followed by general reputation, media comment, city publications and websites (European Cities Monitor, 2003-2009).

TABLE 5 - THE BEST CITIES IN EUROPE, RANKING AT THE FIRST 10 TOP POSITIONS: PROMOTION (PR) AND IMPROVEMENT (IMP) OF THEIR IMAGES 2002-2004 AND 2003-2009

Cities	*Ranking 2002 (PR)*	*Ranking 2003 (PR)*	*Ranking 2004 (PR)*	*Ranking 2003 (IMP)*	*Ranking 2004 (IMP)*	*Ranking 2005 (IMP)*	*Ranking 2006 (IMP)*	*Ranking 2009 (IMP)*
Dublin	1	3	3	7	8	8	8	9 (with : Lyon, Moscow, Amsterdam)
Barcelona	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**
Paris	2	5	2	5	6	9	9	5
Madrid	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	4 (with: Prague)
London	3	4	1	7	4	7	6	2
Berlin	4	7	6	3	3	4	4	3
Frankfurt	4	8	8	9	8	Budapest (5)	Budapest (5)	10
Brussels	5	8	7	8	9	Warsaw (6)	Warsaw (6)	Warsaw (6)
Amsterdam	5	8	7	8	10	Prague (3)	Prague (3)	Lisbon (8) (with : Brussels
Milan	5	9	8	10	10	Lisbon (10)	Lisbon (10)	Budapest (7)

Source: European Cities Monitor (2002,2003,2004,2005,2006,2009) – Author elaboration

As we can see Barcelona holds the leading position, among other strong places, the last five years both in terms of promotion and improvement of its image. The whole view leads to the conclusion that marketing policies have had great results in the establishment of the city as a competitive destination satisfying the vision and the goals of the city.

Some of these policies concerning The *Fira de Barcelona* [Barcelona Trade Fair] is one of the main participants in the huge international platform for economic activity in the Area of Barcelona, which includes the Port, the Airport, the Free Zone Consortium and the new technological innovation districts. *Fira de Barcelona* generates indirect business of almost 2 billion euros and creates 41,000 jobs. In addition, it is the main organiser of industrial / professional trade fairs, covering 70% of this sector, and is among the top five in Europe. The surface area hired for all the *Fira* Exhibitions is the largest in Spain, while *Fira de Barcelona* represents a unique model; a management innovator characterised by public capital and private management.

Apart from this, the *Fira* will achieve projection into the future through the *Fira de Barcelona* Strategic Plan, due to unfold between 2006 and 2015, a project requiring the investment of almost 900 million euros. This Plan was approved in July 2005 by the institutions which make up the *Fira* (Barcelona Town Council, Generalitat de Catalunya and the Barcelona Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Navigation), and hinges around four points:

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- The completion, in 2009, of the Gran Via enclosure and remodelling of the Montjuïc enclosure. Barcelona will house the second-largest enclosure in Europe, which will take top place as regards architectural design, technological innovation and customer service and support.
- Higher growth, based on innovation and quality. The creation of new halls and promotion of existing ones.
- Capture of large-scale trade fairs and international conventions.
- A boost for its international dimension through the Barcelona Convention Bureau, a programme specialising in support for the organisation of acts and the promotion of the city as a place for hosting meetings. BCB is part of Turisme de Barcelona, an organism financed by the Barcelona Town Council, the Official Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Navigation and the Foundation for the Promotion of Barcelona. It also has contributions from private sector companies.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The creation of a positive city image constitutes an extremely important part of economic regeneration (Hall, 1998/2001: 115). For a number of scholars cities do compete in order to create a favourable business environment and attract business executives, to get public funds or to host and organise 'hall mark' and 'mega' events which have economic multiplier effects for cities economic development (Lever, 1993, 1999). Adopting Kotler et al., and van den Berg and Braun views we advocate that the implementation of place marketing is not something simple but, on the contrary, something multi-dimensional. Of course the place is not an enterprise; the representation of common interests in place's environment is more difficult and complicated than that in an enterprise. Local policy makers, in the majority of cases, are devoid of specialization and knowledge, but despite of that, the necessity for strategic planning remains the same, and, in the case of cities, much greater and more sophisticated.

According to METREX network European metropolis faced, at the last quarter of 20th century, a variety of social and economical problems, while at the same time have exploited several opportunities in order to improve their competitiveness, to create to high level of life quality and to regenerate their urban and natural environment (METREX, 1999)[1]. These changes bring at the first stage Mediterranean cities also, enforcing their role and significance, affecting though this way the balance of the European urban

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[1] METREX is a network of 120 metropolitan areas, with population over 500.000, including the cities of Athens and Thessaloniki. In this network are participate public local authorities, development organizations, specialized consultancies, having as a major concern spatial planning and the development of European metropoles

system. So, cities such as Barcelona, Madrid, Athens, Lisbon and Turin, improved their images as powerful financial urban centers of the European South (Dura-Guimera, 2003; Petrakos and Economou, 1999). A very characteristic and successful example of city competitiveness is Barcelona. The European practice of the last 20 years presents a considerable development of the city in terms of image promotion and improvement in the areas of business, culture and international attractiveness. Through the use of strategic planning and the development of marketing policies, Barcelona managed to become an attractive and competitive pole.

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