

6. Case Studies in Spain

This section explores major discourses and practices of commons in Spanish movements from 2000 to the municipalist present, allowing us to situate the discourse and practices of commons in the Spanish state, and presents a brief genealogy as well as a glossary of relevant concepts. We begin by exploring histories and terminologies as they emerged since the beginning of the 2000s, leading up to the moment where new municipalisms of the common dominate the discursive field. This is a history entangled with movements around militant research and indeed feminist movements; below we shall see some criss-crossings whilst however following the major commons theories as threads.

6.1. How commons came to figure in Spanish social movements: a genealogy

6.1.1. Introduction

Spanish, as other Latin languages, has a myriad of terms relating to the commons. Without tracing a complex etymology or exploring the existential dimensions of this terminology –as authors like Esposito (Esposito 2009) or Agamben (1993) do– my approach here will be a genealogical one. My aim –more in line with the analytical approach of Foucault– is to trace some key lines of development as regarding the practices and discourses of commons in a specific time and place (Spain 2000-2020), and notably to understand the relations between discourse and practice.

Such a genealogy cannot do without taking into account regional influences, and as such we need to take into account some key debates and events beyond the Spanish state too, particularly in Latin America (Argentina, Bolivia and Ecuador playing a key role here) as well as in Europe and North America (particularly in Italy, France, the US and the UK). These regional influences are key not just to understanding Spanish debates on commons, but also the shifting practices of commons in Spain. The discourses and debates relevant here have been formulated to a large extent by or, at the very least, in relation to social movements, and stand thus in an organic relation to practices.

6.1.2. Three key moments in the genealogy of ‘commons’ in Spain

By way of genealogy in the Spanish state, we may outline three major moments of commons discourse and practice: (1) the first debates and movements around digital commons, anti-copyright and free culture, via the notion of the *Procomún*; (2) movements and ideas about *institutions of the commons* as bringing together knowledge and spatial commons in relation to the right to the city (3) discourses and practices ‘*in common*’ [en común] as relating to the municipalist candidatures emerging in 2015. In what follows, we map out some of the processes and events leading up to the formulation of municipalist candidacies around the concept of the common/s.

The 2000s: The Procomún as against and beyond copyright, authorship and the privatization of knowledge

1. In the early 2000s, in the context of increased debates about the commercialization of culture and of copyright, notably the wealth of new and collaborative cultural production enabled by the internet, the ‘commons’ becomes a key concept to a growing movement of cultural producers and online activists (see also *Report 3. Digital Commons*). In 2001, the ‘Creative Commons’ licenses first emerged, as part of a general movement of ‘Copyleft’ activism that opposed the (copyright) regime of intellectual property and its privatization of knowledge via the Creative Industries paradigm.³ At this stage, the debates on digital commons strongly revolved around questions of licensing.

Starting from around 2006, the discourse of commons appears in relation to cultural production in Spain, via the notion of the ‘procomún.’ Initially, ‘procomún’ (Fernandez Moreno 2010) appears as a direct translation of ‘commons,’ meaning something akin to a public utility, an ‘Allmende’ in German. The term however soon takes on a life of its own and becomes the keyword of cultural producers’ revindications around free culture, public licensing, creative commons and collaborative culture in general. The boom of ‘collaboration’ (Schneider 2006) leads the paradigm of individual authorship, genius and the figure of the artist to be questioned and it sees a myriad of collectives and networks of cultural workers and hackers emerge.

In dialogue with and relation to the EuroMayDay movements (2006-10 roughly, see Zechner 2012b), Spanish groups such as Atravesadas por la Cultura⁴ emerge and put forward new and collective forms of (cultural) workers’ inquiry that lead to the formulation of militant research, as a method of collective knowledge production that runs counter to the privatization of knowledge. Based in Madrid but in close dialogue with their counterparts in Málaga (Creador*s Invisibles), Barcelona (Yproductions), Italy (Chainworkers, Serpica Naro Collective), London (the Carrot Workers Collective) and elsewhere, they ran inquiries in cultural workers conditions and the increasing exploitation of digital labor (from teleworkers to artists, museum vigilantes, writers, interns, etc.) as well as reviewing cultural policy and funding in Madrid.⁵ A debate and experimentation flourished, thus, with non-proprietary, radically collective and critical forms of knowledge production, which took its spread across different areas of work and research. The notion of commons was present, if diffuse, during this period.

³ The Free Software Foundation plays a key role in this, and debates on licensing dominate much of the debate. See for instance this text <https://commoning.wordpress.com/2011/01/04/misunderstanding-the-gnu-general-public-license-reciprocity-in-perpetuity/>

⁴ Atravesadas por la Cultura Blog. <https://atavesadasporlacultura.wordpress.com/>

⁵ Atravesadas Por la Cultura, Survey <https://atavesadasporlacultura.wordpress.com/encuesta/>
Atravesadas por la Cultura, Kulturometer <http://kulturometer.org/>

During this period, the term ‘common’ came to appear in cultural-activist projects and debates and publication. Apart from blogs and online (nonacademic) journals, such as that of the EIPCP in Vienna, the Madrid publishing house ‘Traficantes de Sueños’ was a crucial platform for these projects and processes. The prologue to their books, speaking of free knowledge and against the sanctity of authorship and books as objects, concludes with the proclamation ‘Omnia Sunt Communia!.’ They were and remain dedicated to militant debates on commons, with early titles such as *A la Deriva* (Precarias a la Deriva 2003) or *Nociones Comunes* (Marta Malo et al. 2004) and many later ones tracing local processes such as the *Carta de los Comunes* (Madrilonia.org 2011) or publications stemming from their ‘Nociones Comunes’ self-education platform (from 2015 until today), as well as translations of works such as *Commonwealth* (Hardt & Negri 2011), as we shall see below.

As movements around precarity and digital labor were transformed and a new phase of struggle and neoliberalism came to require new concepts, the notion of the ‘Procomún’ slowly gave way to ‘comunes’ or ‘común’ as translations of the term ‘commons.’ The Procomún still lived on past 2011 in spheres of digital and cultural labor, notably as a key concept for collaborative or cooperative businesses. A 2011 article in *El País* speaks thus of ‘The Cultural Revolution of the Procomún,’ (Fragas 2011), showing the arrival of the concept in the mainstream. In the social movements, however, the phase shifted from an analytical and critical moment to a diagnosis of the need for alternative, noncommercial modes of production beyond the digital sphere. Collective work and employment gave rise to cultural workers’ cooperatives such as ColaBoraBora (Colaborabora 2013) or Guerilla Translation (Guerilla Translation 2013), as the commons came to be associated with solidarity economies in the wake of the financial and social crisis of 2008. Yet, in some spheres, the relation between the Procomún and the Commons continued to be debated (Economistas sin Fronteras 2015).

After the financial crisis of 2008: from the Procomún to institutions of the commons

As we have seen, the concrete critique of creative industries in Spain soon came to be articulated as a question of cultural governance, and in relation to social centers as spaces of autonomous cultural production and research. The Casa Invisible in Málaga, occupied in 2007, plays a central role as a prototype of ‘monster institution’ (Universidad Nómada 2008, EIPCP 2008), or what later came to be called ‘Institution of the Commons’ by the former Universidad Nómada and cooperatives such as Traficantes de Sueños. In 2009, a cultural activist meeting on ‘Cultural Governance and Institutions of the Commons’ at Casa Invisible prefigured this new foundation, laying out the debate about privatizations of knowledge in relation to practices of space and the city. Social Centers like the Casa Invisible were to be defended as new kinds of institutions, promoting the right to the city and grassroots forms of creation and research. A book going with this process is *Producción Cultural y Prácticas Instituyentes* (Transform 2009), published by Traficantes de Sueños in 2009.

There already exist various experiences, in different contexts of creative cities, of creation of institutions of the commons, of autonomous spaces managed by people themselves, similar to the Casa Invisible, dedicated to cultural, artistic, social, educative, and rent-related production... The Institutions of the Commons set out to work on the collective intelligence in projects that seek the self-organization of social creativity and the production of critical knowledge connected with experiences of struggle against precarity, for the freedom of movement and access to knowledge (Museo Reina Sofía & Fundación de los Comunes 2009; my translation from Spanish).

The horizon was opened thus for a new kind of institutional critique that stemmed from a critique of authorship and property, bridging the gap between the immaterial and the material by articulating cultural production with autonomous spaces. In a lively dialogue with parallel Italian experiences of occupation (ESC Roma, S.A.L.E docks, etc.) that had emerged from the precarity movements, these new practices set out to challenge urban policy and the privatization of urban space alongside intellectual property regimes. Thus, a first window of addressing institutional actors was opened from a very autonomist position, and a broader debate on the city was inaugurated. The debate was largely facilitated by allies of social movement that held director positions at cultural institutions such as the Reina Sofía in Madrid, the Palau de la Virreina or MACBA in Barcelona.

The notion of ‘institution of the commons’ came thus to embody a double claim: that to a recognition of the institutional dimension of autonomous spaces of creation and organization beyond the public, as a ‘commons’ of the city; and to a becoming-common of existing public cultural institutions, addressing ways of enabling cultural programming, research and education that are in touch with social struggles rather than representative of the state. A key historical reference for this vision is Italian autonomism, particularly the work of Antonio Negri, who used the term ‘institutions of the commons’ early on. It is not by chance that the ULEX, the Casa Invisible’s ‘university,’ published Negri’s text ‘Communism / Institutions of the Commons’ (Negri 2010) as a booklet in 2010. At the same time, Negri and Hardt (2009) had just published *Commonwealth*, where they build on their vision of the Multitude (Hardt & Negri 2004) to open debates concerning self-government, commons and institutions. Negri –and to some extent also Hardt– had been in lively and ongoing contact and exchange with Spanish movements since many years, frequently invited by the Universidad Nómada to debates.

In 2011, an event changed the horizon of the commons and of the political in Spain: the 15M movement. On 15th May 2011, just after the conservative, austerity-bound and corrupt Partido Popular of Mariano Rajoy was reelected to parliament, thousands of precarious and declassed people took to the streets in Spanish cities. They opposed austerity, they called for real democracy, they established camps on main squares, they moved into neighborhoods and they established organs of struggle and mutual support, leading to the development of a wave of new social syndicalism around

education, healthcare, immigration, water etc. (the ‘Mareas’).⁶ This was an extremely powerful movement that changed subjectivities and fundamentally reoriented several generations of people in relation to politics, embracing self-organization and contesting the status quo, in a spirit of solidarity and empowerment. While young people –particularly those recently educated, whose prospects of work and dignified life were crushed by the austerity regime- kicked off the protests, this was also a truly intergenerational movement, involving pensioners as well as students and unemployed people of different ages alike.

In the 15M context, debates and practices of the commons found fertile ground. ‘Commons’ never quite came to be a key term of the movement, yet the previously described processes of debating other forms of institutionality and city politics articulated themselves with this movement in powerful ways. The urban fabric across the country became receptive to new forms of experimentation and instituting, focusing around some 62 camps in cities with over 100.000 inhabitants, as well as many, many more in smaller places (Monterde 2018). A broad desire to invent another kind of politics, outside institutions and from below, sustained new forms of grassroots organization. From assemblies to working groups, from inclusive facilitation tools to safe and accessible camps, from a politics of care in urban conviviality to a politics of joint, radically horizontal knowledge production, the 15M brought a new political spirit to the country.

The experimentations on the squares eventually became too difficult to sustain, as people got tired of conditions outdoors and the intensity of organization and negotiations there. The ‘indignados’ (a term primarily used to describe this movement in the Anglophone world) slowly decided to move into the neighborhoods, where their struggle was to be articulated with everyday life and local fabrics, broadening out further and becoming more sustainable, easier to connect with people’s everyday life. This move was made with great creativity and dedication in thousands of neighborhoods across the country, each in their own way. It led to a new sensibilization in neighborhood as well as urban politics, and the making of new demands and campaigns in relation to local policy, resource allocations and urban planning. This was the laboratory of learning that prefigured the municipalist turn, a learning that turned from a focus on the state to one increasingly directed at the city.

By the time the autumn of 2011 came, protest and new practices of composition had profoundly shaken the public perception of politics in the country. Estimates say that in August 2011, around 8.5 million people in Spain supported the 15M movement (El País 2011) –probably a conservative estimate. Yet, still all this left the regime unchanged. For some, this brought a sense of futility. Many returned to their lives, and participation in assemblies decreased. Others debated how to take the struggle forward, and soon arguments for moving to a new level emerged. Might it be possible to subvert the system from within? Some activists strongly disagreed and found this to

⁶ Wikipedia Entry on ‘Movimiento 15M y Mareas,’ https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Movimiento_15-M#Mareas, accessed 2/9/2018.

be a dangerous proposition, yet others preceded to experiment along these lines. This is what Podemos and the new municipalisms emerged out of, in very different ways. Podemos began to emerge within the 15M movement so to speak, out of the argument that now an organization was necessary. This sequence is familiar, and the suggestion of the need for moving from informal to formal political organization -a party essentially- is one of the basic formulas of Trotskyism, whose insistence and attempts at capture are often strongly resented within movements. The emergence of Podemos was seen along these lines by many, as a movement that weakened and captured grassroots power. Yet, it is not the only process that is relevant in this genealogy.

Rather, the new party-models of both Podemos and municipalism were preceded by new, experimental party-prototypes that were truer to the spirit of the 15M. The first significant anti-corruption party to emerge out of the 15M was the Partido X7 (formerly Partido del Futuro), which emerged from a hackers' corner of the internet close to where the initial online call for the 15m protest came from (the DRY collective). The Partido X was not a membership organization but it proposed, rather, forms of 'Wiki government' and similar protocols, meant to radically reinvent the way politics functions via online technologies, to enable radically new forms of participation and debate, in the spirit of the 15M. Their running for elections was highly experimental, a test for determining some possibilities and limits within the party form. Whilst many quarrels and splits ensued across the newly forming initiatives coming out of the 15M, there was also exchange and collaboration across platforms like the hackers' camp of the Partido X and the more Laclau- and Trotsky-inspired camps of Podemos. Parts of the online strategy of the former came to be adapted for the latter by its makers. Overall, despite some conflicts about appropriation, the tension between these two political dynamics was productive and agonistic.

Rather than Podemos, we will focus on the experimental politics of the hackers and grassroots groups here. These interest us because of their transversal and experimental approaches, which are key to the new municipalisms, particularly because both hackers and municipalists were part of the activist ecosystem of Barcelona, from which DRY, Partido X as well as the first municipalist platform (Guanyem Barcelona) emerged. This experimental background to the new municipalisms is mostly ignored or underrepresented in studies of municipalist politics, which tend to focus on Podemos and the grand narratives of the state, particularly in Anglophone contexts. It is however crucial to understand the experimental, transversal and situated politics that leads from the 15M into municipalism.

This conception of changing the source code, the proper DNA of politics and institutions, was fundamental to the spread of a desire to take on capital-P politics. In Catalunya, it led to a myriad of initiatives that prepared the ground for grassroots candidatures. The model for those was never the political organization, the party, but

⁷ Wikipedia Article on 'Partido X,' https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Partido_X, accessed 5/9/2018.

rather the social network and the neighborhood assembly. There was a belief that there was enough social force and intelligence present not just to take power, but to invent new forms of political and institutional organization. From the 15M to the Mareas, to the PAH housing movement, the Citizen Bailout Plan⁸ ('Plan de Rescate Ciudadano,' a name later ironically adopted by Podemos as part of an electoral campaign), DRY, Juventud sin Futuro and other key 15M actors, there was a world of new practices and approaches to learn from. This logic of learning and experimenting is what enabled the innovative and processual capacities of municipalism, wherein government was always imagined as self-government. This is the logic of the commons, of commoning governance.

After the 15M movement: from institutions of the commons to candidatures of the commons

Let us now look more closely at the debates and conceptual productions that made a municipalism of the commons possible. In 2013, the self-education platform Nombres Comunes ran courses such as 'Storming heavens. Power, movements and constituent process,' which deepened debates on theoretical perspectives as well as previous experiences of what came to be known, in typically masculinist language still, as the 'institutional assault' ('asalto institucional'). In 2013, the Observatorio Metropolitano Barcelona ran a reading group and course (of Nombres Comunes seminars) on Institutions of the Commons, where a prefiguring of questions of urban governance in relation to commons can be seen (many people involved in the Observatorio subsequently formed La Hidra research cooperative, which works on urban governance and municipal policy):

When we speak of commons, we speak of resources that are managed by communities and that generate collective benefits; of processes that are not exempt from elements of management, control or regulation, but that rest on principles of social justice. We from the Observatorio Metropolitano Barcelona have been working since a while on a collective research project, together with collectives of the city, that focuses on urban commons. In order to build an alternative narrative to that of Barcelona as space of elites and as strategic scenario for taking over social wealth, in order to recuperate a history that has been deleted because it was considered unproductive and annoying, a way of living the city that today re-emerges in different processes and social movements, we thus started a reading group... (Observatorio Metropolitano Barcelona 2013; my translation from Spanish).

These spaces of debate were crucial for the development of autonomous knowledges and practices of the commons in Spain. Nombres Comunes has been a key site for commons-related debates, with well over ten courses directly dedicated to different aspects of the question of commons, and with a growing archive of sessions held

⁸15Mpedia Article on 'Plan de Rescate Ciudadano,' https://15mpedia.org/wiki/Plan_de_Rescate_Ciudadano, accessed 5/9/2018.

across different social centers and bookshops in Spain. Some (I mention but a few here) of their commons-related courses include ‘Los Comunes Urbanos, Crisis, derechos y riqueza’ (2013), ‘Como Coño se sostiene eso: ciudad, cuidados e infraestructuras de lo común’⁹ (2015), ‘Revoluciones y producción del común’ (2017), ‘(Re)produciendo Común’ (2017), and ‘Comunes y vías jurídicas’ (2017). These courses were a key source for commons debates in Spain, focusing not just on questions of social movements, institutions, cities and governance but also providing the ground for some important feminist and antiracist discussions, amongst others (Nociones Comunes undated). As such, the Nociones Comunes courses carry the legacy of militant research and precarity struggles towards autonomous platforms of commoning knowledge, organized via a bookshop and a publishing cooperative.

From this process, and the alliances of self-education projects and social centers that Nociones Comunes sprang from, the Fundación de los Comunes emerged—constituted in 2011 at the Casa Invisible.

One of the big challenges is about thinking the commons as a space that does not grow and stop at the local, but that has the capacity to be lived in a distributed way in other territories. For this we need federated institutions of the commons, processes that can walk side by side, sharing their codes and transferring robust experiences. That’s how we’ll do it (Observatorio Metropolitano Barcelona 2013; my translation from Spanish).

These debates on commons followed the creation of the Fundación de los Comunes (part of which Nociones Comunes then came to be), a federated network of social centers, bookshops and research groups in different Spanish cities. In 2014, the Observatorio Metropolitano Madrid—one of several groups working on critical urban research, stemming from the same movements that compose the Fundación de los Comunes—published a book entitled *La apuesta municipalista* (Observatorio Metropolitano 2014), launching the idea of running popular municipalist candidacies. While so far the electoral debate had revolved around the state level and centered on Podemos, now a new horizon for taking over institutions opened, one that seemed much more compatible with the logic of proximity of the 15M than the party-models of Podemos. Out of circuits linked to the 15M, notably the PAH and the Fundación de los Comunes, municipal candidacies were proposed, and received massive popular support—first in Barcelona, soon in other cities. Their initial names and mottos were ‘Guanyem/Ganemos,’ meaning ‘let’s win,’ as an approach more in line with the language of ‘Podemos,’ based on more masculine and goal-oriented notions, of which ‘winning’ is the end.

Following the launch of these experimental candidatures, a period of vivid social creativity and composition ensued, building proper grassroots campaigns that set up powerful debates and imaginaries of change in many cities. Housing and feminism may be seen as the main building blocks of these candidacies, and they continue to be

⁹ Which I co-organized.

their greatest strength today. The foundational feminist influence on municipalism in Barcelona can also be seen as what led many candidatures to adopt a different political and organizational approach. This was determined less by ends and more by means, emphasizing good process in the inclusive spirit of the 15M and feminist politics of care, and led thus the candidatures to rename themselves to ‘En Comú/En Común.’ Characteristically, this denomination refers to *how*, to a way of doing things, rather than a ‘what.’ It partakes in the same feminist and ecological sensibility mentioned here at the outset (Haraway 2016, Puig della Bellacasa 2017). Not as a means without end (Agamben 2000), but as a situated, open and careful way of engaging means towards ends. A key part of this is the capacity to set one’s own time. The more organically, carefully and slowly –the less similar to the market– commons can constitute themselves, the more likely they are to build good collective process. This need for slow, organic social growth is characteristic of commoning, wherein relations and not just aims are at the center.

6.1.3. Previous and parallel developments in Latin American institutions

The experiences of the new Latin American Left, from the beginning of the 2000s to their recent decline, have been eagerly observed and debated in election-bound circles in Spain. Particularly those countries where new, non-party movements swept a new political class to power (as in Bolivia and Ecuador) have yielded some lessons on the potentials and pitfalls of running for government. But, also, Argentina, Mexico, Brazil and Venezuela have produced rich debates about the new ‘gubernismo’ (‘governism’) and its relation to social autonomy.

Key Latin American thinkers that have been read in Spain on the relation between social movements and institutions include Raquel Gutiérrez, Bolívar Echevarría, Alberto García Linera and Colectivo Situaciones and María Gallindo. Raquel Gutiérrez, who has been to Spain for conversations¹⁰ about and with new electoral movements from Podemos¹¹ to municipalisms, bases her analysis in social struggles rooted in commons –water movements in Bolivia, for example, with strong indigenous protagonism. From the viewpoint of these struggles, she interrogates and documents the social movements and political processes in several countries in Latin America (Gutiérrez Aguilar 2017a; 2008; undated) and insists that building power through commons hinges on a collective capacity:

When we speak of the production of the common, we don’t just speak about a way of managing or a kind of access or some such thing, we are talking about unfolding the collective capacity to generate material wealth –autonomous in some form– that can allow us to conquest fields of political autonomy (Gutiérrez Aguilar 2017c; my translation from audio recording).

¹⁰ In 2017, she did a speaking tour passing by Barcelona, Madrid and Zaragoza amongst others, organized by Fundación de los Comunes.

¹¹ During her visit to Spain in 2017, Gutiérrez also debated with Pablo Iglesias in his TV show ‘La Tuerka’ (Tuerka 2017).

Contrary to more technocratic and formulaic notions of commons management, which have found a place in some Latin American popular governments, Gutiérrez thinks about building power as a collective, embodied and material process. Building power involves transversalities and strategies that reach across different social fields (Zechner & Hansen 2016) as well as the production of subjectivities. Commons entail a form of material and subjective production that must be autonomous, argues Gutiérrez. This does not mean they do not ‘talk to’ state agencies or negotiate with institutional actors, but that they determine their own meanings, uses and framings (examples on this in the chapter on childcare commons).

The Colectivo Situaciones in Argentina, too, are interested in micropolitical and collectively subjective processes that come with crisis, rebellion and institutional politics. In their book about the political ‘impasse’ which they diagnose in relation to Kirchnerism in Argentina (Colectivo Situaciones 2009), they speak of a ‘crisis of the word’ in relation to politics:

In the *impasse* the word ‘politics’ enters into crisis in a precise way: the ‘factory of meaning(fulness)’ is displaced towards the mediatic-managerial sphere, in detriment of collective thinking. ... We thus confront a paradox, where whilst all kinds of political discourses circulate, a progressive *depoliticization* of the social and of language occurs (Colectivo Situaciones 2009: 35; my translation from Spanish).

This process of becoming void, or becoming catchphrase, of political language can be observed in a myriad of contexts where institutional or commercial actors appropriate the language of social movement. The ‘common/s’ has been used in an enormous amount of political and institutional initiatives in Spain, from party and candidature names that vary from ‘Barcelona en Comú’ to ‘Catalunya en Comú’ to ‘En Comú Podem’ to the denomination of ‘Los Comúnes’ as a general term of this political camp, to internal names of Barcelona en Comú such as ‘El Comú’ which names their party base, to their childcare project ‘Canalla en Comú,’ the social gatherings ‘Birres en Comú’ and many others. Largely speaking, these initiatives did not banalize the term to the extent that it becomes void or depoliticized. Indeed, the term remains politically charged, despite its broad use. By becoming part and parcel of everyday language, it has paved the way for commons to become common sense and common parlance, whilst still signifying an opposition to the status quo. This is a powerful process of commons becoming not hegemonic, but marking one sizeable part of the political spectrum -showing that beyond the third way, there can be a ‘Plan C’ for an institutional and grassroots politics, that articulates the public and the private in new and solidary ways.

When trying to understand childcare commoning, its politics and genealogies, we must take two key dimensions into consideration: on the one hand, their being based in local community and networks, within the fabric of neighborhoods; and on the

other hand, their status as reproductive commons per excellence, and the feminist struggles and knowledges that shape struggles around childcare. In this section, we will thus linger on the local and reproductive character of childcare commoning, exploring its relations to the feminist politics of work and its specific genealogies in Poble Sec/Barcelona and the Spanish state.

6.2. Feminist subversions of community and the commons

6.2.1. Defining commons with children in mind

Which criteria should need to be met in order for a childcare project to qualify as a commons infrastructure? Is self-management sufficient, or are accessibility and democratic structures and processes also criteria? What about continuity, and political engagement with its surroundings? The ecosystem of childcare projects in Poble Sec – which certainly constitutes a community– breathes the contradictions and tensions that come with these questions. In the Barcelona of Barcelona en Comú, children’s rights matter: a free municipal leaflet with the charter of children’s rights can be found in public institutions. Public space is being reclaimed for children, with the Ciutat Jugable policy¹² and the Superillas urban designs that reclaim road space for socializing and play. Education and care are being revalued and democratized, with more funding for nurseries and schools and the encouragement of experimental new schooling models. This is a context where feminist politics is going full force on reverting adult-centric, male-centric policy and design: a high point in feminist struggle and consciousness, where new experimentations become possible. Children come to be seen as subjects and active agents in cities, rather than as objects or incomplete adults. Childcare commons, though not named as such by Barcelona en Comú and allies, are on the rise, and the city tries to support them with a helping as well as critical mindset. Yet, what can legitimately count as commons, and what merits public support? In 2017, the city commissioned a study into commons by the Hidra cooperative, in order to arrive at more precise definitions, protocols and legal and administrative frameworks for urban commons (Ayuntamiento de Barcelona, Direcció de Democràcia Activa y Descentralizació 2017; this later led to the urban commons framework of La Hidra 2018). These drew on existing social movement criteria for the definition of common goods, such as from the Observatorio Metropolitano Madrid, a grassroots urban research group:

- Universality (open access)
- Inalienability (they cannot be alienated/expropriated or sold to third parties. By nature, their value resides in use value)

¹² The city government has put into place a policy called ‘Playable City’ [Ciutat Jugable] in February 2018, implying the construction of 69 new playgrounds in the city as well as a series of extended play areas where car traffic is banned. The concept of the playable city comes from the Reggio Emilia movements around democratic pedagogy, and is here adapted with the idea that the entire city should be children-friendly, as a way of avoiding struggles over limited spaces for childcare and play (which tend to be won by those with most capital), in order to make urban space accessible to all, including families that don’t have their children in childcare, for example (Ayuntamiento de Barcelona 2018a).

- Sustainability (the conditions for the reproduction of the good itself must be guaranteed) Democracy (the community governs, establishing the democratic conditions of its management)

(Ayuntamiento de Barcelona, Direcció de Democracia Activa y Descentralizació 2017: 27; my translation from Catalan).

... and also, from the Charter of Principles of Social Economy, promoted by the Permanent European Conference of Cooperatives, Mutuels, Associations and Foundations (CEP-CMAF):

- Primacy of the Person and the object over capital
- Democratic control by its members
- Conjunction of the interests of the user members and the general interested
- Defense and application of the principles of solidarity and responsibility
- Autonomy of management and independence from political powers
- The majority of revenues are destined to the achievement of objectives in favor of sustainable development, of the interest and service thereof, and of the general interest

(Ayuntamiento de Barcelona, Direcció de Democracia Activa y Descentralizació 2017: 27; my translation from Catalan).

These definitions are relevant because, rather than merely drawing on academic literature, they are based in the self-definitions and guidelines that commons initiatives have come up with in the Spanish and Barcelona context.

There are various lines of intersection and negotiation of the childcare projects with the new municipal government of the ‘Común’ in Barcelona. Childcare projects and platforms negotiate with the district and council about funding and the assignment/lease of spaces [cesión de uso]. The dynamics around this are similar to other assignments of spaces [cessions/cesiões] in the neighborhood and city, where Barcelona en Comú is trying to assign empty lots and vacant spaces to neighborhood groups and associations for common use, some of them earmarked as distinct legal entities of the commons. This is part of a general rethinking of the ‘plans of use’ [plan de usos] of local spaces, as well as neighborhood ‘plans of infrastructure and services’ [plan d’equipamentos].¹³ Should childcare groups be listed as public or common services? This implies a complex debate given their limited accessibility. The tension between a politics of the public and a politics of the common here makes itself felt in

¹³ Contrary to much public opinion and knowledge, the inclusion or exclusion from the plan of equipment is not a question of the (good) will of district and city councilors merely, but indeed also dependent on the interlocutors in place and their strength of negotiation and proposal. The possibilities of formalizing commons in the administrative schemas of the city depend not only on technical knowledge and tactics, but very much also on strategies and forms of participation that allow for infrastructures and services to be truly shared in their use as well as management.

very concrete ways, as we shall explore in detail in the following chapter. In order to get there, we must briefly explore a genealogy of Spanish feminist struggles and experiments around childcare, as well as the specific character of reproduction commons.

6.2.2. Neighborhood childcare commons after 15M: a brief genealogy

How can we give account of some of the crisscrossing lines of genealogy concerning debates on care, childrearing [crianza], childcare [crianza], reproduction and new feminist demands in recent years in Spain? Within our time horizon, autonomous-feminist struggles and the 15M movement are key starting points.

The 15M, new feminisms and struggles for reproductive rights

As we have seen in the previous section, the precarity and squatting movements of the 2000s spurred some autonomous-feminist experimentations that led into a new wave of feminism in Spain (Gil 2011). These practices were complemented, surpassed and further developed in the context of the 15M movement, which was a powerful catalyst for feminist movements, leading to the development of practices and debates that left a legacy from the streets to the neighborhoods to the new municipal governments. The powerful work of the feminism commissions of the 15M and the work of feminist collectives set the scene for a broad social debate on care, care work, interdependency, vulnerability and social reproduction. Groups, such as the Feministas Indignadas, Territorio Doméstico, Precarias a la Deriva, Agencia Precaria, the Escalera Caracola social Center in Madrid, and books such as *Nuevos Feminismos* (Gil 2011), *Economía Feminista* (Perez Orozco 2014), *Caliban y la Bruja* (Federici 2010) and *Cojos y Precarias Haciendo Vidas que Importan* (Foro de Vida Independiente and Agencia de Asuntos Precarios Todas a Zien 2011) facilitated a broad and very lively debate on care, care work and feminist economics.

As always, this powerful movement also sprang from resistance. In 2013, the feminist forces of the 15M were propelled by the attempt of the conservative minister Gallardón to illegalize abortion in Spain (Calvo 2013). The Partido Popular government approved a law that would undo 30 years of feminist achievements, sparking thus large-scale outrage across society and its movements. The new conservative affront was part of a neoliberal political package that included drastic cuts to healthcare and education, seeking to enforce a model of society where people would again rely solely on their families for their reproduction. The link between precarity and women's rights and labor came to be blatantly clear (Zechner 2012b). Massive countermobilizations ensued. Gallardón stepped down as a minister in 2014, and his law went in the dustbin of history: at the same time, the streets, squares and neighborhoods were lively with feminist debates and organization. The powerful renewed anti-abortion movement was questioning reproductive rights in broad terms, drawing on second-wave feminist demands of reproductive autonomy, as well as developing new viewpoints in relation to care and interdependence. Within those, not least because women in the feminist generations of the precarity-and 15M movements

came to be mothers, the question of childcare and gender equality came to the fore. Later on, as we shall see below, it was these same generations that started and massively joined the municipalist movements, giving the latter a solid grounding in women's rights as well as in the politics of interdependence and care.

From reproductive autonomy to the politics of interdependence and childrearing

Focusing on the neighborhood of Poble Sec in Barcelona, we can see the 15M movement as a key moment of emergence of a series of projects and practices that seek to politicize care and address the increasing need for alternative infrastructures of reproduction, in the face of drastic cuts to public services and soaring unemployment. Those articulations were in many ways pioneering. Out of the local neighborhood assembly of the 15M and its intersection with a loose mothers' network that stemmed from post-partum classes, the first radical childcare project emerged in Poble Sec in 2011: Babàlia. What started as a mothers' network providing mutual aid and care, sharing a space and taking turns in looking after children, grew with the children who moved from being babies to toddlers. Babàlia came to include a pedagogue and fixed schedule, in a space where pedagogues and parents work together in care and self-management: a *grupo de crianza compartida* born from an encounter between local and social movements. Indeed, struggles and practices around social reproduction tend to be at their strongest when they bridge these two dimensions: broad social dynamics and dense local workings.

Babàlia is not the first parent and educator-run childcare project in the history of Barcelona (in Sants, a neighboring barrio of similar working class and migrant composition as Poble Sec, a group called Tatànet had started in 2008). But it is the first of this kind in Poble Sec, and relevant to us here because it inaugurates a new phase of experimentation that runs parallel to feminist and commons movements (the latter as described in the previous section). The crux to Babàlia's proposal is that it proposed an affordable and politically radical model, critical of patriarchy and capitalism not just in word but in practice. The continuous presence of a parent meant that expenses of the project were limited to one pedagogue's salary only, on top of rent, bills and expenses. Though Babàlia did not literally self-describe as a commons, it brought the very question of alternative models of care, and of *grupos de crianza compartida* as childcare commons, onto the horizon in Poble Sec.

Focusing on Madrid and the policies of the central PP government, we can see a broader shift in feminist discourse and practice. Once Gallardon was defeated, feminist mobilizations moved from reproductive autonomy to a focus on care and interdependence. This shift was contextually contingent as a new sensitivity to the neighborhood and everyday arose out of the 15M (see previous section) as well as hinging on generational dynamics (activists becoming mothers). Alliances were increasingly forged across feminist groups and domestic workers' struggles (with the Territorio Doméstico collective at the forefront), disabled people's groups (with the Foro de Vida Independiente, for instance) and pensioners (the Yayoflutas movement), all of whom were vulnerable and acutely threatened by the PP's policies.

The question of vulnerability and sustaining life –always as a matter of dignity and solidarity, not pity and charity– had become common in the face of the brutal cuts that impacted millions of people’s lives. These debates and struggles emerged in the same manner as those around childcare. Slowly, at times timidly, gaining confidence and visibility as they drew strength from one another. The politics of care was collectively developed in bouts, by mothers with young children who had their hands full, by migrants and disabled people who had yet to raise and connect their platforms, and since the politics of care was new territory for feminism as well as social movements in general.

As some feminists took up questions of reproduction, maternity and childrearing, different experiments of collective thinking and debate, as well as of organization and reproduction, emerged. The grupos de crianza are part and parcel of this history, as are feminist social centers as loci of experimentation, and self-education courses such as ‘El ADN de la Vida. Cuidados, crianza y comunidad’ (Nociones Comunes 2013). They set out to map and debate models of childcare and subjective, collective and social dynamics that occur with motherhood and childrearing.¹⁴ This was a generation that wanted to rethink and re-value reproduction and childcare, beyond the binary trap between conservatism and the nuclear family. A fourth wave of feminist struggle looked to surpass the pro-employment and pro-autonomy stances of second wave feminism, knowing that labor market integration did not mean salvation but precarity and triple burdens, and that rather than more independence merely, a recognition and valorization of interdependence was in order. This meant, in many ways, starting from experience in relatively uncharted territory and with many questions:

We will stop to reflect on the question of care and interdependency on the one hand, and on the other hand we will get into the debates about different childcare models. Two questions that, once explored, will bring us to look deeper into the dichotomies, solidarities and possibilities that childrearing [crianza] opens up in debates on public and private space, also between the strong contradictions and the challenge that proposing childcare between the familiar and the communitarian means. Our questions will be ‘how to articulate models of childrearing that don’t relegate childcare back into private space? How to crisscross and affect [atravesar] the common and communities with childrearing? How can we approach community-related debates in this field?’ And the key question ‘What is the political and social meaning of a construction of collective, community childrearing?’ (Nociones Comunes 2013; my translation from Spanish).

A string of books and articles shedding light on the matter appeared from 2013 onwards, penned by recent mothers. The bestselling book *Where is my tribe?* (‘Dónde está mi Tribú?’, Del Olmo 2013) reflects on raising children in individualist societies and facing a lack of support networks, as well as on the tensions and contradictions

¹⁴ To speak of ‘parenting’ instead of mothering would betray who the real agents and workers in this reproductive and political context were. Men only marginally joined in on these debates and struggles.

between feminist demands of various generations in relation to the experience of raising children today. Similarly, from the viewpoint of sex-positive, post-porn feminism, activist Maria Llopis published an edition on *Subversive Maternities* (Llopis 2015). The bibliography continues to date, with books such as *Trincheras Permanentes* (León 2017) and *Maternidad, igualdad, fraternidad: las madres como sujetos políticos en sociedades poslaborales* (Merino 2017), to name but a few. All these books are authored by women who were active in the 15M movement.

These reflections ran parallel to organizational experiments such as that of Babàlia, stemming from a concrete need to establish infrastructures of childcare. Due to cuts, public access to early childcare institutions was very limited. Thus, slowly but surely, many small, self-run childcare projects emerged since the beginning of the crisis and cuts, in many Spanish cities. While the pioneers in many cases were radical projects driven by precarious mothers involved in social movements, soon the model of the self-organized daycare center spread beyond movement circles and attracted a wider range of parents, of middle-class background mostly. Between 2011 and 2020, some ten self-run projects emerged in Poble Sec, with at least 6 such projects still active at the time of writing.

A new generation of self-run childcare projects

The movement-based discourses and practices of care, reproductive commons and community childcare stand somewhat in tension with the equally flourishing discourses and practices of alternative pedagogy ('educación libre,' 'educación viva y active,' etc.). While those pedagogies question the power relations and learning processes of traditional education set-ups (authority, discipline, homework, marks, etc.) in favor of more attachment-based forms of parenting and education, they often fail to address the power relations that condition the world around them, inequalities of race, class, gender, processes of gentrification, etc. Most experiments of self-organization and community childcare [crianza comunitaria] took up these pedagogies, articulating them with different micro- and macropolitical stakes and opening thus onto a very rich pedagogical context. This also led to tensions and contradictions, of course.

Paradigmatic of the tension between politically radical pedagogies, which are critical of inequalities in practice and not just in theory, and more liberal pedagogies, which are concerned with the wellbeing of children and families but are more insular in terms of their engagement with wider processes of social wellbeing, is the early split that happened amongst the mothers of the 2011 neighborhood assembly in Poble Sec. Disagreeing over the principles that should drive a self-run childcare project, two groups of mothers formed and set out to establish the high-involvement Babàlia on the one hand, and the more nursery-like Petit Molinet on the other. While Babàlia and its successor project Rimaieta worked to make sure their fees do not exceed the public centers' fees by much (Rimaieta 2018), many of the projects which did not enlist parents as carers charged as much as 400-500€ a month, sometimes for shorter days than those of the public centers. Apart from being irreconcilable with 9-5pm jobs for

many, the more expensive childcare group fees were also largely unaffordable for working class, precarious or ‘milleurista’ (with a salary of about 1000€/month for full time work) parents, not to mention unemployed parents. This begs the question to what extent such projects are commons, and when indeed commoning might be reserved for the middle classes. Before exploring these questions in depth in the next chapter, we will seek to address them from a Marxist-feminist viewpoint that reflects the politics of reproduction and labor, and their key role for the neighborhood social fabric and struggles.

6.2.3. The politics of social reproduction and care in the neighborhood

We will now turn to further look at the importance of a politics of social reproduction and care for commons, specifically to understand the role that childcare and other reproductive commons play in the neighborhood. One aspect of this concerns the role of work in commons, where feminism can teach us ways to avoid invisibilizing essential work, and points towards commons that draw strength from care and reproduction, becoming thus more resilient and sustainable. Another aspect concerns the role of women –as well as migrants and subaltern people more broadly– in subverting hierarchical and heteropatriarchal orders of community. This is important for both a critique of the overly homogeneous forms of collectivity that commoning often produces, as well as for expanding our view of commons towards open and porous forms of belonging and cooperating, as in the mobile commons (Papadopoulous, Stevenson & Tsianos 2008) and invisible politics (Bayat 2010). Drawing on historical feminist work on women’s role in holding together and subverting communities, and their protagonism in resource struggles, we shall see how the love and labor of mothers in Poble Sec operates as powerful political force. The commoning of childcare does not just generate powerful social and solidarity ties, it also leads into the making of demands and the defense of public as well as common resources and spaces.

Commons, reproduction and labor

Seeing commons through a feminist viewpoint of social reproduction is crucial in order to understand the dynamics of labor and care that are enmeshed in commoning practices, as well as to politically understand the intersections between unwaged and waged labor that often characterize commons. Massimo De Angelis, in his book *Omnia Sunt Communia*, speaks of commoning as social labor that mostly happens on the reproductive plane, yet however it often also involves paid labor. Commons labor, paid or unpaid, is different from capitalist wage labor in the sense that it does not exist to reproduce the capital-labor relation and its formula of accumulation but instead produces value within a community regime, where use value remains the primary driving force of interactions and exchanges, and money does not enter circuits of speculation (De Angelis 2017: 192-193).

This is crucial in order to avoid essentializing commoning labor as purely immaterial or non-remunerated, and to develop a theory and politics of the intersections between

commons and market spheres (see De Angelis 2017: 192-195). In this sense, ‘Commoners are social subjects that...are engaged in the reproduction of commons and for which the relation to capital is often necessary but does not exhaust their social being and activity’ (De Angelis 2017: 184). These relations may be tense and reproduce some of the precarizing dynamics of the market, as we will see in the case of cooperative childcare projects. It is difficult to escape the dynamics of rent, in contexts of rising property prices and falling wages. One of the key characteristics of commons, in this sense, as argued by many interviewees in my childcare case study, is that they do not internalize or invisibilize these dynamics of precarity and labor but indeed seek to politicize them.

A key aspect of politicizing labor, aside from the question of the state of wages and contracts, concerns reproductive labor, which per se goes undervalued, non-remunerated. This is the terrain of feminist social reproduction struggles, which have been claiming different ways of valuing reproductive work, from demanding wages (wages for housework) to distributing such labor more equally and imagining alternative economics (feminist economics). In the childcare projects I study, the two problematics of labor intersect. Pedagogues are both precarious in terms of their income and employment status, but there is a broader question of unpaid reproductive labor that affects parents as well –particularly mothers (Keller Garganté 2015).

Commoning –though defined by authors like De Angelis as a practice not equivalent to, yet intersecting with, social movements– is akin to what Silvia Federici calls the ‘self-reproducing’ moment in communities and social movements. Commons are about the capacity to sustain life and relations via cooperation, as a collective, and as such are the lifeline of many social movements and neighborhoods. Social centers, commonly managed spaces, soup kitchens, mutual legal aid groups, self-education projects, free open source internet infrastructure and code all contribute to sustaining resilient neighborhoods (P.M. 2015) and movements for change, as well as embodying change in practice. In this vision, commons constitute an ecology of life and reproduction, and to reinvent commons in an industrialized capitalist context would thus mean to overcome the separated and alienated spheres of work, leisure, consumption and property. Speaking of work, this requires both a critique of waged labor and of the patriarchal devaluing of reproductive work, as well as, in a further step, a revaluing of care and reproduction.

‘Commons as a concept could be a space that globalizes into a political discourse of different local and self-reproducing initiatives outside the market or the state while acknowledging difference,’ Deborah Sielert says, pointing to the fact that the diversity of commons discourses and approaches is welcome and that what characterizes commons as a horizon is precisely the absence of a one-model or one-solution approach (Sielert 2014). Rather, it is an experimental and practice-based horizon for change that, ‘whether in the form of a food cooperative, a childcare collective, or an activist camp, commons let us experiment with more equitable forms of life and therefore grasp a different world that is not only in the distant future’ (Sielert 2014).

As such, the commons perspective does not readily lend itself to purisms and sectarianisms, yet it does come with some critical notions and criteria - feminist debates about (divisions of) labor, economic models and organizational paradigms (such as Levine & Freeman 1984) as well as reproductive commons (Federici & Gutiérrez Aguilar) and neighborhoods (Dalla Costa & James 1972) have a lot to contribute to these matters.

Towards neighborhood-based childcare commons?

In the case of neighborhood childcare self-organization, critical questions often concern reproductive labor (its value, divisions) and the question of self-reproducibility. For many of my interviewees, a key criterion for calling a childcare project a 'commons' is that it can sustain itself through time, beyond the generation that founded it, and can constitute a lasting infrastructure, though not eternal, as institutions supposedly are. Another key issue is accessibility: are these childcare infrastructures only for white middle-class families with liberal attitudes and high income?

Other questions concern the relation of commons to the neighborhood. Do commons damage neighborhoods by contributing to gentrification rather than providing a common resource for all? And if more free-flowing, unconstrained and organic relations of children to their environments lead to these environments becoming more solidary, social and safe for all (Tonucci & Institut de la Infancia 2016), then can we conclude that self-organized childcare groups are beneficial to neighborhoods as a whole? My tentative answer to both these questions, explored through a series of stories and examples in the following many pages, is 'yes.' Where they tilt more towards private and elitist models of childcare, local groups can accentuate dynamics of segregation along class, racial and gender lines. Where they tilt towards commoning however, they can build powerful transversal ties and porous spaces in the neighborhood, as well as linking groups of parents and educators with the neighborhood in situated, caring and solidary ways.

Another question concerns the relation between the commons and public systems in childcare: 'do the commons undermine the public?' In this study, we see inspiring examples of connection and continuity across the commons and public institutions - public nurseries as well as city political institutions. In many ways, these pages tell real tales of transversality, of working across spheres and avoiding ghettoization -at any level. In this context, and particularly through an encounter dedicated to this question in 2018, we come to the conclusion that there isn't necessarily a contradiction between the commons and the public. We will find different opinions regarding the usefulness and reach of different commons projects at this time in Barcelona, and we will find that despite differences, they are all engaged in an ongoing debate and negotiation of what commons could, can and should be, trying to create favorable conditions for them to flourish and be radically democratic. It is however important to make tensions and conflict explicit, in order to understand commons in a properly political way, beyond images of commons and community as

purely positive or harmonious. This does not mean reducing the diversity of commons approaches to a single model –be it definitional or practical– but paying attention to the different existing approaches and models in terms of the –social, political, economic, spatial etc – effects they produce.

In this sense, dynamics surrounding labor, rent, race/ethnicity, class, space and gender are important to observe. While no commons are perfect, it is important to also look at them critically. Silvia Federici speaks of the risk of appropriation of commons discourses, pointing to how they are sometimes portrayed as a kind of third option between the public and private but not as against capitalism, indeed as a way of humanizing or indeed saving the current capitalist system (Federici 2013). This is something we want to avoid here, yet without categorical imperatives. The potential of commons lies in their being enmeshed with the messy and dirty workings of real life in capitalism, whilst opening the horizon for, and fighting for, other possible worlds: *within, against and beyond*. Commons are ethical rather than moral assemblages in this understanding, and rather than operate as inspectors of radicality, we must act as supportive comrades to question, improve and sustain initiatives. Starting out from an enmeshed and caring ‘we’ rather than from individual critical sovereignty is what has allowed many of the practices presented here to grow and flourish together.

Women, migrants and the subversion of community

Women and migrants and/as the mobile commons (Papadopoulous, Stevenson & Tsianos 2008) or undercommons (Harney & Moten 2009), more generally, know the need to establish alternative circuits of care, income, justice and so on. ‘Women, because of their responsibility for reproductive work such as housework and childcare, were historically more dependent than men on access to communal resources’ (Sielert 2014). Migrants, because of their restricted access to social rights and public resources, as well as cultural and ethnically managed resources, depend on the same capacity to self-organize and practice mutual aid (for an exploration of institutional racism in relation to municipalism, see Instituto DM 2018). Women’s and migrant as well as indigenous knowledge and participation are key to building successful, sustainable and inclusive commons. Their practices and perspectives have however been systematically overlooked or, at, best become the subject of protocolonial ethnographies. The place I speak from here, as a white middle class woman in an academic research project, tries to reflect dynamics of migration, class, race, as well as age and ability, yet certainly others will take this much further. Furthermore, the experimentations and struggles that childcare commons and municipalism in Barcelona are certainly limited to predominantly white and middle-class agents during the period of my research.

The commons initiatives discussed here engage radically and promisingly with feminism. Many feminists lament commons discourse of the past 20 years being very male- and technology based (Federici 2013, Mies 2014), marked by a historical blindness to practices of reproduction. MariaRosa Dalla Costa and Selma James’ 1972

text ‘The power of women and the subversion of the community’ (Dalla Costa & James 1972) can already be seen in this light of valorizing the knowledges and practices of women in sustaining shared resources and community relations. The commons in women’s self-organization might be food, childcare or emotional support and revolve around ‘resources’ in complex ways. As Silvia Federici argues, reproductive tasks cannot be done by one person alone, they have to be collective - reproductive work by nature is a collective concern (Federici 2013), making reproduction a historical nexus of collaboration and community building. Indeed, this nexus is strongly tied not just to patriarchal capitalism but also to colonialism.

Women (in many cases indigenous women) have been the protagonists of many resource struggles –from water to food and land– and have developed a myriad of organizational forms and strategies. Silvia Federici (2013) insists that the committees to ensure access and distribution of resources like ‘the glass of milk’ (Peru and Argentina) should be seen in this light, just as much as practices of collective shopping, gardening or cooking, as well as land squatting, collective farming and resource pooling (in different African movements particularly), the setting up of autonomous healthcare or childcare centers (Argentinian and Colombian mothers), and similar practices in many other places. These practices can be seen as being about more than survival, since they propose and perform a different position of women in society, and a different understanding of the political as revolving around life and the everyday.

The protagonism of mothers in such struggles can give an interesting impulse to understanding commons. Like care, commoning is a practice undertaken neither by self-interest-driven individuals nor by altruistic impulse; it is driven by the lively, corporeal, affective and material entanglements between people. Mothers in this sense must be understood as political subjects (Merino 2017), not just when they address themselves to the stage of politics as in the cases of Latin American mothers’ activism around disappeared family members for instance (Maier 1990), or when they organize and protest for more public resources, but indeed in their everyday activity of weaving networks of care and community, in the light of the organizational forms they develop in this context. This is why, in my study of the self-organization of childcare at the neighborhood level, understanding the informal networks of mothers –particularly embodied in chat groups emerging out of pre/ and postpartum classes– plays a key role.

The political as located in reproductive commons

In the view I am proposing here, reproductive commoning is not just about alternative, more efficient or sustainable ways of resource management but about a repositing of the political and the political subject as such (Zechner 2016, Amaia Perez Orozco 2014, Isin 2002). If ‘the political’ refers to the practices of work and life that change power relations (rather than ‘politics’ as the institutional embodiment and negotiation of those relations), then the work of women and other invisibilized subjects who reproduce daily life (whether as cooks, cleaners, carers, garbage

collectors, farmers, etc.) needs to be central in the investigation of the politics of the commons. The racialized dimension of this –in its very real material, spatial and social aspects– is often ignored in debates on the commons, despite very obvious signs that certain commoning practices are strikingly white, middle-class, autochthonous. This is the case with regards both to the municipalism of the ‘común’ and the self-organized daycare projects in question here.

In a similar vein, it is interesting to question reproductive commons in relation to what Asef Bayat (2010), in his book *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*, calls ‘social non-movements,’ meaning the daily isolated and often invisible, yet complicit, actions of people going against different kinds of consensus or rule. Drawing on a broad series of middle eastern case studies, resonant with the 2011 ‘revolutions’ in the area, Bayat speaks of solidarities forged in transitional spaces of encounter as offering another kind of definition of the political outside the sphere of classical social movements, NGOs or parties. ‘The critical...point is that these practices are not carried out by small groups of people acting on the political margins; rather, they are *common* practices of *everyday life* carried out by *millions* of people who albeit remain *fragmented*’ (Bayat 2010: 21; emphasis in the original). This definition of the political challenges the narratives of the commons here presented, in line with a decolonial critique, akin to that of the mobile commons and undercommons.

Bayat thus speaks of ‘how ordinary people change the Middle East’ through subversive everyday practices and solidarities that fall outside the radar of organized, formal politics. The cumulative effect of those actions generates revolutions, in his argument –this may be compared to the subversive power of everyday practices of reproduction put forward by feminist movements, leading to silent shifts as well as moments of sudden upheaval. What he calls ‘social non-movements’ is characterized by a functioning through difference, indeed by an ‘everyday cosmopolitanism’ that flies in the face of theories of the clash of cultures, civilizations, religions or ethnicities (Bayat 2010: 202) and requires us to think community beyond essentializing or rigid definitions of interest, exclusivity or introversion. This resonates with the perspective of reproductive commons, whereby alliances are based not so much on identity as on shared practice and needs.

6.2.4. Initial conclusions

In this introduction we have begun to see that in the Spanish commons struggles and institutions that follow the 15M movement of 2011, matters of care and matters of politics are thoroughly intertwined. We have traced the genealogies of both municipalism and childcare commons via the 15M movement, which operated a powerful transfiguration of political subjectivity and community in Spain. This has shown us that the feminist politics of care and interdependency, and the municipalist politics of the commons and micropolitics run parallel indeed. We have seen some instances of common history, spaces and debates within social movements that have facilitated the emergence of new forms of collective intelligence and practice that put

both the commons and care at their center, developing new micropolitical sensibilities. In what follows, we shall see concrete instances and contemporary histories of this nexus between commons and care. We will be narrating different articulations of feminist politics, childcare, commons and municipal policy in Poble Sec, Barcelona, in the following chapter. In the subsequent chapter, dedicated more to municipalism, we will trace the relation between movements and institutions that underpins the specific micropolitics of municipalism in Barcelona and Spain. Feminism and care play a key role in this latter chapter too, as the new municipalisms seek to operate a caring turn, sometimes referred to as ‘feminization,’ in politics. We will see how the ethics of care and grassroots municipalism bring a new political logic and sensibility into circulation in Spain, which spreads from movements into society and institutions. This political logic and sensibility bring many new forms of subjectivation and struggle with it, pointing towards future horizons of egalitarianism and ecology.