Collective mapping at ‘Comunes y crianza’ symposium in Poble Sec, Barcelona, autumn 2018. Photo taken by Manuela Zechner.

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HETEROPOLITICS

Refiguring the Common and the Political

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

REPORT 6

CASE STUDIES IN SPAIN

Childcare Commons and the Micropolitics of Municipalismo

In this introductory chapter, I present the research endeavor of this project and some of its methodological premises. Why and how research childcare commons and the micropolitics of municipalism in the current conjuncture, and why present them as inextricably linked? Following two brief sections of introduction and methodology, this chapter features two longer sections that explore some of the key underlying currents of my two interconnected case studies, in their specific relation to the commons. Thus, we will first trace a brief genealogy of social-movement based commons debates in Spain, in order to better understand the social and historical foundations of the new commons-based municipalism. Then we will trace a genealogy of childcare and commoning in Spain and most specifically in Barcelona and Poble Sec, to investigate the importance of the neighborhood as a dimension of politics and care, as well as of feminist debates and collaborations across Spanish cities and across to Latin America.

Introduction

This report spans four years of embedded research in Barcelona and beyond, looking at the micropolitics of municipalism and at the politics of neighborhood childcare commoning. Though they might seem unrelated, these two matters are very much connected in the political and social landscape of Barcelona between 2016-20. We are looking at a time of strong dynamics of change in institutions, policies as well as neighborhood fabrics and politics, all of which share a new sensitivity to the politics of care. This politics bears the signature and fruits of Spain's 'new feminisms' (Gil 2012, Perez Orozco 2012), of Southern European struggles for welfare and Latin American struggles for commons (Perez & Salvini Ramas 2019, Gutiérrez Aguilar 2017a; 2017b), and of the global movements around care (Barbagallo & Federici 2010, Bärtsch et al. 2017, Luxemburg 2018) - and articulates them with new struggles and strategies at the neighborhood and municipal level. The subjects of this new politics are manifold: generally, it is women, migrants and informal workers who are at its center in the urban context. More specifically, in our case, it is also local mothers, children and parents as well as councilors, mayors as in the case of Ada Colau in Barcleona, and municipalist platforms, parties and networks.

My research into this politics has neither been disengaged nor disinterested, but rather immersive and militant, in the sense of partaking in the lived territories, realities and desires that drive it. As a mother I have been living and caring in the neighborhood of

Poble Sec, whose networks and groups of childcare are the subject of the first study in this report. As an activist and writer, I have been engaged with Barcelona en Comú since its emergence, working first with the migrations, then the international and Poble Sec working groups. My interests and desires certainly express themselves in my observations and analyses, and they have strongly influenced the kind of conversations I could have in interviews and group settings. Rather than offer a supposedly impartial study of the political climate of Barcelona between 2016-20, what I can offer here is an engaged and situated account that is shaped by many ongoing relations of collaboration, trust and discussion. As Donna Haraway puts it, 'It matters what matters we use to think other matters with; it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with; it matters what knots knot knots, what thoughts think thoughts, what descriptions describe descriptions, what ties tie ties' (Haraway 2016: 12). Talk of care might sound like mystification to the positivist ear, yet the difference it points to is substantial: it matters how we relate, from what place, position and ground we make connections, be they between beings or concepts.

There are many ways of drawing connections between childcare and municipalism, beyond the anecdotal. The politics of care is one such general common denominator, as are the concrete relations of (inter-)dependence within and across neighborhoods, social movements, parties and institutions. Bodies that need attention and specific configurations of politics, from children to pregnant ones, from ill to frail to disabled bodies, as well as othered ones. They all play a role in configuring this new politics of care. Urban space and the relation between the private and the public are put in question by practices and policies of childcare commoning, inaugurating the 'playable city' (Tonucci & Institut de la Infancia 2016) as well as feminist mutual support and new modes of caring masculinity. Childcare and play spaces render care and reproduction both visible and social in political organizing and organizations, such as in Barcelona en Comú's 'Canalla en Comú,' which posits children as a matter of the common. Breastfeeding councilors and baby blocs at demonstrations, the thriving feminist strike on each 8th of March and the debate around public support for self-organized childcare groups -all these are part of the same movement and effort. An effort to democratize care and radicalize democracy, redefine the political subject and reconfigure urban space and relationality so that it can allow for commoning across all kinds of levels of reproduction and production.

It would make no sense to narrate childcare and municipalism as strictly separate matters, particularly not in the context at hand. Because the new municipalism that arose in Barcelona would have been impossible without the feminist groundwork. Not just because it strongly hinges on Ada Colau as a leading figure and on a range of radical women councilors that have done incessant educational and consciousness-raising work amongst their male colleagues as well as the general population, but also because the very concept of the commons that the municipalist movements started from had already been strongly influenced by feminist movements and struggles around social reproduction, in Spain and beyond. The post-15M social movements

would never have endorsed a municipalism that were not at the level of its claims for another modality of social care, one that matched the modes of listening, caring and commoning of the squares and neighborhoods.

Inversely, childcare commoning would likely not have thrived and matured without the ongoing dialogue and encouragement of municipal councilors and Barcelona en Comú. Without the more favourable institutional context that was inaugurated by Barcelona en Comú, childcare commoning would have remained in the niches of self-care and self-defense, as an activist and experimental practice and strategy whose great worth likely did not reach into broader debates. Without devaluing or underestimating the power of experimental and counter-politics -as the reader will see, this is hardly my general gist- it is important to note the new levels and modalities of debate and articulation self-organized initiatives such as childcare groups have reached in the context of institutional municipalism. This learning and growing has been exponential in the period of my research, and it has been mutual, as a movement held in common by activists and institutional actors. It has implied a truly transversal moment and transformation, through a very broad social movement, that has brought together traditionally very disparate actors and domains. Therein lies the value of transversality and of micropolitics, in my understanding, as enabling profound transformations in relationality and subjectivity. The latter are the most solid basis for engaging lasting and sustainable social and systemic change, as I will be arguing across these pages, and they also constitute thus the most relevant base for thinking about the potential of commons and commoning.

As a research endeavor that draws on situated anthropology and explores the micropolitics of relations and organization, the genealogies I present in this chapter inevitably focus on the sociopolitical emergence of practices and concepts. Politics, even where it seems restricted to the agora or institutions, is made and sustained by everyday relations, conversations, debates and experiments. Hence, I take care to draw attention to the collective initiatives and networks that brought forth the lively politics of the commons that underpins municipalism. This history of movement around the commons also influences and conditions the childcare politics in question, as we shall see in tracing a genealogy of childcare and commoning in Spain and, most specifically, in Barcelona and Poble Sec. In this second section on the foundations of childcare commoning, we will see the importance of the neighborhood as a dimension of politics and care, but also of feminist debates and collaborations.

While this introductory chapter traces past synergies between commons, municipalism and (child)care movements in Barcelona and Spain, the following case study chapters look at the present (2016-2020) of these entanglements. The dynamics of municipalist movements, politics and policies are omnipresent at this time in Barcelona, and have much to do with the way self-organized childcare projects constitute networks, position themselves between public and private, and make claims. Many activists of the municipalist platform Barcelona en Comú have their children in local childcare projects, local mothers who are also urban planners are

involved in debates on public policy surrounding childcare spaces. The debates on commons and on care –and indeed on commons of care– that have marked Spanish social movements from 2008 onwards, have been a strong influence on municipalist candidacies and policies. Many dynamics and stories intersect, and thus the main questions and genealogies relevant to both case studies also do.

I have tried to interweave conceptual debates, local stories, analyses and inspirations, histories and genealogies, and methodological considerations in such a way that they allow the reader to dive in and out of different layers of thinking and reality here. The parts on childcare and on municipalism can possibly also be read across, as they relate and refer to one another across a myriad points. I hope my readers can appreciate this entanglement.

Methodological considerations: Situatedness, transversality, research militancy and resurgence

In this section I introduce some of the principles and methodologies that underlie my research in more depth, starting from an overview of the notions of situatedness, transversality and research militancy. I present a brief genealogy of militant research that dwells on its interconnection with movements around the commons that emerged from the Spanish mayday and precarity struggles in the 2000s, to new waves of feminism and the 15M movement after 2010, and the municipalist present of this report. I look at the latter in more detail, exploring the way militant research sits between social movements and academia as well as between institutional critique and feminist epistemologies. We thus trace not just the genealogical importance of militant research for commons-based politics in Spain, but also its aptness for researching commons, care and prefigurative institutional practices. Finally, I briefly dwell on the question of resurgence in this section, asking with Stengers and Gutwirth what it might mean to research for resurgent commons, and what methodological approaches this might imply.

Situated, transversal and militant research

Two key principles have underpinned my research practice both in 'fieldwork' (everyday observation and participation, interviews, workshops) and writing: situatedness and transversality. I shall be referring to those continually across the coming pages and chapters, in different contexts and perspectives, therefore I will only introduce them briefly here. I am inspired by the feminist situated research paradigm first named as such by Donna Haraway, who in 1988 argued that 'Feminist Objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object. It allows us to become answerable for what we learn and how to see' (Haraway 1988: 583). This notion of situated knowledge is directly relevant to the research on commons as instances of collective organization and reproduction that are singular in space and time and lie beyond the universalizing and generalizing logics of the state. It also builds an ethical basis upon which we

become immediately responsible or answerable for *how* we research, figure and represent.

Transversality is a concept that stems from the militant, micropolitical and schizoanalytic work of Félix Guattari, who also coined the term 'micropolitics' in the aftermath of the 1960s and the early neoliberal 1970s-90s, in France and Italy. To take a transversal approach (Guattari 2003, Raunig 2002) means to look at the lines of coincidence, intersection, crisscrossing, influence, attraction, affinity and tension between different phenomena, to take seriously the interdependence between real processes in a shared space, as in this case in the city. Transversality in dictionary definitions means 'traversing one or more lines' as well as 'crossways, diagonal, oblique, crosswise' (Collins 2020). With Guattari, it means the capacity to crisscross subjectivities and worlds (Kanngieser 2013), to make connections beyond different spheres of meaning and signification as well as life and politics. This is pertinent to my work as it relates to different affective and subjective moments, to different spheres of experience and inhabitation, which constitute the basis of 'another' kind of politics. As such they require not just transdisciplinary and intersectional but also transversal sensitivities and approaches.

The third key pillar of my approach here is militant research. This again is a practice or approach that emerged from the Latin and Mediterranean context, with initial roots in 1970s Italian operaismo (Marxist workers' inquiries and co-research, see Viewpoint Magazine 2013) and a second wave of development in the context of precarity movements in Italy, Spain, Portugal and France particularly (Euromayday), as well as in feminist and autonomist contexts in Spain and Argentina (Precarias a la Deriva in Madrid, Colectivo Situaciones in Buenos Aires), in the 2000s (see also Zechner 2012a; 2012 b). In this history, the meaning of 'militant' shifts from the original figure of the male factory worker (1970s) to the precarious, flexibilized worker (Euromayday and related Precarity movements) on to the feminized, sexualized and care worker (new feminist practices such as those of Pracarias a la Deriva collective, Territorio Doméstico and Todas a Zien collective, all of which are linked to the Eskalera Karakola social center in Madrid; Zechner 2012a) as well as to dissident subjects of crisis (Colectivo Situaciones). This set of conceptualizations and practices was soon imported into English speaking movements and academic circuits since the mid-2000s.[1]

[1] In their book on *Constituent Imagination: Militant Investigations and Collective Theorization* (Shukaitis, Graeber & Biddle 2007), Stevphen Shukaitis, David Graeber and Erica Biddle set out to gather a series of key texts on Militant research. Another collection of texts on what we may call engaged social movement research – though it does not inscribe itself directly into the tradition of militant research – is *The Radical Imagination. Social movement research in the age of austerity* (Haiven & Khasnabish, 2014). This 2014 book speaks to the context of economic crisis notably.

The EIPCP, an Austrian-based editorial collective with a strong ethos of translation and networking across and beyond Europe, is a significant actor in the transportation and framing of militant research. Its Transversal Webjournal featured an issue on militant research in 2006, with texts by many Spanish language authors (some of them to be republished in *Constituent Imagination*) and continued to

I am myself invested in these genealogies both as a researcher and activist, and I have reflected on the contexts and experiences in question in various texts (Zechner 2012a; 2012b; 2013). In this project, as an active mother in Poble Sec and activist of Barcelona en Comú during its first years, I have tried to produce knowledge not primarily *of* but also *for* and *with* the sociopolitical contexts in question. What has come to increasingly matter to me is the question of how we pass on knowledge across social movements of different types, in situated and transversal ways. Militant research, in my case here, does not mean so much a collective, politically driven process of knowledge production towards a concrete end (though there are collective moments and aims in my research), but, in a more modest way, a commitment to mutual exchange and the mutual provision of access (to knowledge, resources, materials, spaces, etc.) across activist and university contexts. The neoliberal university operates via small contractual packages, segmented deliverables, a bureaucratic arsenal of ethics and health and safety, and rating and ranking systems that interpellate the researcher as individual and legally responsible subject. In this academic context, militant research in the proper collective and targeted way becomes increasingly complicated, yet its legacy continues to inspire new modes of sharing and hijacking resources and access, in the modality of the undercommons (Harney & Moten 2013). However precarious and compromised, this mode of trying to 'common' research is invested in producing knowledge for ongoing struggles and their resurgence.

What follows is a brief genealogy of militant research that dwells on its interconnection with movements around the commons that emerged from the Spanish mayday and precarity struggles in the 2000s, to new waves of feminism and the 15M movement after 2010, and the municipalist present of this report. This will then take us to some considerations around researching for resurgence, with which we shall conclude this section on methodology.

The emergence and methods of Militant Research

Militant research was not developed by researchers entering into social movements in order to study them, but by researchers (university educated or not) within movements. As such, militant research is an expression of the post-Fordist conditions of knowledge labor, in which precarization, proletarianization of intellectual labor and mass education created a layer of activist-researchers that engage in knowledge production around their social movements and contexts. We might say that Militant Research is for post-Fordist Southern Europe what Participatory Action Research was to engaged research in dictatorship and post-dictatorship Latin America in this sense. Militant Research problematizes, yet does not reject social science methods, and dwells on what it means to produce knowledge for singular movements, rather than

contribute substantial texts to the debate in subsequent issues. They are all available at http://eipcp.net/transversal/, accessed 20/7/2020.

for a supposedly 'universal' institution like the university. Though its starting point is the self-understanding of students and academics as (precarious) workers, it differs from earlier operaist workers' co-research in that it seeks the transversality rather than, primarily, the utility of knowledge. In a context of neoliberalism, militant research seeks to re-establish social bonds, particularly those heterodox and subversive to the capitalist, patriarchal and racial-colonial order of knowledge.

Militant research was formulated out of a need to invent other ways of conceptualizing and practicing co-research in the field of social struggles – co-research no longer based in the factory nor contained within the walls of the universities, which were becoming increasingly neoliberalized and cut off from the streets. The post-structuralist knowledge turn had left many intellectuals caught in the production of discourse removed from struggles, and the emergence of post-Fordism had meant that the notion of work and workplace needed reconsidering. Both developments raised the need not just for a critique but, more fundamentally, for another way of doing things, for other ways of thinking about research and inhabiting the spaces between the streets and institutions, the homes and workplaces.

In the case of Precarias a la Deriva, this happens by taking both militancy and research out of a predominantly male frame of wage labor and academia, and placing it 'in the circuits of precarity' and, specifically, of female precarity. The inquiries of Precarias a la Deriva engaged, thus, the domestic, the everyday life of care and social reproduction in the city and their links to newer forms of precarity brought about by neoliberal politics. The collective's main tool to conduct its research have been 'drifts' –first elaborated by the Situationist International as forms of wandering the city without a fixed aim, letting oneself be impressed by what one comes across and learn from them. For Precarias, being 'adrift through the circuit of feminized precarity' means going into homes, as workplaces both of domestic workers and of precarious workers without an office (so-called freelancers, as well as university workers, cultural workers, etc.). It is broader changes in the world that render new radical approaches to research necessary. Ours is a time, writes Marta Malo of Precarias in 2004, that is marked by

> … the end of the world defined by Yalta, the disappearance of the subject 'worker's movement,' the end of the industrial paradigm, informatic and technological innovation, automation, the deterritorialization and reorganization of production, the financialization and globalization of the economy, the affirmation of a state-form based on war as a vector of normative production, and when the only thing that remains constant is change itself – dizzying change – … (Malo 2004).

In this situation of disorientation, what is necessary is 'building operative maps, cartographies in process, emerging from dynamics of self-organization, in order to be able to intervene in the real, and maybe to transform it' (Malo 2004). To call this *militant* research may in some sense be a misnomer, or at least require an

understanding of 'the militant' beyond the traditional workplace or party. It is however a name that has stuck, generating its own genealogy, as elaborated in dialogue across a series of collectives and authors.

Colectivo Situaciones, in their second text on research militancy which they wrote in response to a prompt by Precarias a la Deriva in 2004, speak of the importance of an anti-utilitarian aspect of militant research methods, in particular as concerns the format of the workshop, which needs to produce 'an "uncoupling" (in each encounter, again and again) from everyday spatiality and velocity. The disposition to think emerges from allowing thought itself to spatialize and temporalize according to its own requirements' (Situaciones 2004: 85). In this sense the workshop –rather than a focus group with preformulated questions and an attempt at mapping out participants' responses from the vantage point of researchers who are external to the process they investigate– is a format that proposes, that posits, that experiments and overthrows. In the translation of these Spanish-language works into English there is always the challenge of pointing to the complicity of 'experience' and 'experiment,' on the coincidence of which Situaciones insist. If we look at the etymology of 'experience,' we find that its Latin root comes from 'experiri' as in 'to try.' The discrepancy between Germanic and Latin languages is considerable in many such terms. In the term experiri, we also find the etymology of 'expertise,' suggestive of how this term can be detached from its current reduction to institutionalized and technical knowledge, and it can be reconnected with practical reason and experience.

As such, Militant Research is a method specialized in knowledge production within social movements and sites of commoning, as well as within prefigurative practices that relate to institutions. In Spain and Italy, social centers as 'monster institutions' or 'institutions of the common' (EIPCP 2008, Universidád Nómada 2008) formulated prefigurative practices in the context of struggles around precarity, in which a politics of knowledge commons was forged and militant research was a key practice.[2] These social centers were prototypes of later spaces and networks based around the commons -such as the Fundación de los Comunes in Spain, the Teatro Valle in Rome, l'Asilo in Naples -and allowed for a shift from knowledge commons to a broader paradigm of commoning, wherein the proto-institutional aspect was increasingly emphasized. This played no minor role in prefiguring the municipalist turn. Here the emphasis no longer lay in building autonomous institutions, but in going one step further and taking over public institutions.

Militant research is thus not just a methodology for knowledge production, nor is it simply a paradigm of knowledge production and struggle that has relevance for my

[2] The social center La Casa Invisible in Málaga instituted this early on with its Universidad Libre y Experimental/ULEX, as did La Eskalera Karakola, El Laboratorio with the Universidád Nómada and Precarias a la Deriva groups in Madrid, and the Ateneu Candela in Terrassa for instance (in tandem with Italian social centers like ESC or Cinema Palazzo in Rome or SALE Docs in Venice, to mention just a few). Within and across these places, all of which were sites of precarity struggle during the Mayday years, Militant Research, self-education and the provision of autonomously organized courses play(ed) a key role.

research endeavor. It is a key dynamic in the very genealogies of commoning that are at stake here. It takes its starting point in the questions faced by the very fabrics and intelligences of practices, engaging rigorous self-reflection and feeding immediately back into practice. The blatant embeddedness and partisanship of Militant Research – even expressed in its name– means that it avoids the fallacies of disavowing its own necessary situatedness in relation to questions of normativity and antagonism. These are demands that must be made of all studies into prefigurative practices and institutions.

Militant research between institutional critique and feminist epistemologies

In a 2017 text revisiting militant research, entitled 'Intellectuals, experiences and militant investigation' (Gago 2017), Veronica Gago –member of the former Colectivo Situaciones– explores three moments-debates to address the relationship between concepts and experiences differently. Speaking of the Argentine context and its developments in politics and militancy, she traces a development from 2001 to 2017. First, in 2001, there was a destituent moment and a break with neoliberal consensus in the Argentine crisis, and with it the production of new subjectivities and resistances. This is the moment out of which the formulation of militant research as practice and method springs, we may add. Then, Gago argues, came a moment of political and populist capture and interpretation of movements in electoral terms. This implied the neutralizing rendition of all struggle as social movement –'the sociological classification of the multitudinous under the all-encompassing category of "social movements" ' (Gago 2017)- and the reaffirmation of the party-style intellectual as reading the world. Finally, in more recent developments pointing to 2017 and beyond, a context where progressive governments falter and neoliberalism returns with full force, new social unrest and community weavings emerge, such as *Ni una Menos* in Argentina. These correspond to new interwoven knowledge productions around women's movements against violence, says Gago:

> One current form of militant investigation is connected to mapping the composition of laboring, subaltern, popular classes (all variations which are worth taking into account). But it is necessary to add a third component that is fundamental in our conjuncture: the issue of violence against women, which requires that the question of gender takes on, as Rita Segato says, 'a real theoretical and epistemic status' (Gago 2017; my translation from Spanish).

And yet the point is moving those conflicts out of the ghetto of gender issues. This leaves open the question of the instituting capacity and everyday force that determines the radicality of a 'politics in feminine' as Gutiérrez Aguilar names it (Gutiérrez Aguilar 2017a) in the streets and homes. This takes us beyond commons municipalism to the radical feminist politics of care and commons. Beyond seeing the closure of a cycle of progressive governments in Latin America, we must thus also value the opening of a cycle of transversal struggles pushed by the women's movement (where the word 'woman' itself is no longer bounded or predetermined but

refers to an intersectionality of experiences). In these struggles, there is a new need to put practices and concepts into tension, nourished by feminist epistemologies and experimentations.

The radical feminist experimentations in Latin America and Spain perhaps prefigure the post-institutional-turn landscapes, or at least posit and point to a most radical and promising direction for the development of progressive governments and commons politics. At stake is a radical rethinking of the political subject and logic, as a revolutionary rather than reformist moment in thinking community, commons and, also, the polis. Rethinking the political subject does not just imply going beyond subject/object divisions, as Militant Research also posits:

> In the blurring of the boundaries between the object of research and the subject of research, the practices of militant research can be explored both to inform and change the practices of academic research and reflect upon the role of knowledge in the political organization of social movements (Salvini 2013).

Rethinking the political subject also means to specifically undo the masculinist, individualist and sovereign notions of subjecthood. We must go from the Cartesian *cogito ergo sum* – 'I think, therefore I am' – to *Alguien me parió luego existo* – 'someone gave birth to me, thus I exist' (Gutiérrez Aguilar & Gil 2017). We must embrace a new relational, materialist and feminist politics, wherein commons too can be resignified. The politics of care here points first and foremost to indigenous and ecological perspectives. Learning from indigenous epistemologies, Gutiérrez Aguilar points to the 'four flowers of the common' in the indigenous sense:

> We learned a lot from the American indigenous tradition…, they speak like that in a properly poetic way, I really like how they put it. They speak of the four flowers of the common, they say: land/ground/soil [tierra], work/chores [trabajo-faena], assembly and celebration [fiesta]. These are the four things that make up the possibility… there have to be these four things in order for there to be a common (Gutiérrez Aguilar 2017c; my translation from Spanish).

Commoning is about relating as much as it is about material resources –the assembly and the fiesta are key platforms for the circulation of affects and development of relations and organizational strength. In this sense, commons are about 'putting life at the center' of our activities (a key phrase of the Spanish-speaking feminist movements), which hinges on radical collective care and the capacity for doing situated politics. Its materiality and relationality are specific to time and place, and as such any theory or politics of the commons must work through situated methodologies. It must be able to read the importance of practices, of rituals, of relations, rhythms and forms of collective practice, the 'communitarian weaving' as Gutiérrez Aguilar, Gago, Gil and many other theorists call it. Furthermore, in this view, commons are not just resources, but they are matters of relation, work and organization in a necessary sense: no commons without relations, processes of (re-)production and organization of commoning, or in the words of feminist Maria Mies,

'no commons without a community' (Mies 2014). The question of work –visible or invisible, reproductive or productive, communal or individual, paid or unpaid, etc. – in this sense is key to thinking commons, to avoid mystifying them.

In the pages that follow, I have tried to give an account of these dimensions in relation to childcare and municipalist commoning. Their material conditions and bases, and the resilience of relational, micropolitical and communitarian fabrics and weavings, is what conditions the resurgence of commons, their capacity to revive.

Researching for resurgence: passing on common(ing) memory and culture

As Stengers and Gutwirth (2016) point out, self-organizational human commons (as opposed to natural commons such as land, water, forests, etc.) are by nature resurgent. They emerge, transform, collapse, reemerge and reconfigure themselves over time and across generations. Whilst natural commons (which some refer to as 'resources,' an anthropocentric and utilitarian term I try to avoid) also go through cycles, seasons and processes of living self-organization, they do not hinge on human activity per se. Human self-organizational commons or social commons, however, require our constant labors and attention in order to sustain themselves. To resist enclosure is certainly a key challenge for them, as it is for material and natural commons, but they face an additional task: in order to survive, they need to construct social memory, resilience and continuity. As self-organizational commons, instances like childcare cooperatives or municipalist platforms are intrinsically collective in nature, and hence the question of micropolitics in them is not secondary but rather pivotal. Their possibilities of existence and sustainability rest on the capacity of a group of people to set their own rules and to adapt to changing internal and external challenges, to produce and sustain living knowledges. To ask about the sustainability of resurgent commons inevitably means to ask about the transfer or knowledges, experiences, memory, about 'common cultures' (Stengers & Gutwirth 2016: 27) or 'écoliteratie' (Capra & Mattei 2015).

We have seen that producing and sustaining living knowledges is the concern of Militant Research, which makes it very apt for researching commons. We look at commons both as social movements and social nonmovements (Bayat 2010), in the sense that they are the subject and often also the product of intense moments of social organization (what we call social movements, like the 15M, the anti-austerity movements, the new wave of feminisms, etc.), as well as being inextricably linked to and dependent on everyday practices of resistance and resilience. We may think of the latter as social nonmovements (Bayat), reproductive commons (Federici), radical practices of care (Puig della Bellacasa) or indeed ways of staying with the trouble (Haraway) -what is clear is that commons always include these everyday practices as a key moment not just of sustainability but also of subversion. Women play a key role in the subversion of community (Dalla Costa & James 1972). In the commons, too. The practices of gossip and storytelling, the informal circulation of knowledge in spaces of reproduction and everyday life, are key elements to producing resilient

commons. Militant research tries to engage such informal modalities of knowing and telling by incorporating different formats and temporalities of listening, telling, knowing and remembering, particularly when it involves bodies as sites of knowing and learning, as we have seen above in the work of Precarias a la Deriva and others.

This embodied, situated and transversal engagement with knowledge allows commons to build living cultures and traditions. Commons build up an immense wealth of knowledge for those involved in them, yet their ceasing can often mean this knowledge is lost (whether they dissolve due to impasse, or they cease simply due to people moving on to prioritize commoning in other areas). This does not mean that all commons must last, but that knowledges of histories, processes and failures need to find a way to live on in communities and infrastructures. To pretend self-organizational commons must be eternal would be to misunderstand their basic premise: to meet needs that are often urgent and sometimes temporary. One important affirmation of Félix Guattari was that *groups need to know how to die* (Guattari 2003). A related affirmation of a more contemporary thinker and practitioner of micropolitics, David Vercauteren (Vercauteren, Müller & Crabbé 2007), is that social movements need a 'culture of precedents' to build memory and traditions that can allow their practices, however situated, to be remembered and learned from for future commoning. Failure and death are a key to liveliness and resurgence, and it matters what stories we tell about those, and with what perspectives, means and modes we tell those stories.

When we think about resurgence, we touch upon what Pascal Michon calls 'the rhythms of the political' (Michon 2007), as in the different cyclical ways in which mobilization and demobilization happen in societies, and how this intersects with bodies, families, groups, institutions and so forth. We need to understand how commoning partakes of rhythms at the macro -as well as micropolitical levels, as well as at the embodied, natural and generational levels. I try to take the importance of different vital moments and generational dynamics into account in my account of the way parents and children move through modalities of commoning care, and the ways in which people shift from social movements into municipal politics (and back again), as it seems to me that this matters a great deal for our understanding of commons.

This is a crucial concern in these studies of childcare commons and municipalist organization: how to give account of, give concepts to, remember and transmit the experiences and knowledges emerging from concrete processes of (self-organizational) commoning, so that they can benefit future generations, nourish a sense of history, tradition and belonging. We need to recuperate the sense that commoning has a history, a wide spread, it is part of a common culture we share across places and areas of activity. This is what gives commons, as social movements and nonmovements alike, their political power, their capacity to affirm a 'we' and a practice that has its long standing and must be defended.

While there are a myriad articles and studies analyzing municipalism and its politics, there are few that take the care and time to develop an embodied and relational stance, to situate their analysis in lived experiences and relations, and give an account that is self-reflexive rather than trying to be objective. Raquel Gutiérrez (2008; 2017a; 2017c) is a scholar-activist who practices situated and partisan production of knowledge, speaking to the (non)movements rather than an academic audience, whereby any reader can be part of the (non)movements by identification, if they so wish to see themselves as part of a 'we' of struggle. This mode of interpellation, positing a 'we' of thinking rather than an individual reader subject, also matters a great deal to militant research. Its function is not to avoid criticality or to produce blind identification, but to engage the production of collective subjectivity and be clear about its partisan nature, circumventing the notion of disembodied, neutral or objective knowledge. This mode of speaking and writing builds a culture of precedents and understands itself to be part of a common body of living knowledge. Gutiérrez takes great care not just to analyze but also to *narrate* the histories and struggles she is close to. The critical practice that this mode of knowledge production enables is one where questions are raised not on behalf of a non-situated, supposedly disinterested individual -the academic is the prime figure of this- but on behalf of a grounded, entangled subject that knows it cannot think without a 'we,' that knows its interdependencies and inhabits them with care.

Let's take another example of why collective memory and subjectivity matters. The fact that there are thousands of articles online about childrearing but little collective culture of dealing with the challenges of being a parent, consolidating life and work in early years, of thinking politically about raising children in a local context, and so forth, attests to the problem of memory in childcare commoning, for instance. Childcare projects emerge and die, much knowledge and resources are lost; the PEPI network seeks to respond to this, as we shall see in chapter 2. This question of memory and resilience is not least what differentiates commons from neoliberal projects, start-ups and enterprises. Commons are part of a common culture and history, a situated 'we' that remembers and cares, where telling stories matters. Neoliberal quasi-social dispositifs come and go without much trace or memory, except for success or failure in numbers and monetary terms. This is one of the key aspects of what differentiates the social and solidarity economy, in which commons partake, from the neoliberal economy. And this is why memory and care matter a great deal for how we research and tell stories of commons.

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 comú/n] 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 Cultura[4] 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 (Yporductions), 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.

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[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://atravesadasporlacultura.wordpress.com/

[5] Atravesadas Por la Cultura, Survey https://atravesadasporlacultura.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’ (Universidád 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 Sofia & 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 Sofia 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').[7] 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

[7] Wikipedia Entry on 'Movimiento 15M y Mareas,' https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Movimiento_15-M#Mareas, accessed 2/9/2018.

to subvert the system from within? Some activists strongly disagreed and found this to 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 X8 (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

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

candidatures. The model for those was never the political organization, the party, but 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 Plan[9] ('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 Nociones 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 Nociones 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. Nociones Comunes has been a key site for commons-related debates, with well over ten courses directly dedicated to different

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

aspects of the question of commons, and with a growing archive of sessions held 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'10 (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

[10] Which I co-organized.

may be seen as the main building blocks of these candidacies, and they continue to be 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 'gobernismo' ('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 Echevarria, Alberto García Linera and Colectivo Situaciones and Maria Gallindo. Raquel Gutiérrez, who has been to Spain for conversations[11] about and with new electoral movements from Podemos[12] 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

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

[12] During her visit to Spain in 2017, Gutiérrez also debated with Pablo Iglesias in his TV show 'La Tuerka' (Tuerka 2017).

> some form– that can allow us to conquest fields of political autonomy (Gutiérrez Aguilar 2017c; my translation from audio recording).

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 policy[13] 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 Democracia Activa y Descentralizacó 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:

[13] 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).

- Universality (open access)
- Inalienability (they cannot be alienated/expropriated or sold to third parties. By nature, their value resides in use value)
- 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 Descentralizacó 2017: 27; my translation from Catalan).

… and also, from the Charter of Principles of Social Economy, promoted by the Permanent European Conference of Cooperatives, Mutuals, 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 Descentralizacó 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/cesiónes] 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].[14] Should childcare groups be listed as public or common

[14] 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

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 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 *Nuveos 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. Gallardon stepped down as a minister in 2014, and his law went in the dustbin of history: at the same time, the streets, squares and

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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.

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 Babalia'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 Babalia 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 Yayoflautas 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.[15] This was a generation that wanted to rethink and re-value reproduction and childcare, beyond the binary trap between conservativism 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 unchartered 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

[15] 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.

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 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 Babalia, 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 'mileurista' (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.

PART A

6.3. Childcare commons in Poble Sec: Mothers' sympoieisis, neighborhood politics of care and municipal(ist) policy (2015-2020)

This section introduces the practice and problematic of childcare commons in Poble Sec, outlining the research questions, concepts and methodology I used to approach this aspect of commoning and care. We will map out why and how childcare matters to commons and vice versa, and how different conceptual approaches enable us to understand childcare as a key matter of social reproduction and feminist as well as anti-capitalist politics. We will begin to see how mothers' networks and childcare groups subvert dichotomies between the private and the public and open onto new paradigms for struggle and the political. This section thus sketches out some of the key insights we may draw from looking at childcare commons, identifying some of my main concerns and referents.

6.3.1. Introduction

By organizing care work in a way that is not mediated by market or state, commoning care implies a range of practices that provide various degrees of autonomy from both. It involves performing care labor –whose benefits are to be received and shared by all– collectively and cooperatively. Perhaps most importantly, commoning care would mean organizing care work in a non-patriarchal, egalitarian and democratic way (Akbulut 2017).

Starting points, research questions and hypotheses

Care commons, childcare commons, commoning care, reproductive commons: in this report, we shall be discussing (child)care and social reproduction as a matter of *the common*, of *commons* as well as of *commoning*. Each of these three latter terms have different inflections and consequences for a politics of care commons. 'Commons' refer to initiatives, dispositifs and infrastructures,'commoning' implies a myriad practices and relationships of sharing, complicity, collaboration, networking, value-creating and reproducing, and 'the common' means matters that act as the basis and connective tissue between living beings (rather than resources): air, water, etc. We will be hearing about and learning from concrete experiences of childcare commoning in Barcelona, in order to reflect upon the politics of care commons in the context of late neoliberalism in the global North.

This report presents the results of a 2017-2020 research project on childcare commons in the neighborhood of Poble Sec, Barcelona, undertaken by myself as a local mother. It focuses particularly on self-organized, sympoieitic[16] nurseries –'grupos de crianza

[16] This term came to me via Donna Haraway, who picked it up from Beth Dempster, a researcher who coined this term in 1998 –much in tune with Lynn Margulies' 'symbiogenesis' -to describe systems that are not autopoieitic (self-organizing) but rather sym-poieitic (organizing together, in relation, interdependently). I believe it is a worthwhile feminist and ecological practice to always add or even replace 'sympoieisis' when we speak of self-organization processes that interdepend with a broader

compartida' for babies and toddlers –in the context of mothers' commoning, local solidarity economies and the municipalism of Barcelona en Comú. In a context or urban individualization and precarity, the 'grupos de crianza compartida' set out to bring together *childrearing* (crianza; broadly speaking the pedagogical, educational and nurturing dimension of accompanying a child in its growth and development) and *childcare* (cuidados; the labors and organizations of care-giving), through a sharing [compartir] of different modalities of care: caring about, taking care of, care-giving, care-receiving, caring-with (Tronto 1994). I shall be returning to Tronto's definitions of care frequently in order to define caring commons not just as crucially engaging *care-giving* and *care-receiving*, as sustained activity and labor, on top of the dimensions of *caring about* and *taking care of*, but also *caring-with* as proto-ecological assemblages (see also Zechner & Hansen 2020).

These groups are important examples of childcare commoning because they combine and articulate matters of pedagogy, care and organization, in ways that can transform all these dimensions, and build sustainable alternatives to the public and private nursery systems for bringing up children and creating community. In the terms of Joan Tronto's ethics of care, they combine concern (caring-about) with action (taking care of) and dedication as well as labor (care-giving) in reciprocal ways (care-receiving), as well as solidary relations to the neighborhood and beyond (caring-with). They may be seen as social-familial-local ecologies of care, as care or reproductive commons that are necessarily imperfect and impure, that 'stay with the trouble' (Haraway) in the very material and relational tissues of the everyday and in the quest for commoning not just childcare but also childrearing, building extended families (Zechner & Hansen 2019) or 'tribús' (Del Olmo 2016). The kinds and strategies of commoning they invent and deploy are particular and situated, and they will be discussed here across the different dimensions they comprise: childcare groups (grupos de crianza), mothers' networks and Whatsapp groups.

This research sets out to open up thus a field of commons practice and debate as located in the sphere of reproduction and as based in a politics of care. The analysis of the politics of care and reproduction within commons has seen increasing attention in research and cultural practice in recent years, drawing on histories and writings of authors like Silvia Federici, yet concrete investigations of contemporary practices of childcare are still new and few (for instance the work of Christel Keller Garganté 2015, Ezquerra & Mansilla 2017, in Barcelona). My modest offerings here include a transversal reading across a series of feminist currents and theorizations –care ethics (Tronto 1994, Raid 2009, Puig della Bellacasa 2017), social reproduction feminisms (Federici), feminist economics (Perez-Orozco 2014, Knittler & Haidinger 2016), cyberfeminisms and interspecies feminisms (Haraway 2016) –aiming to address systemic as well as relational, political as well as economic, and embodied as well as technological (in the sense of Foucault) dimensions. I hope to contribute a grain of salt and seed to these diffuse fields by relaying some examples of childcare

range of processes (as pretty much all organization does).

commoning from Poble Sec in Barcelona, with a specific focus on how these intersect and co-emerge with neighborhood and municipal politics and communities.

These examples stem from a special period of political experimentation in Spain, that was inaugurated by the 15M movement in 2011 and further developed into powerful feminist as well as municipalist movements. Commoning and childcare are thus inseparable from the politics of social movements as well as institutions. The relation of these commons to the public and private is complex and complicated. When speaking of childcare, 'private' does not refer to the private sector of economies so much as it refers to the enclosed spaces of the home, and 'public' does not just mean the abstract sum of state services and infrastructures but directly harks back to local histories of claiming space and infrastructures, to neighborhood and municipalist struggles and their gains. Both the public and commons models are limited in what they can do. By bringing the commons' singularity and the public's universalism into play with one another, the childcare groups invent modes of (self-)governance that can mark new political horizons, in always impure, lively, troubled, unfinished and onward ways. Mothers' networks, too, are spaces of commoning that subvert the dichotomy between public and private. They create lively links between public institutions/spaces (health centers, playgrounds, nurseries) and the private spaces so pivotal to childcare (the home, the family). These networks, though informal and noncommittal, often end up being stronger spaces of reference than both public and family systems.

Pedagogy plays an important role at all levels of this politics of commoning care, based in an understanding of the need to develop bases and tools for (common) understanding, not just when it comes to working with children but also in self-organization and policy -making. Feminist care commoning foregrounds how relations and ties ('vinculos') are subversive and transformative to politics. Across the movements, neighborhoods, new municipalist platforms and institutional actors, the period in question here saw an incessant, multifaceted and complex back and forth between practice and thought, where new concepts grow out of social composition and collective organization rather than being proposed by public intellectuals or scholars mainly. I attempt to stay true to this mode of theorization and storytelling by reflecting lively and ongoing debates and conceptual productions, and the modes of mediation and translation these implied, without trying to fit these into given academic or political categories. I understand commoning as an autopoietic process that generates its own singular logics and collective configurations, as a matter of subjectivity and relations rather than ideology or identities primarily.

This project sets out to translate between practices and discourses of feminist, childcare and neighborhood commoning across Spanish-language and anglophone contexts, since the existing Spanish-based literature on childcare groups (Ezquerra & Mansilla 2017, Keller-Garganté 2017) and the politics of childrearing (del Olmo 2013, León 2017, Llopis 2015, Nociones Comunes 2013, Malo & León 2016) does not frequently echo or translate into Anglophone contexts. There has been a wealth of

practices and reflections on childrearing, commons and care in Spain since 2011, which could contribute a lot to debates and experimentations in anglophone contexts and beyond. Again, Silvia Federici has been one of the rare figures moving between the two contexts, being able thus to develop conceptual frameworks that take both Hispanic and anglophone feminist currents and genealogies into account. Broadly speaking, we may say that the corresponding UK- and US-based debates have focused more on wage labor and welfare when thinking about commons and social reproduction, while Spanish and Latin American debates have dwelled more on community organization and alternative institutions. A difference easily explained by the different forms neoliberalism and enclosures take in the global division of power, labor and extraction.

Spain to some extent sits between those worlds, with both a relatively developed welfare state, though young and weak compared to other EU countries, and a rich history of autonomous reproduction, community organization and local struggle. Poble Sec's childcare groups feed off both worlds, in that they mostly start through encounters at the public healthcare center's post-partum classes, linking into lively neighborhood networks of communication and organization. They also oscillate between the public and the community models in their orientation towards the municipalist present and their own future:

Should the grupos de crianza strive to get funding, become recognized and licensed? Should they affirm their autonomy and disengagement from municipal institutions and policies? Is there a middle way or a transversal approach?

These questions resonate strongly throughout this study, partially resolved in varying ways at varying moments, yet remaining open in the period and contexts here described. My interest in investigating these questions was not and is not to find and relay a final answer or truth, but to give account of the debates, affects, movements, relations and decision-making processes that confront this tension between the public, the commons and the private entails. I aim for my writing to serve as a guide to understanding complexity and the interlinkings of politics, relationality and affect, to shed light on tactical and strategic moments in their situatedness and singularity.

The English language is also a key means to dialogue with the Greek context this research is embedded within, as part of the *Heteropolitics* project and in resonance with childcare, commoning and feminist practices. The *Heteropolitics* project, running from 2017 to 2020 and funded by the Horizon2020 program of the European Research Council, was based at Aristotle university Thessaloniki, and sit et out to deepen knowledges of divergent commoning practices in Southern Europe. My research on childcare and municipalism in Barcelona ran alongside a set of other studies undertaken by colleagues from the *Heteropolitics* team, benefiting from their legal, anthropological and theoretical viewpoints on commons, and was generously guided and supported by principal investigator Alexandros Kioupkiolis. The commons became very popular as political and experimental framework in Mediterranean

Europe –first in Spain and Italy, then Greece perhaps– as the financial and social crisis of 2008 took its tolls. The *Heteropolitics* project has allowed us to follow up on these developments some ten years after and to engage in labors of translation and comparison between the three countries.

This text on childcare is, thus, part of my larger research project on commons in Barcelona, and it is followed by and entangled with my other focus of research: the municipalisms of 2015-19 in Spain, and particularly in Barcelona, with a view to their micropolitical dimensions. As the reader will soon notice, municipalism keeps spilling over into my accounts of childcare commoning. Indeed, these two contexts inform one another in significant ways in the real life of Barcelona at this time. The feminist politics of Barcelona en Comú, just like the self-organizational practices in Poble Sec I depart from here, refuse to have themselves dissected and (once more) separated out into an ontology that sees care and politics, macropolitical and micropolitical, or everyday and institutions, as opposing poles. Hence, there will be neither a pure account of childcare nor of municipalism: everything will come mixed and entangled, as it is in reality. Similarly, there can be no separating the 'case' or the practice from the theory. We will be focusing on the commoning practices of self-organized childcare groups and their neighborhood accomplices mostly, but we will also see how the municipalist politics of Barcelona en Comú often practically, tactically and strategically articulate politics of the commons within public frameworks, in ways that do not merely promote islands of commoning but aim to broadly transform the city and its modes of relation and inhabitation. Inhabitation and space are key sites of struggle in neoliberal times, as urban geographers like David Harvey have amply demonstrated, where speculation on land and property, as well as precarity and coercive mobility produce fragile communities, precarious care chains and many contested urban sites (Zechner, Cobo-Guevara & Herbst 2017).

My work here particularly reflects two of the key research questions of the *Heteropolitics* project, concerning the relationships between the state and the commons –if and how the state could support the commons– and more concretely, the relationship between the commons and municipalism.

My research endeavor started out with a series of situated questions regarding care, reproduction, childcare and commons. *How may we think, define and test reproductive commons in the case of collectively organized childcare in an urban center? What kinds of care networks do they draw on and enable? There is a saying that 'It takes a village to raise a child' -how does this reflect on Poble Sec, a highly organized and solidary neighborhood in Barcelona that is indeed sometimes compared to a village for its density of relations?*

And more generally: *What is specific about reproduction commoning, and childcare commoning? What does it mean to think commons from the viewpoint of care and care ethics, and from the situated knowledges of the neighborhood and parenting? What*

genealogies, discourses, relations, infrastructures and embodiments does the childcare commoning in Poble Sec draw on?

Leading into some critical political questions: *When do childcare projects merit the name of commons? What are their politics, and what problems and risks do they face – of collapse, sustainability, appropriation, co-optation, exclusion? Who are they driven by and who do they serve? Are they merely self-referential projects of the white urban middle class, or do they manage to reach beyond these identities?*

Then there was also a second block of questions that drove my research, which I initially associated more with municipalism and macropolitical questions, but which soon seeped into my considerations about childcare commoning too, since the specific political-institutional context of Barcelona between 2017-2020 was marked by a claim not just to politics but also to policies of the commons (as led by Barcelona en Comú).

How can we think the relations between the private, the public and the commons when it comes to childcare? What struggles and tensions, but also what complicities and inventions, happen between self-organized childcare projects and the municipal institutions and their agents? Can there be such a thing as policies of childcare commoning, or will these inevitably lead to corrupting and weakening the commoning aspect of these kindergarten projects? We are often aware of the claims that commoners make on the public system, but what claims does the public paradigm make on commons? Should commons be funded? Can commons and commoning be articulated with the claims to universality of public welfare, or are they a danger to it? Can feminist viewpoints help with articulating care, commons and universality in new ways, beyond the discourses of a feminization of politics?

This leads us to the broader questions the *Heteropolitics* project poses, such as *How do commons in general, and childcare commons, more specifically in this case, as a collectively self-organized making and 'management' of childcare in terms of a common and shared good, contribute to the promotion of other forms of politics and social relations and historical transformation more broadly? Does childcare commoning point towards collective autonomy and heteronomy, equality, justice, solidarity, sharing, openness and plurality? If commons are to be transformative social practices that lead not just to more democracy but also to more equality (making democracy accessible to all), then what basic things must they achieve in this sense? Do commons always start from shared cultural codes or can they, by departing from shared needs, also create new cultural codes between diverse actors?* I will answer these larger questions little by little, with all the contradictions and ambivalences this involves, throughout this text.

My analysis here will take us through an argument for situated and embedded research into understanding care networks and neighborhood dynamics, whereby we come to understand the local context and define childcare and care as key aspects of commoning. I will be noting the great collective intelligence and care that has been put into furthering childcare commons in Poble Sec - by families, carers, healthcare

workers -as well as in Barcelona overall- by the feminist municipalists of Barcelona en Comú and the highly active and experimental social as well as institutional fabric in the city. We find that childcare is actually a matter at the heart of municipalism, not just as a matter of women's participation but also as the touchstone of the politics of care that Barcelona en Comú has developed across their internal workings as well as political outlook and policies. I will be showing that while much remains to be done, we are looking here at an extremely fruitful and experimental period of political work, where a myriad of previously unthinkable things become possible in politics.

My main aims in this project were (1) to research –to take up, question and produce knowledge– not just through reading and observing but also through practice and relation; (2) to create a situated research set-up that would enable me to inhabit a dynamic, organic and embodied back-and-forth between the lived local dimension, broader debates in the city and social movements, and the academic framework of the *Heteropolitics* project; (3) to imminently and intimately relate the micro- and macropolitical dimensions (Guattari & Rolnik 2006), amongst other things through a refusal to rigidly separate questions of childcare from those of municipalism; (4) and finally to give account of some processes that are otherwise invisibilized, undervalued, silenced, by focusing on care and micropolitics in my studies –a deed particularly in relation to the Spanish political context, which often tends to be abstracted, mystified or even fetishized in English-language accounts.

This text will take you from this introduction into definitional and theoretical implications of care and feminist epistemologies on the commons, opening onto some specific situations and debates on childcare commoning in Poble Sec, in order to arrive, towards the end of this chapter, at some of the implications of childcare commoning on policy and urban space. I have chosen to keep this text on childcare commons closely interlinked with debates on municipalism and micropolitics (and indeed also interlocked in the sense that this text leads directly into my study and analysis of the micropolitics of municipalism in Barcelona 2015-2020). At the end of this long text, you find two appendixes that give a detailed insight into the situation, networks and projects in Poble Sec, as well as an autoethnographic account of my experiences and learning process as a mother and participant within this field.

6.3.2. Methodology

My research as part of the Heteropolitics project ran from 2017-20 in Barcelona, yet my implications with this place and 'field' precede and exceed the project, since I practice situated and embedded research. As a mother whose child was born in 2016, I went through the experiences of childcare myself, and drew on the ties I built in this context in order to render this research collectively relevant. Apart from interviewing local actors (some ten formal interviews, some 10 informal ones) I have been in ongoing conversations with parent-mother-activist-researcher-teacher-neighbors, and I attempted to share not just my questions and findings but also resources within this local ecosystem.

In 2017, I ran two workshops with mothers from my post-partum group, doing care-network mappings. In 2018, I co-organized the 'Comunes y Crianza' colloquium together with a handful other local researcher-activist-parents. This was a precious occasion for continuing and deepening some conversations and debates both locally and from my research, and its session transcriptions are one of my key sources in this text. I am grateful and glad this could happen in such a way, both to the *Heteropolitics* project for its openness and to my local companions for taking up the offer.

My research is thus focused on the neighborhood of Poble Sec, and wider Barcelona to some extent, and therein it has proceeded not just through militant and participatory action research but also through a lot of continuous and implicated observation and listening. Being part of a lively Whatsapp group of 80 mothers was a crucial part of understanding the local ecosystem of mutual aid and care, as were playground visits, conversations, etc. This situated (Haraway 1988), embodied and care-based research method is solidly grounded in feminist politics.

6.3.3. Why and how commons?

Rather than a technically minded study of a specific childcare model, this report seeks to give an idea of a social *ecosystem* of childcare, as implicated in local networks, struggles, debates, politics. Within ecosystems, relations are complex and changing, always part of different dynamics –symbiosis, competition, parasitism, mutualism, predation, commensalism, etc.– and so I try to give account of some cosymbiotic genealogies, their tensions and inventions. This approach draws on analyses of commons as systems (DeAngelis 2017; 2019) and as relations: 'Commons are not things, but social relations –of cooperation and solidarity. And commons are not givens but processes. In this sense, it is apt to talk of commoning, a term coined by one-time Midnight Notes collaborator Peter Linebaugh' (Barbagallo, Beuret & Harvie 2019: 6).

In this endeavor I draw on systemic approaches to the commons that refuse to separate resources from relations, internal from external dynamics, or micro- and macropolitical dynamics, but rather insist on the importance of seeing these dimensions as a dynamic whole. In this sense, I owe much to autonomist-feminist inspired theories of the commons as social systems (De Angelis 2017; 2019) and of commons as constellations of struggle (Federici & Caffentzis) that are embedded within broader dynamics of capitalism, neocolonialism, patriarchy, ablism and so forth, and cannot be considered as separate from those (for more examples on this approach, see also Barbagallo, Beuret & Harvie 2019).

One basic tenet in this kind of research on and with commons is the research into relations, constellations, tactics and conjunctures –rather than a search for broadly generalizable organizational principles or recipes, or indeed technical or prescriptive definitions of commons or commoning. No commons without context, complexity, contradictions -and indeed also conditions, change, care. Or, in the words of De Angelis: '...once we understand commons as social systems, we realize that the

tension between commons' endogenous and exogenous forces is a tension that necessitates productive articulation rather than categorical differentiation and contraposition' (De Angelis 2019). Easier said than done, particularly in academic cultures that stake their claims to neutrality based on principles of dissection and categorization that stem from (classical) natural science. Hence my insistence on entangling childcare and municipalism, care and institutions, etc.

De Angelis opposes Ostrom's emphasis on endogenous matters -'insufficient coordination skills, a fall in trust, burn-outs, diminished purpose, excessive free-riding, an inability to adapt effectively to a new context' (De Angelis 2019: 218). When it comes to her description of failing commons, De Angelis (De Angelis, Stavrides & An Architektur 2010) dismisses related individualist notions of 'the tragedy of the commons' (Garret Hardin) that blame failure on supposed selfishness or human incapacity rather than systemic forces. My emphasis on micropolitics, and indeed also on interdependence, could not be farther from such Rousseauean notions of individual failure or insufficiency. The focus of my analysis of relations, affects, networks and mutual dependency is on the inventiveness, openness and generosity that enables both limits and potentials of commons. I am interested in enabling constraints (following Brian Massumi and Alfred North Whitehead) and in collective intelligence when it comes to trying to stake out ways of living, inhabiting, caring and working that run counter to the dominant neoliberal logics of individualism, profit, efficiency, expansion or development. As George Caffentzis says, '…the anti-capitalist supporters of the commons… look to the larger class context to determine the dynamics of 'the drama of the commons' (Caffentzis 2012). In this sense, a difference between reproduction commons theories and commons theories like those of Ostrom is also that the former are transformative, positing an active social and political potential and role of commons, and that they take the gendered as well as class and racial dimension of commoning into account (an exemplary case of this is Federici 2004).

At the core of this is the question of resisting enclosures and recuperating space for anti-capitalist, decolonial, anti-patriarchal modes of relation and conviviality: not as isolated islands but as sympoietic zones within wider contexts. De Angelis notes that this kind of 'radical concept of the commons has only re-emerged recently' (De Angelis 2019: 210). Federici and Caffentzis, too, emphasize this anti-capitalist aspect of commoning, noting that many times cooperation can and does become captured by capital or the state (examples here range from platform capitalism to free labor to tamed unions, etc.). I agree on the importance of a differentiation between resistant and mainstreaming processes of commoning, while at the same time recognizing the difficulty –or outright impossibility and indeed, also, undesirability sometimes– of characterizing processes in one sense or another.

Commoning is based in processes of cooperation where there are always several forces at play, and the tactics and solutions they invent and adopt vis-a-vis capital and the state merit careful consideration before they can be categorized and judged, hence

the care I take in laying out the different aspects, tensions and forces at stake in childcare commoning in Poble Sec and Barcelona. The complex and ambivalent relation between the commons and the public/state is a recurring problematic in this study. Here 'the state' comes in the form of municipal institutions, themselves partly subverted by municipalist movements and histories (from Barcelona en Comú to the republican anti-fascist municipalism of the 20th century). The meaning of claiming or re-claiming public services and infrastructures, and social rights -which may be seen as a mode of 'commoning the public'- is a radical mode of struggle and, indeed, of commoning in contemporary Spain and Barcelona, as housing movements from the PAH (Colau & Alemany 2014), the Marea movements for healthcare, education and so forth, or indeed movements for the welcoming and regularization of migrants and refugees show.

In this sense, analyzing relations and affects has the purpose of deepening our understanding of the lived realities of inhabiting this tension, ambivalence and also openness between the commons and the public, as it existed in Barcelona during the time this study refers to. A constant labor of trying to detect both moments and dynamics of weakening, corruption and subsumption, as well as moments and dynamics of empowerment, rooting and growth in commons, my analysis goes by the Spinozian principle of investigating what increases and decreases our capacity to act, collectively and across different phases and configurations. I attempt to provide a modest but dense account of some of the phases that both childcare and municipalist commoning went through in the period from 2015 to 2020, from the viewpoint of struggles of horizons and capacities for action and for building collective power. The lines between the inside and the outside of the community and the institution are not always clear then. Agents may be impure in their positions, relations, movements and tactics, and a myriad of tactics are being tested and invented in this open political arena, as contradicting strategies vis-a-vis commons and the state come to play in manifold and dynamic ways.

While this project is focused on commons, I also share the approach of Barbagallo, Beuret and Harvie (2019: 6) when, in the spirit of Silvia Federici and George Caffentzis, they refuse to see commons as 'a panacea for the issues that beset the contemporary left,' as a master signifier to read all problems and struggles through. The commons might more properly be seen as filling 'a lacuna in radical thought, providing a way in which we might practically work out how we are to live with each other and the world without the violence of the state or the rule of capital' (Barbagallo, Beuret & Harvie: 6). To be sure, crafting care commons is a major task at *any* scale in societies that privilege individualism, nuclear families and the outsourcing of care. It is this entanglement of (life) practice and thought, however minor it might appear, that I am concerned with here, attempting to provide a contribution to rooted, situated praxis as much as to itinerant thought and translocal theorization.

6.3.4. Reproductive commons

The particular angle on commons most relevant to my research on childcare is that of reproduction. This strand of commons thought has been inaugurated by Silvia Federici to a large extent, in synergy with autonomist and Marxist feminism. Federici most poignantly connected primitive accumulation with women's labor and bodies, thinking the problem of enclosure from the viewpoint not just of land and resources but also of relations and care (Federici 2004; 2012; 2019). In this view, reproduction commons need to be considered from a dual viewpoint: 'In societies dominated by capitalism, people are reproduced as workers but also, at the same time, they are reproduced as people whose lives, desires and capabilities exceed the role of the worker' (Barbagallo, Beuret & Harvie 2019). There is a tension between autonomy and heteronomy inherent in this kind of commons thought –stemming obviously from its autonomist and feminist roots– that sometimes embraces ambivalence while at other moments taking clear sides vis-a-vis capital and the state. Furthermore, reproduction commons exceed both the idea of a predominance of the immaterial, as in theories of immaterial, digital, knowledge commons, in autonomist Marxism, and of reproduction as revolving entirely around women, as in some feminist theories, or of the social and economic. The reproduction perspective on commons encompasses, thus, many layers and dynamics, across micro- and macro, waged and other types of labor, care and reproduction, everyday life and capitalism, etc. At its best, it allows for a transversal analysis of commons that can 'locate reproduction as the strategic site from which to build and sustain power' (De Angelis 2019: 220).

Massimo de Angelis, in a text summing up the reproduction commons perspective of Silvia Federici and George Caffentzis, notes four of its insights and potentials: (1) to identify 'reproduction commoning as the process through which collective interest and mutual bonds are generated' -what I am speaking about in terms of organizing around needs and of needs shaping shared interests in this study on childcare; (2) reproduction commoning as 'the first line of resistance against a life of enslavement,' relating to the possibility to reproduce one's own conditions and means of survival; (3) as a way to delink reproduction from capital's measure of things, from its values, from its line of command, and (4) in consequence, also 'decoupling from systems of violence, the prison, the war machine, the custom office…' (De Angelis 2019: 219). And perhaps most importantly for the context of neoliberalism and precarity my research speaks of, 'Through reproduction commoning we turn the abstract conception of solidarity into a living collective body, which develops its resilience vis-a-vis capital, better able to endure capital's myriad attacks' (De Angelis 2019: 220).

To this, I add two key aspects in my research, and a concept. First, speaking of the reproduction of bodies and of resilience and resistance, childcare can of course be a key site for the production of other kinds of subjects and subjectivities, that escape or subvert the link between the school and the factory or the office, defying the notion that education should serve to produce docile or excellent worker-subjects. Radical

pedagogy, when combined with a commoning-based organization of sites of education, can brew a very powerful mix for anti-capitalist, anti-authoritarian, feminist subjectivation. This last point brings me to a second key aspect of my viewpoint on commons, one that is omnipresent and that I will be exploring in particular in relation to the micropolitics of municipalism: commons as sites of the production of subjectivity. The production of counter-hegemonic conditions, economies and institutions can never exist durably or radically (rootedly) without a concomitant production of subjectivities, as embodiments, knowledges, cultures (see for instance also Guattari & Rolnik 2006, Zechner, Cobo-Guevara & Herbst 2017, Vercauteren 2007). Commons and commoning have to be inhabitable, embody-able, else they are mere abstractions or impositions doomed to die or turn into dead institutions.

Finally, looking beyond the framework of autonomist-Marxist and autonomist-feminist commons thought, it is useful to take into account the notions of cosymbiosis or symbiogenesis, as present in the work of feminist scientists and scholars such as Lynn Margulies, Donna Haraway (2016) or Anna Tsing (2017). These offer a complex and refined way of thinking about the relations between autonomy and heteronomy, as well as the formation of subjects and their milieux (in line with the thought of Gilbert Simondon). Commons and capital co-evolve and feed off one another, in a metastable way, that can tend or resolve one way or another, yet knows no pure subjects, no autonomy proper, no outside. Commons in this sense, which is indeed the sense shared by theorists of reproduction commoning, are not islands or utopian enclaves. Rather, commoning is about strengthening a certain tendency or dynamic of collectively determining one's own cultures, means, conditions, with the outcome always remaining open. What I aim to explore in this report are not major theories, all-encompassing notions or grand solutions, but rather ethical-political challenges, minor but key analytical tools (transversal, transformative, intersectional) and situated accounts of practice.

6.4. Situating ourselves: childcare and self-organization in Poble Sec (2017-20)

In this section I present some of the key characteristics of the social, political and economic context of the grupos de crianza compartida in Poble Sec (during 2017-20). This gives us an overview of some of the key actors, dynamics and numbers concerning childcare commoning in the neighborhood, as well as some of the major lines of local debate and reflection concerning collectively managed childcare. The role of mothers' networks and sympoieitic commoning emerges as crucial to Poble Sec's lively social ecosystem, as do the labors of a midwives and the local public health centers these exist within. Again, we shall see how the political resides in -and commons emerge from- everyday gestures and labors in the spheres of care and reproduction. In outlining how economic and financial dynamics condition the grupos de crianza, we also begin to see the concrete difficulties, aporias and contradictions they face. We will find that the need for slow, organic social growth is characteristic of commoning, wherein relations and not just aims are at the center. I will be arguing

that, with Tronto, we might develop more specifically care-based definitional criteria for commons: that they engage not just caring about, taking care of, care-giving and care-receiving, but also caring-with, as proper ecological assemblages. This section concludes with an autobiographic account that relays the ups and downs of inhabiting and initiating childcare groups.

> 'The mother's whatsapp group is better than calling 112 [the healthcare hotline]' (Local saying amongst parents in Poble Sec)

6.4.1.Who looks after children in Poble Sec?

Poble Sec is a neighborhood situated in central Barcelona,[17] with 40.358 inhabitants (all figures 2017), out of which approximately 1200[18] are children 0-3 years old. Who looks after these children?

- At least half, some 600 children, are taken care of by their parents or in informal care arrangements
- 20% go to local public nurseries. There are about 209 places in 3 local, publicly run nurseries of the municipality and autonomous community, 20% being the legally prescribed quota[19]
- some 20-30 children more go to public nurseries in adjacent neighborhoods
- about 18% go to private nurseries
- and about 100 children (about 8% of the total population) are part of grupos de crianza compartida

The self-organized childcare projects –*grupos de crianza compartida*– thus account for a considerable proportion of early-age childcare in Poble Sec. The number of places that are available each year varies, since projects come and go, but on average they account for up to 10% of local childcare provision.

[17] More precisely, in the Sants-Montjuic district, couched between the port, the Montjuic hill and the neighborhoods of the Raval, Sant Antoni, the Eixample and Sants. It is a neighborhood with historically high numbers of migrants (initially mostly internal, now mainly foreign, mainly from Pakistan, Italy and the Phillipines) and a traditionally lower-income population (76% of the median income in Barcelona in 2016) See the website of Barcelona's statistics department for demographic tables and comparisons: http://www.bcn.cat/estadistica/catala/index.htm, accessed 3/3/2020.

[18] This is a rounded off number between the number 1034, cited by Lucia Zandigiacomi at the Comunes y Crianza Colloquium, and the number 1372, cited by the Catalan Department d' Estadistica for 2018. More broadly, of the population of Poble Sec 12.4% are aged between 0-15 years, some 44,2% are women, and 30.7% are of non-Spanish origin. We are dealing with a neighborhood whose population is ageing and shrinking slightly, as well as featuring more non-nationals, in line with the general demographic development in the city. See the website of Barcelona's statistics department for demographic tables and comparisons: http://www.bcn.cat/estadistica/catala/index.htm, accessed 3/3/2020.

[19] This corresponds to the mandatory 20% of public childcare provision required by the Generalitat of Catalunya and to the approximately 19.5% of public places held by children aged 0-2 in the city of Barcelona (Sindic 2015). At the level of the city, for ages 0-2, an additional 20-22% of children are in private daycare (Sindic 2015).

These groups mostly emerge out of mothers' networks and post-partum groups, in the case of Poble Sec from the groups of midwife Pepi Dominguez at the local health center, in particular. They become very powerful platforms of mutual support and communication, and make up the primary vector of childcare commoning in the neighborhood, meaning that women who attend (the majority of local pregnant women do) build non-biological mutual networks around their children from an early age onwards, rather than only at the time children enter nursery or school. Starting from this strong support around birth and baby-care, many post-partum mothers soon invent minor dispositifs of childcare-sharing, giving rise to a desire to create more intimate and flexible options of continuous early-age childcare.

These groups, forming a shared vision and defining needs, usually find a trained educator to accompany them ('acompañante' is the name given to this person), then find a space (for rent usually), they constitute an association and they begin a (initially always experimental) routine of daily childcare. A key element in their success is the collective that starts them, as well as the time and economic horizon within which projects emerge. The more organically, carefully and slowly –the less similar to the market– they can constitute themselves, the more likely they are to build good collective process, to debate and clarify doubts and tensions, to get information and take legal and administrative steps in time, to get the children used to the educators, to find and equip a decent space, and to reach out to the neighborhood so as to fill places and gather support. Their ethos is that parents, teachers and children are in constant feedback, and constitute a strong care network or 'tribú'[20] -recognizing that modern urban parenting is a very individualizing and precarious matter that requires the invention of new support structures. The groups thus formed are called 'grupos de crianza compartida' because they combine childrearing [crianza] and childcare [cuidados], and because there is sharing [compartir] of the care and organizational work (though the care work is also handed to educators, to a varying degree).

The grupos de crianza in Poble Sec are part and parcel of the boost in self-organization that came with the 15M movement in 2011. In a context of economic crisis, high unemployment meant people had more time to organize, care and experiment. Meanwhile, harsh austerity measures affected the quality of public nurseries. In 2019, the number of available places continues to be low: less than a quarter of children can enter the public system. Austerity and precarity thus produced an increasing demand, capacity and desire for self-run projects of childcare that could provide alternative support networks and forms of education. Crisis opens up new possibilities whilst closing other ones, prompting experimentation with new models. Poble Sec went from a couple of such projects in 2007 to 5 in 2011, 7 in 2016, 5-6 in 2019. The groups I researched in this study are the following (dates are approximate):

- Babàlia. 2011/12-16. (Interview) http://bcncomuns.net/es/cpt/Babàlia/

[20] This term came into very frequent use thanks to the 2013 book of (Carolina del Olmo, *Dónde está mi tribú?* [Where is my tribe], which speaks about mother's and family's loneliness in times of economic precarity and individualization (Del Olmo 2013).

- La Rimaieta. 2015/16-18. (Interview and observation) http://labase.info/places-lliures-a-la-rimaieta-grup-de-crianca-del-poble-sec/
- El Petit Molinet. 2013-ongoing. (Interview and observation) http://petitmolinet.blogspot.com/
- El Monstre de Paper. 2010-ongoing. (Observation) https://elmonstredepaper.com/quienes-somos/
- El Tatanet. 2012- ongoing (Observation and informal interview)
- Baldufa. 2017. (Participant observation)
- La Rauxeta. 2018 (Participant observation)
- Les Ocellets (formerly CoMaLeCu).21 2008-ongoing (Interview and observation)
- Somniatruites. 2016-ongoing (Observation)

6.4.2. The PEPI platform of childcare groups

In 2017, the majority of these projects form the PEPI network together, for mutual support and more political leverage:

> The PEPI is a heterogeneous group…that ripened in two moments I think: on the one hand, there had already been previous meetings between the educators/companions [acompañantes] of the grupos de crianza compartida. In 2014-15, they met several times to speak about issues and we were also lucky, in this case because of Carolina [local councilor of Barcelona en Comú] who started to talk to us all, and one of the first things she told us – and that was also a bit in the air – was that instead of talking to us one by one we should try have a 'voice,' a platform with which we can start negotiating with the city council in order to see what opportunities were opening up in Poble Sec. That was towards the end of 2016. It's very important to note that at PEPI we go slow, very slow, extremely slow, and so it's hard for us to have a meeting every month and a half. …We're more or less 6 or 7 organizations there. We did a first count of families and came to some 100-110 families in 2017 (Zechner et al.. 2018; my translation from Spanish).

This group, the 'Platform for Education and Participation of Infants,' was, as you might suspect, named after Pepi the midwife. Her role as 'meta-mother' and enabler of childcare and mothers' commons is widely recognized in the neighborhood (and

[21] This is not a grupo de crianza compartida as much as a small group (of 2-4 children) taken care of by a 'madre de dia,' Afra Herreu, who is very engaged in the neighborhood. There are many other madres de dia in Poble Sec (Petits Planetes, Niu de Llum, Agua de Vida, Saludo al Sol, …), who however pertain more properly to the intimate private sphere, and are largely invisible, mostly transit between homes and parks, and largely lack collective organizational or democratic structures. The group of Afra is a mixed model of sorts, with a monthly parents' assembly and an active and visible engagement in the neighborhood.

beyond; her fame is considerable). At the 2016 fiesta major of Poble Sec (local celebrations held across the neighborhood in the summer months), Pepi Dominguez had the honorary role of giving the opening *pregó*, a speech that is conferred upon highly valued actors in society.[22]

Inauguration of the PEPI platform in 2017.

The origin of commons-based nursery alternatives also lies thus in the public system, to the extent that public health centers provide a space of encounter and collective interest formation. Relations between public and commons are complex, creative and recursive in the Poble Sec and Barcelona of the 2010s. The scarce provision of public places is widely perceived as a failing and a problem amongst families in Poble Sec. Broadly speaking, approaches to this problem go mainly three ways: demanding more public places and kindergartens (the public approach), promoting the creation and sustainability of small self-organized childcare groups (the commons approach), and making people cope with paying for childcare themselves (the neoliberal approach). The first two are most dominant in the neighborhood fabric of Poble Sec, as in many parts of Barcelona, particularly thanks to the 15M and municipalist movements, which set out from a strong critique of neoliberal governance. There are many overlaps, continuities and tensions across the public and commons approaches, as well as a feminist reclaiming of the 'private' sphere as a space for commoning and politics in Poble Sec. Among these grupos de crianza compartida and their environments, there is broad consensus regarding the importance of *both* public and

[22] See this video also to get an impression of the community and its affective tone: 'Pepi Domínguez, llevadora pregonera de La Festa Major de Poble Sec 2016,' video uploaded by Rafael Mochón in July 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tqE-47vYYvw

commons-based models, and the need to undo the contraposition of those in the modality of *either-or* narratives, valuing rather the ways in which these two models enrich one another.

6.4.3. Economic and real estate impacts on childcare groups

There were brute cuts to the municipal-run public daycare centers after 2012, as the Generalitat of Catalunya reduced their funding contribution to half, from 1800€ to 875€ per child and year. This was a decision that would later rebound, as the municipal diputaciones (councils) that compensated for the cuts sued the Generalitat, which got successive sentences to repay tens of millions of Euros to municipalities (Ibañez García 2018), yet still leaves public daycare centers far from recuperating the 1800€ per child and year (Tomàs & Rodriguez 2018). In many cases, apart from a drastic reduction in the quality of care and conditions of workers, it was the (income-based) fees of parents that compensated for the lack of budget in municipal centers. As the crisis wore on, public institutions remained underfunded, and the demand for self-run creches persisted, thus, even as this study is made. Between 2017-20, there is still a consistent emergence of self-run projects, the tendency of which is however to become more expensive, as the demographic of the neighborhood slowly changes with gentrification.

With the municipal government of the Barcelona en Comú, public creches began to receive compensation as court orders continued to come in. The city government pressured the Generalitat to return to a tripartite division of costs for 0-3 year old's education (one third of costs being covered by the Generalitat, the municipalities and families respectively, as was the case before the cuts).[23] The Bressol creches are however still far from being able to cover local demand (they can only offer places to about 20% of children, as is required by law), and far from the quality of care provided in commons-creches. The latter have an average ratio of 3-6 children per carer, while municipal and regional creches come with class sizes of up to 19 children, with as little as one permanent carer to 12 children in 2017-19 (for numbers, see Diputació de Barcelona 2019).

During the years that my research here covers, generations of children have been cared for and grown up in Poble Sec, in a series of different ways and arrangements. Babies have been born and self-organized childcare initiatives have emerged and imploded, but not in a vacuum: economic and political dynamics have shaped the lives of people. In a period that sits between the economic crises of 2008 and 2020, rents went up and up and with them, many families had to leave the neighborhood, being replaced by those with higher incomes. This is a very important economic dynamic. The rental and property market is also influencing the activity of self-organized creches. Barcelona has seen a boom in rental rates and property prices since

[23] The municipality also increased its budget for early-childhood education (0-3 years) slightly during the 2015-20 mandate of Barcelona en Comú. See this graphic on municipal spending on education: http://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/estrategiaifinances/pressupostobert/es/politicas/32/educacion#view=functional&year=2019, accessed 3/3/2020.

2016, with prices per m^2 increasing by up to 56% (Department de Estadisticas 2020a) between 2013-19 and rents rising accordingly (by about 32% at a city level, between 2013-19, see Department de Estadisticas 2020b). Touristification and speculation led to the buying up of entire buildings for tourist flats, hotels and housing. This, together with a shortening of the obligatory duration of rental contracts (from 5 to 3 years) that came into place in 2015, led to a harsh dynamic of displacement in Poble Sec, as well as to a powerful struggle against evictions and real estate speculation via the neighborhood union [sindicat e barri], the PAH, and the renters union [sindicat de llogaters]. As many families were forced to move to more peripheral zones, the social fabric in the neighborhood was under strain, yet at the same time strong local mobilization and resistance sprang up to resist displacement and commercialization.

This dynamic impacted on grupos de crianza in various ways. First and foremost, it made it very hard for them to find and afford appropriate spaces (shopfronts for rent). Second, it led to a greater influx of families with more disposable income into the grupos de crianza, which in turn affords the projects more financial stability and fairer educators pay through charging higher fees, but it also renders them tendentially more homogeneous and shifts them from a community-based to a more private model. This depends on the interplay between the work situation, the cultural-educational orientation of the constituent families and their economic situation.

In Poble Sec, it is often parents working in the public, non-profit and care-related sectors (academics, educators, cultural and social workers, psychologists, yoga teachers, etc.) who send their kids to grupos de crianza, and as my pathways through Poble Sec's groups and networks have shown, many of them are also socially and politically engaged at the local and other levels. This is unsurprising, given that participation in grupos de crianza requires relatively high levels of engagement, and that information about them flows particularly well across networks of cooperation and activism. In childcare groups where parents work mostly in high income professions in the private sector (more accustomed to working with a profit-based ethic), disposable income rather than available time tends to determine how families relate to the grupo de crianza, with volunteering being more anecdotal. In my experience across different groups, community engagement needs to be continually reasserted by some, or it stands as a matter of necessity, if disposable income is low and participation is the only way to get things done. I witnessed this in a strong way in my engagements with another childcare group in a more gentrified neighborhood in Barcelona (not formally part of this study), which had evolved over twelve years from a self-run grupo de crianza (or indeed Kinderladen, as this was a semi-German nursery) into an increasingly expensive and professionally managed organization.

There clearly is a moment, perhaps a tipping point, when the balance between the logics of commoning and of market relations can become problematic and indeed critical in one way or another. This is always conditioned by a myriad of factors that should not be simplified: from financial to labor issues, personal factors and disputes, pedagogical disagreements, rent and infrastructural factors, generational shifts in the

composition of groups and families, a key person leaving, etc. When the delicate balance between commons and market forces of a childcare group is upset, this often leads to splits in groups. Some groups might reinvent themselves in new commons-based ways, others may shift from an associational legal form to a company form. When groups collapse in social and economic environments like the one of Poble Sec, often families take this as an occasion to shift their children into the public system. The older the child, the more likely this is to happen. Most see this as the ultimate educational destiny of their children: with the two splits I experienced during my research, this was clearly the case.

6.4.4. The community sustaining childcare commons: mothers' networks in Poble Sec

There is one dimension that connects and underpins all the childcare-related organizing in Poble Sec, the more or less informal networks of mothers, and, to a very limited extent, fathers.[24] These networks emerge through different encounters and shared spaces: pre- and post-partum classes, nurseries, everyday encounters on playgrounds and in the neighborhood generally, as well as events and workshops. They appear in more detail at this point in my text not because they are secondary, additional or an aftereffect, but rather because they are key to the recursive nature of childcare commons. Grupos de crianza compartida and other related projects emerge and disappear –failing, merging-transforming or coming to a generational close– and in this movement of coming-and-going, or getting-organized and disarticulating, they always remain tied to the lively sociality and living relations of the mothers' networks. This sociality has its nodal points in playgrounds, on streets and squares, in childcare centers (public, common, private) and in Whatsapp groups.

The mothers' networks are spaces of commoning that subvert the dichotomy between public and private. They create lively links between public institutions/spaces (health centers, playgrounds, nurseries) and the private spaces so pivotal to childcare (the home, the family). These networks, though informal and noncommital, often end up being stronger spaces of reference than both public and family systems. Women trust and seek each other for advice and help, before going to a doctor or asking their own parents. Digital communication technologies like Whatsapp make this mutual support very instant and immediate.

To describe and analyze mothers' networks, we must start with the pre/post-partum classes at the local public health center,[25] since these are in many ways where the grupos de crianza compartida originate. The first such local group, the Monstre de Paper, was set up by a mother who went to the classes and connected with others

[24] In the Whatsapp group of 86 members, there is one male member who has, in the course of two years, sent about three messages; all other correspondence is between mothers.

[25] Most relevant to this study are CAP Hortes in Poble Sec, led by the midwife and public health educator Pepi Dominguez with a port-side catchment area, and CAP Manso in the nearby Sant Antoni, led by Sònia Garcia Ibàñez, with the western part of the neighborhood as catchment area. Pre/postpartum classes are generally open to anyone, making the geographic mix more diverse, however.

there. All the later groups, too, either emerged from or strongly drew on the pre/post-partum spaces. The weekly classes in Poble Sec, as well as elsewhere, are spaces of initiation into motherhood and parenthood, into the entangled and complex worlds of everyday urban life with children and the challenges these pose not just on a practical but also on a social level. Explicitly, these are spaces to combat loneliness, isolation, to build lasting ties and to share childrearing practices. The grupos de crianza compartida and the informal mothers' networks flow into one another dynamically on a daily basis:

> The current rise of the grupos de crianza compartida [the author refers to all kinds of mothers' groups], created and self-managed by women, is a response to the loneliness that many urban mothers suffer from, but also to the model of society and city that liberal capitalism imposes. Those groups that health centers or associations of different kinds promote, are conceived in order to give support to women around the first months of a baby. Yet the tie [vínculo] between the participating mothers is so intense that it comes to transcend this period, and establishes itself as a support for childrearing, with the spirit of what we ancestrally could have identified as tribe [tribú] (Puerto 2019; my translation from Spanish).

Across Spain, a movement of the *rearguard* or *retaguardia* (Malo & León 2016) is stirring –perhaps what with Asef Bayat we might call a 'social nonmovement' (Bayat 2010)– of childcare commoning, driven by mothers. This emerges as a response to female precarization, the loneliness of nuclear family and solo parenting, and the neoliberal fragmentation of care, space and time (Del Olmo 2013). Silent and invisible to the public eye, like most movements of reproductive commoning and of care, this new wave of childcare commoning is however well aware of itself and the predicaments it struggles to overcome. Debates on Poble Sec mothers' networks are often overtly political, and always feminist. From economic, material, social and subjective phenomena to the shortcomings of second wave feminism's orientation towards wages and labor market integration, this mothers' movement wants to build different relations and scenarios of reproduction.

> How do we make the revolution starting from the rearguard? The mothers alone. Crisscrossed by the crisis, by the generalized looting of all that's public, but also by a social awakening that's more pressing each time (Malo & León 2016; my translation from Spanish).

The starting points for these practices tend to be public institutions and spaces. In the case of mothers' groups, pre/post-partum birth preparation classes are a key space of encounter. Since healthcare is organized locally in Barcelona, most women in Poble Sec pass through the birth-preparation classes of Pepi Dominguez (or Sònia Garcia Ibàñez, who works with similar methods in an adjacent barrio), they are accompanied by Pepi as a midwife right after birth (she does home visits), and then they join her groups for post-partum follow-up. Generally, child-bearing women join pre-partum

classes some 4-3 months before birth and stay in post-partum classes for about 4-9 months, so they frequent the classes for 6-12 months in total. They are often accompanied by their partners in some pre-partum classes, as well as first post-partum sessions, but partners (mostly but not exclusively men) then soon disappear while mothers' networks strengthen.

Pepi's classes are very well attended and they also attract people from other neighborhoods. They are open to anyone. Thanks to her many years of dedicated work in Poble Sec, Pepi has a considerable level of fame and a definite following. It's not by chance that the network of childcare groups named itself 'PEPI' -the name is a direct reference to her powers of making association happen. The public institution – of healthcare in this case, but similar dynamics exist around the public nurseries– is a crucial space of encounter for families and particularly mothers, who end up forming networks of mutual support and activity that last for years. These spaces are neither simply ascribable to the public system nor a matter of private networks. They are veritable spaces of commoning knowledges and experiences, as Pepi's methodology insists on mutual teaching, with a ball always being passed around and a physical part with mutual massages, birth or baby handling techniques, etc.

An email list is set up for each cycle of classes, where links, objects and invitations are shared. Mothers' groups set up Whatsapp groups and/or email lists at Pepi's classes and usually maintain these groups as central channels of communication, with a myriad of spinoffs. As a mother, I have been following the whatsapp group emerging in winter 2016/17. While initially very active with up to 200 messages a day, this group continues in 2019 with at least 5 messages daily and a steady number of around 80 participants. The group is a key source of information about events and processes in the neighborhood, as well as for mutual support, advice, exchange and debate. As Pepi Dominguez told me in an interview, with a laugh:

> One mother said that the mother's whatsapp group is better than calling 112 [the healthcare hotline] because at any hour you'll get an immediate reply, a lot of support and expertise (Dominguez 2018; my translation from Spanish).

The kind of role that Pepi exercises within ecologies of commoning care is akin to that of facilitator or catalyst –a very soft and relational kind of 'leadership' if this term applies at all (see *Report 1. The Political*, section 1.19). Perhaps this can be seen as the reproductive and invisible underside to 'feminized' leadership (Roth & Shea Baird 2017a; 2017b), a term so fashionable in the Barcelona of new municipalisms. These leadership labors of hundreds of women in Poble Sec, acting to articulate and hold things together in local social ecologies and their families, have received somewhat more recognition, yet they are far from being recognized as vital social-political agents.

For about a year in the life of (becoming) mothers, the healthcare center and its classes are a key site of sociality, mutual support and the building of networks and ties. This is the base for much of the commoning that follows. It is not just a

significant timespan in terms of duration but also in terms of its intensity. Pregnancy, birth and early childrearing are amongst the most transformative and challenging experiences women undergo, and they are times when the creation of ties and support networks play a very particular role. Pepi Dominguez insists much on the importance of creating 'vínculos' in this time, a conviction she bases not just in life circumstances but also in the hormonal disposition of young mothers. Pregnancy, birth and breastfeeding are moments where the hormones oxytocin, prolactin and relaxin powerfully kick in and inform a woman's disposition towards others (Pepi Dominguez 2018). Beyond the usual individualist metaphors of nesting and protecting, the time surrounding childbirth is indeed a time of creating ties, making mothers particularly predisposed to building community and commoning. The hormonal angle Dominguez points out matches the insistence of Silvia Federici (2004; 2012; 2013) on the predominant role of women in the building of commons. Federici's argument points to women's subaltern position in patriarchy and capitalism and the way this makes them depend more on mutual support and commons.

Whatever way one analyzes it, mothers' commoning works. A look at the neighborhood's family trajectories reveals, and Pepi herself reports, that there are children who grow up with these networks as if they were family (Pepi Dominguez 2018). This is not necessarily an idyllic matter. Family trajectories are crisscrossed by breakups, rent raises, moves, job loss and search, illnesses, moments of depression, and so forth; the ties they build fluctuate, vary, weaken. It is not exactly that extended families are built out of nuclear ones, though in the case of the Babàlia and Rimaieta groups, strong and continuous co-madrazgos[26] have emerged, or that multi-family house-shares are initiated (this is also due to small flat sizes), but there is a continuity of ties across public spaces, events and communications platforms. The emergence and continuities of ties, groups and networks of childcare tell us a lot about cycles, *generational processes* and handovers of commons, a dimension much overlooked in commons research. Those could also be analyzed using Pascal Michon's concept of the 'rhythms of the political,' looking at the ways in which bodily, seasonal, economic, political, and many other kinds of rhythms intersect (Michon 2007). The mothers' networks, for instance, renew every half year or so, with generations overlapping:

> Every half year more or less there's a new whatsapp group; summer and Christmas holidays are natural moments of generational change, though there is always a continuity of people and some groups even keep meeting during the holidays without me (Pepi Dominguez 2018; my translation from Spanish).

Despite the lively transmission of knowledge in the neighborhood, members of grupos de crianza compartida lament the fact that every new group needs to 'reinvent the wheel:' to find, rent and renovate/equip a new space, set up an association, figure out

[26] Co-madrazgo or the co-madrato have been discussed in Spanish social movement feminisms in the recent decade, as a practice of sharing care and making each other's children grow up in a sibling-like proximity.

numbers, ratios and employment modalities, set up platforms of representation and invent modes of self-promotion and recruitment, figure out internal organizational modalities, build channels of communication with related neighborhood entities, etc. The Rimaieta childcare space, for instance, space closed its doors in 2018 -but not its collective ties, as members insist. Many of the children went on to inhabit the Petit Molinet group together -due to a rent raise and generational tipping point, as at 3 years many children enter the public P3 preschools. They were left with a desire to give account of the experience and modes of self-organization, to pass on knowledge across different generations of groups. This is a challenging task with short educational cycles.

Taking my own experience as an example, the pre/post-partum groups of 2016/17 remain my key point of reference for parenting in Poble Sec. A Whatsapp group of some 80 participants was started in 2016 and continues to this day in 2019, with some people having exited and others joined, in an increasingly intergenerational mix of newer and older mothers, newer and older neighbors. Initially, the first year after birth, there were often 200 messages a day, now there are about 5-20 a day. Social media chats become a way of facilitating not just information and debate but also intersections in real space –meetings are organized, flyers and links to events are shared readily. Chats, thus, act like a digital background or murmur that nourishes and sustains everyday encounters and lives. The kinds of catalysts in Poble Sec's childcare commoning are thus diverse –spatial, social and technological –from figures like Pepi and the many engaged mothers and some fathers, to the healthcare centers and playgrounds, to chat groups of different sorts. These are 'social technical assemblages' (Puig della Bellacasa 2017: 14).

This 'reproductive networking' –a kind of networking functioning on premises well opposed to those of the neoliberal job market– leads us mothers to exchange advice, objects, arrange meetings, joint walks, playdates, talks and workshops, baby blocs and campaigns, to circulate information as well as discuss all sorts of matters from medical to political to personal. This is reproductive commoning par excellence: diffuse, multilayered and multitasking cooperation and collective care. Reproductive commoning is relational and thrives on addressing multiple and changing needs, rather than centering on a single resource or task. While the mothers' networks primary function is not the sharing of childcare work as such, these networks do provide collective emotional support that is crucial for many shared projects and lasting relations. They collectivize childrearing as a broad multilayered matter, centering more on mutual support, advice and sociality than on sharing everyday labors of care. As Núria Verges tells:

> With the mothers' groups I decided that I find the 'post-Pepi' most assumable generally for myself, those that I liked best. And [yet] I have to say that they didn't provide me with autonomy because we didn't say 'take her for three hours and I'll go to X.' That they didn't do, but an emotional support, yes. They made me feel happy, I rediscovered myself, my relation to my daughter and

> they also gave me moments, because we were together and sometimes it's the others looking after your child while you tell them about this or that crazy story that happened to you (Zechner et al. 2018; my translation from Spanish).

In Nuria's post-partum generation (which I share), a small 'Monday's group' formed through Pepi's classes, where mothers took turns looking after each other's children sometimes. This strengthened ties but did not lead into sustained care-work sharing. Other years have seen this early pooling of care turn into grupos de crianza compartida. The 'Bressol Encreuat' was one such group in 2015, a large one with 15-20 members, involving the entirety of the post-partum class, from which the Rimaieta grupo de crianza compartida arose. And Babàlia, too, emerged out of 5 families doing rotas and sharing a babysitter. The parent-run grupos de crianza compartida in Poble Sec all have their origins in this early pooling of childcare.

Those are the 'grupos de crianza compartida' in their originary meaning, where childcare itself is shared. In Babàlia and Rimaieta there were paid educators, but parents also participated in the childcare, on a rotational basis. We can differentiate those 'parent-run and -initiated' groups from the more 'educator-run and -initiated' groups where organization and coordination are shared, but childcare as such is not. In the strict sense, the former are where we may most properly speak of reproductive commoning, since it is *care labor* – as *care-giving* in the sense of Tronto's 5 phases of care (*caring about; taking care of; care-giving; care-receiving; caring-with*) that is at stake (Tronto 1994; 2009). The pooling of organization around care –as *caring about* and *taking care of*– is however also a valuable contribution in a world where care generally –and *care-giving* most specifically- is invisibilized, relegated to women and subaltern, and undervalued. In whatever way one might debate the critical matter of *what* and *how* care is shared or socialized, it appears useful to remember what big steps and efforts *any* sharing of acts and labors of care represent in contemporary societies that privilege individualism, nuclear families and the outsourcing of care (via value-extraction chains). As Christel Keller Garganté argued during our 2018 colloquium on Childcare Commons in Barcelona:[27]

> The 'grupos de crianza compartida' are indeed useful for socially valuing care, which in this sense is a claim that many different feminisms have made, about the visibilization of care work and so on. The *groups de crianza* indeed *do* work when it comes to making this a common cause [ponerlo en común] and therefore to give it [care] a central space in social life, which is also to do with their given capacity of creating communitarian webs [hacer tejido comunitario] (Zechner et al. 2018; my translation from Spanish).

The matter of sharing and socializing care is however neither principally nor uniquely the task of the grupos de crianza compartida. It is an entangled and multilayered

[27] Known as 'care chains' (Hochschild 2003, Lutz 2011, Zechner 2013a). Value-extracting relations are not absent from the grupos de crianza compartida mostly, since the educators are largely subaltern and precarious, but active efforts are made to reduce these forces of (real) abstraction.

matter that requires a whole ecosystem to take place. It requires many different ways of 'staying with the trouble,' as we may say with Donna Haraway (2016). Interdependence and commoning are not prone to ideological strictness or clear-cut divisions, they are not based on sovereign individuals and independent political subjects. They require, indeed, an ecological approach that can see interlinking environments, creatures and critters, needs, abilities, spaces and systems. Care and commoning are transformative not just of relations but also of spaces, they re-make meanings and configurations of the neighborhood, urban tissues, public spaces, private zones, and so forth. The grupos de crianza importantly also engage Tronto's 5th phase of care, caring-with, meaning solidarity with others around them, primarily in the neighborhood but also in the wider world. This might be an important care-based definitional criterion for commons: that they engage not just caring about, taking care of, care-giving and care-receiving, but also caring-with, as proper ecological assemblages.

6.4.5. Self-organized childcare between empowerment and failure: an auto-ethnographic account

Since 2017, I have been a mother in Poble Sec, joining a lively community of families, neighbors and activists. These categories mostly overlap with the persons cited here, many of whom are also engaged in research, cultural work and politics. This happened in a moment of lively experimentations around community-based childcare. A researcher, activist, cultural worker and parent myself, familiar with the neighborhood since 2014, I fitted rather will with the overall dynamics and demographics of Poble Sec, a place with a strong working class history and a strong fabric of neighborhood association, co-inhabited by engaged elderly people as much as a young and active precariat. After giving birth to my daughter, I soon embarked upon a double journey of re/search: looking for a nursery and investigating the (recent) local past and present of community childcare. Often hard to disentangle, in a dynamic where lines between subject and object blur and give way to situated, embodied and troubled knowledges (Haraway 1988; 2016; see also my notes on methodology in this report), in my militant participant research I tried to make my academic research useful to the childcare community and at the same time to navigate this field intelligently with my daughter.

On the research side I succeeded, gathering and circulating information in ways that not only lacked the alienation and awkwardness so typical of academic research on living social processes, but also managed to make a humble contribution to this field. In October 2018, after a careful process of collective preparation with fellow parent-researcher-activists, I (co-)organized a colloquium on childcare commons, in the local community center, a moment of encounter and exchange that proved very rich and that this present document also draws on.

On the practical side I failed, but as is known to researchers and commoners alike, there is nothing like failure to produce critical, complex and in-depth knowledge.

After deciding –with much scruple– not to take up a place in public nursery due to its very low ratio (one carer to 13 babies in this case, except at lunchtime), I ventured to join a new and promising collective childcare project with my daughter. Three-four rotating staff from different pedagogical and creative professions, a beautiful, though unfinished and quite dark space, a monthly assembly and some working commissions, a network of quite like-minded families and some flexibility at the hour of 'adaptación,' starting one's baby off in childcare.

At the public nursery we were offered three days to get our kid used to the place in our presence, at a rhythm of being present with the child for one hour on day one, then leaving the child there after 30 minutes presence on day 2, and after 10 minutes presence on day 3. For anyone unfamiliar with such processes, this is an extremely steep curve for babies, and it implies lots of tears and stress for all parties involved, especially when carers have over ten such unhappy babies to try attend to. To be sure, children emerge from public nurseries healthy and happy, and those early experiences indeed soon disappear from conscious memory, so the distress does not necessarily imply trauma. It is experienced as a form of violence by most however, reserved particularly for the working poor, whose only choice is submitting their baby into a public institution from 4 months of age for full-time care. The stress this implies even just in terms of breastfeeding, for a mother and baby, is considerable: mastitis and tears. In the self-run childcare group we could take a month or even two for adaptation if needed, and we could be present for any amount of time we wished. Since we could afford a slower process in terms of time and money, we went for it. They were not cheap, but they offered a part-time rate of 220€ a month, which was perfect for us and our 9-month-old baby.

The beginning was promising, but soon some strange chaotic elements emerged, such as signs of dis-coordination between the educators, who were largely responsible for the running of the project, though parents also took an active role, and a mysterious slowness and reluctance about putting glass into the then-still empty window frames. As October passed, slightly desperately, we gathered some willing families and put glass into the windows, an alarming necessity for a place that has babies crawling around on the floor, which itself was quite cold due to being below ground level. But once the work was done –which we were OK to do, but under conditions of more support and transparency– the monthly assembly yielded bad news. The educators had gotten into an unresolvable fight over past weeks and decided to stop working together. It turned out some other families knew, but no one informed us because we were new. The project would run another month, after that no continuity was guaranteed.

Slowly, but surely educators began to vow for families in different subtle or explicit ways, wanting to continue the project and keep the space. A huge struggle over the space ensued, which was also the rented home of one of the educators, who had gotten into debt for the project. Lack of transparency was near complete, as families struggled to gain clarity, to try mediate and at the same time to find new childcare.

The ambience in the space was tense and messy in this last, disarticulated month. It soon emerged that we would not get our deposit back, either, because the educators, particularly the one who had lent his home to the project, were all in debt, struggling financially (one of them was a single mother). More than half of the staff, who had worked without a proper contract so far, were migrants from Latin America (Chile, Uruguay) with little to no local support networks.

I need not describe the emotions, frustrations, anxieties and mistrust that we went through in the three months during which we were part of this project. We had spent months to get our baby used to the educators, going through daily tears, consolations, long hours of playing there, etc. We had not just lost time but an important bond we were trying to build. This is one reason why when one of the educators insisted on setting up a new project, many parents followed. It's simply too stressful –and costly, in time and money terms– to go through this 'adaptation' process again, for the children as well as parents. I joined the initial meetings to set this up, but eventually decided that my trust had been broken and that I wanted to try set up a small childcare arrangement myself, with our neighbor's daughter. Some 6 families went ahead though and constituted a new project, for which they rented and completely rehabilitated a new space, since for reasons that seem to have mostly to do with revenge, they were not allowed to keep using the previous space, which they had spent half a year renovating bit by bit. A perilous decision on the part of the other educators, who ended up having to give up the space anyways because they could not pay the rent.

Speak of a rough start, we had it. But this was not to be the last slightly devastating experience. I tried to set up a small project with a 'madre de dia,' a single childminder who has 3-4 children at her charge, two of whom we had already secured -my daughter and our neighbor's. After one of the past group's educators cancelled on us (on the 24th of December) after having confirmed that she wanted to be in our project, I set out to find a pedagogue, placing an ad online. We found a lovely young Chilean yoga-teacher and educator who was eager to set up a project with us, and we began the process of adaptation. In parallel, I identified a space for use: the small shopfront of a cinema collective who were struggling to pay the rent and were happy to have us use the place in the mornings. It just needed some work. We invested a considerable sum into putting in new floorboards. Halfway through the works, the new educator cancelled on us. She realized that she was too unexperienced and could only really take on two children at the same time, not 3-4. She was also overwhelmed by the fact that our neighbor's daughter was raised in an often quite brutal way by her poor, migrant family, and decided this was irreconcilable with her pedagogical principles. A contradiction I had to accept, though this difference was the very reason I had wanted this family to be involved. For most educators, it takes many years of experience to be able to confront such situations, and indeed the public system is much more of a school for such matters than the grupos de crianza with their heavily protected children. Be that as it may, after scrambling for alternatives for a couple of weeks, I

gave up. We could not face trying to find another educator and going through another adaptation process with our child, since during all this time we were seriously short for childcare, having to pay babysitters on many afternoons to cover the time we lost on adaptación and the organization of the project. After all, I had a job, I needed to research and write the pages you are currently reading. By the end of January, I was defeated and exhausted, and we joined the spin-off project of our previous nursery group.

But soon tensions emerged there, too. This time because of a lack of transparency about accessibility of shade for the children in summer, a seemingly banal issue that however opened onto other difficult dynamics and bad communication. Another strange process of assemblies and negotiations ensued. We were considering leaving, and after some pressure from educators and some parents, we decided to go. Soon it became clear that beyond this conflict, there had been an ongoing problem amongst the two educators again, and, by the time it was March, they had announced that they would stop working together. They would go on until the end of May, but one of them stopped showing up. They said they could not be in the space together anymore, so deep was the conflict. The parents thought they were living a bad nightmare. They had lost another huge amount of time and money, investing several thousands of Euros into the space, and their children would again have to get used to a new place and set of people. Again, they were suddenly left without childcare. Most families eventually joined the long-standing project Petit Molinet at the start of autumn term in 2017. We also ended up joining a long-standing self-organized project, but in a nearby neighborhood, because we couldn't get a spot in any of the groups in Poble Sec. In a way, we were relieved to get out of these specific neighborhood entrails by then, and thus I continued my research without the strong vital investment of also having my child in a local group.

This autoethnographic soap opera tells a particularly unfortunate story, no doubt, but also yields a lot of insight into self-organized childcare groups. It speaks of the precarity and fragility of these groups, as they have a very vulnerable age group at their heart and tend to be initiated by educators –in many cases transcontinental migrants– who face very precarious living conditions. The pressure that these projects face is great, not just because parents care very much about their children and pay monthly fees that are often quite elevated for their standards, but also because it is the parents' time that is at stake. Childcare is supposed to buy or, ideally, to grant free of charge parents' time, so that they can work and organize their lives. In self-organized childcare groups, the balance between give and take can at times be challenging.

In more activist-driven childcare groups, such as Babàlia and the Rimaieta, monthly fees are very low because parents take on part of the pedagogical as well as all the organizational work -weekly assembly, cooking and acting as co-educator once a fortnight. This is a time-intensive, but transparent and truly self-driven process that largely leaves families satisfied. Tatanet runs on a similar model, but the childcare is done only by educators. Other projects are more oriented towards offering parents the

time to work –with slightly less implication, like a monthly assembly and being part of a working commission, and in exchange for fees that are a bit higher (around 300-450€ in the cases of Petit Molinet, Ocellets). This more educator-driven model also works well in the mentioned cases.

There are, thus, different kinds and configurations of self-organized childcare, all of which can function well and continue across generations. A key element in their success is the collective that starts them, as well as the time and economic horizon within which projects emerge. The more organically, carefully and slowly –the less similar to the market– they can constitute themselves, the more likely they are to build good collective process, to debate and clarify doubts and tensions, to get information and take legal and administrative steps in time, to get the children used to the educators, to find and equip a decent space, and to reach out to the neighborhood to fill places and gather support. This need for slow, organic social growth is characteristic of commoning, wherein relations and not just aims are at the center.

We will now enter debates on care and reproductive commons via political and feminist theories, to understand the eminently political nature of care and childcare, and the bearings it has on commons theories and practices. Outlining some of the basic debates and stakes around childcare and its relation to the reproduction of societies, communities and families, we will see the childcare commoning in Poble Sec through different contexts: from new Spanish feminisms to Latin American community-based commoning, via German histories of childcare commoning, and through autonomist demands and feminist revindications. This will equip us with some necessary tools to begin analyzing the grupos de crianza compartida in Poble Sec, and will lead us into the question of how such commons practices may relate to the public system in general, and the municipal administration in particular.

6.5. Childcare Commons: definitions, contexts, approaches

6.5.1. Childcare commons – between self-organization and a claim to universality

Within the debates and analytical frameworks on commons, including Elinor Ostrom, Silvia Federici (2004; 2014), George Caffentzis, Massimo De Angelis (2017), Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval and many more, there are -as Isabelle Stengers and Sergej Gutwirth (2016) point out- two main fields to be distinguished. One concerns the protection and accessibility of the *res comunes*, the basic material and immaterial resources that should be at the disposal of all beings on earth:[28] air, water, light, wind, world commons such as the Antarctic, the moon, stars and great ocean's depths, as well as the material and immaterial heritage of humanity (including the digital, immaterial commons in their indefinitely reproducible dimension).

[28] Indeed, as they argue, we should not focus exclusively on humanity here but embrace an ecological, non-anthropocentric perspective.

The other concerns, as in the studies of Eleanor Ostrom, what we may call the commons of self-organization and self-government, meaning specific instances of collective use and management of resources and infrastructures, such as plots of land, fields, community gardens, play areas, social centers, communal housing, or specifically adapted systems (of irrigation, processing, milling, etc.). Those commons, requiring a collective effort of care, maintenance and governance –a group of users who inter-depend, both positively and negatively, on one another for this resource– cannot be subject to the same claims of open access or state management that the grand open im/material *res communes* are. They have a limited and particular character, rather than a free or universal one, they are not a 'free-for-all' but managed and collectively sustained (see also *Report 2. The Common*). Of course, resource-based commons, too, can be appropriated, polluted, privatized in particular ways. They are not just natural in some intangible abstract way, but they are indeed also material and situated.

In this study of childcare commons, we are concerned with commons of the second, self-organizational type: collectively created and run kindergartens and play spaces. Nonetheless, a broader question about the character of care also presents itself to us. To what extent is it possible to overcome the particularizing enclosures of care in the domestic sphere which are associated with women's bodies, by positing a more radically open and democratic notion of care, as a universal right? *Attention* and the *capacity to care* are at everyone's disposal, yet they are very unevenly allocated and distributed across the planet, across spaces, spheres and bodies. To democratize care, do we, maybe, need to politicize attention (Citton 2017) and claim that beyond ethical and tactical moments, the right and responsibility to care also need to be inscribed in more universal platforms, from law to economics?

Feminist economics and care ethics hint at these possibilities. Notably, these would entail radical redefinitions of the subject of politics and democracy, beyond the white, well-off male subject at the center of liberal as well as ancient thought, law and institutions. Crucially, care commons imply a *practice* of sharing care and reproductive work across gender, racial and class divides in collective projects of all kinds. It takes both redefinitions (of politics) and redistributions (of reproductive labor) in practices of commoning, which means going beyond historical notions and contemporary practices of democracy. The latter still majorly limit the participation of the poor, less educated, women, racialized and disabled people in processes of decision-making. The grassroots formulas and forms of commoning politics seem more apt and equipped to base themselves (rather than just 'include') in other political subjects, as well as in political difference proper.

6.5.2. Feminist thought on care and commons

Feminists have been battling for decades with this question, in one way or another, negotiating the tensions between the invariably intimate, particular and indeed private aspects of care and the need for publicly accessible and socially distributed provision

of care (see Multitudes 2009, Zechner 2013a, Perez-Orozco 2014). Invariably intimate and time-consuming, care requires attention and time at levels that cannot be merely prescribed, measured or compressed into efficient regimes, making its transference to third parties a delicate matter. The commons come (back) in as a modality for the organization of care that makes sense, allowing for these dimensions to be bridged and indeed also subverted. Starting from an ethics and politics of care we may see subjects, practices and institutions emerge that differ from the liberal political and economic paradigms. I will argue that care is thus a key starting point for commons that want to properly transcend the liberal democratic order.

What if our current predicament, of an individualist anthropocentrism centered only on economic imperatives, on extractivisms of all kinds that lead to social, political and ecological catastrophe, is indeed strongly conditioned by the fact that we do not understand care as being part of the great universal, inexhaustible, infinitely reproducible resources of our human cultures and our planet's regenerating systems? Attempts have been made to set out a philosophical groundwork for an ethics of care (Tronto 1994; 2009b), to analyze how care is inscribed into regimes of value production as that undervalued, unpaid and invisible activity so crucial for the functioning of capitalism (Federici 2004, Gibson-Graham 2003, Perez-Orozco 2014, etc.). The importance of care sustaining life and societies has been widely analyzed through the lens of women's work (Dalla Costa & James 1975, Torrebadella, Tejero & Lemkow 2001).

One way of looking at the dilemma with care today is to lament that it is either debated as a matter of public or private, but not as a matter of the common, commons and commoning. Each of these three latter terms have different inflections and consequences for a politics of care commons. To argue for care in terms of 'commons' means to look at initiatives, dispositifs and infrastructures that make it possible to give and receive care in common, to organize care between many of us. To look at care from the angle of 'commoning' implies dwelling on the myriad practices of sharing, complicity, collaboration, networking, value-creating and reproducing that care implies (looking, thus, at care both in terms of reproduction and labor, and as reproductive labor). And, as we have hinted at, to argue for care in terms of 'the common' may be to suggest it is part of a dimension of matters –as are air, water, etc.– that condition the basic survival of living beings. No critter, human or otherwise, can survive without some degree of care. Humans all the more so, being born too young to survive on their own. Childcare is not an optional, vocational or cultural matter: it is a condition for the survival of *all* human beings, everywhere. It is as basic a need as food, water and air.

And, as such, it requires commoning. It is the stuff of attention, dedication and care, held in common by people and communities. Only with patriarchy does care come to be enclosed in the home, rendered as the opposite of politics and democratic life. Only with industrialization and the nuclear family does care come to be individualized into the figure of the housewife, detached slowly from larger extended family structures.

Only with precarious neoliberal mobility regimes does care come to be further unsettled not just from extended families and communities but also from place itself, giving way to care chains and urban parental loneliness. There have been many moments of enclosure around the care of children, elders, the sick and others in the family and community. Silvia Federici is one of the most prolific authors addressing this, yet not the only one (see also Hansen & Zechner 2019, Gonik 2019, Del Olmo 2014). No matter from which angle we look at care and commoning –indeed in this text I will speak to all three aspects, interweaving them continuously– one thing is clear: the private and public are insufficient for fully grasping and articulating care, because, even if care links private and public life, it also largely exceeds them.

6.5.3. Reproductive commons and (child)care

As concerns commons, particularly social reproduction feminisms have pointed to the importance of what we may call reproductive commons or reproduction commons. They point to the way capitalism is reproduced via the unpaid labor of women in the home (Federici 2004, Barbagallo 2016b), service industries (Lutz 2011) and informal economies (Miranda 2011), as well as via the displacement and exploitation of indigenous people from their land and means of subsistence in order to give rise to extractivism (Federici & Caffentzis 2014). The destruction of local reproductive commons is part of the destruction of planetary ecological commons, with every moment of eviction and extraction reducing the planet's capacity to reproduce its environmental balance. These viewpoints have insisted on the need for systemic perspectives on commons, steeped in analyses and practices that look to transversally address commoning and enclosures at the level of spaces, communities, practices, ecologies, institutions (see also Barbagallo, Beuret & Harvie 2019). The interplay between the terms 'reproduction' and 'care' is a particular strength –not to be misread as an unreflected ambivalence or lack of precision– we can draw from bringing reproduction feminisms together with different theories and ethics of care. 'Reproduction' designates the systemic aspect of life-sustaining in both individual and collective life, while 'care' points to the more intimate, relational and ethical dimensions of such life-sustaining.

The notions of caring economies or economies of care emerge in resonance with the Marxist feminist analyses of domestic labor, feminized work, and colonial and extractivist exploitation. They are part of a feminist redefinition of economy (Perez-Orozco 2014, Knittler & Haidinger 2016, etc.) and of the formulation of a politics of care (Tronto 1994, Multitudes 2009) and as such start from a political subject that is vulnerable and interdependent, rather than the male ideal of independence. These debates and analyses powerfully nourish contemporary feminist movements, as they are articulated with critiques of patriarchal violence (Ni una menos, Womens Strike, #metoo; see Liz Mason-Deese 2018).

The ethics of care are pivotal to my analysis here, not only because of the critical intersectional perspectives they offer, but also in the specific definitions of care they

allow for. Tronto's five phases of care allow us to get to the heart of what we may mean by 'care,' and may be summarized as follows:

1. 'caring about' as the dimension of attention, worry and concern (in terms of childcare, often also referred to as 'the mental load')

2. 'taking care of' as the dimension of caring gestures and tasks

3. 'care-giving' as the continuous, dedicated and laborious activity of looking after someone

4. 'care-receiving' as the being on the receiving end, a role largely mystified as exceptional and 'weak' yet crucial and inevitable to all life

5. and finally, as Tronto added later on, 'caring-with,' which is more akin to solidarity and indeed probably also with commoning care (Tronto 2009a).

In my analysis of care commons, I will be pointing to many different activities, tasks and functions that correspond to one or another of these phases of care. As Tronto points out, ideally, they flow into one another, yet in our contemporary societies they tend to be increasingly segregated. Care-giving is allocated not just to women as mothers, wives or grandmothers, but it is also outsourced to women as maids, au pairs, carers. Taking-care-of is stylized and visibilized in game-like displays of virtue on social media (see Zechner & Hansen 2020) as well as in everyday life (Tronto 1994). Care-receiving is devalued and rendered as taboo or shameful, based in a notion of vulnerability and precarity as exception (we might suggest a feminist argument not unlike that of Neilson & Rossiter 2008). Finally, caring-with is made ever more difficult due to distances, relationships alienated from everyday care, and lack of collective spaces, infrastructures, times and, also, legal models (on the latter, as relating to the possibility of inscribing urban commons in law, see *Report 4. Case Studies in Italy*).

In a similar vein, which however has to be thoroughly acknowledged by social reproduction feminism as yet, technofeminists and critical feminist scholars in Science and Technology Studies (Maria Piug della Bellacasa, Isabelle Stengers, Donna Haraway, Anja Kanngieser et al..) have taken up ecology to broaden their insights towards the situation of ecosystems and the planet (see also Bärtsch et al.. 2017). These currents point towards broader epistemological, philosophical and political consequences of taking ecologies of care seriously in confronting the dilemmas of our time, often in relation to the technofeminisms of some decades ago, imagining new techno-eco-feminisms at the service of the common good on the planet (Sollfrank 2018).

In this report, I will attempt to engage with the contributions of all these currents of feminisms, in trying to develop the thinking around childcare commons, specifically. The question of care as a great worldly commons, as well as a material, embodied and affective field of struggle is thus introduced, if not yet resolved, but in the process of

being translated and transduced in practice. The examples of self-organized childcare I here describe are part of a strongly situated, local and embodied practice, wherein matters of organization, politics, care, time, value, education, knowledges, pedagogy and institutionality intersect and point toward a broader political-ecological horizon of care. This has broad consequences for definitions of the political subject and the economy, of the relation between the public and the community, of democratic space and urban policy, etc. As we start with definitional and theoretical implications of care and feminist epistemologies on the commons, towards the end of this chapter we will arrive at some of the implications of childcare commoning on policy and urban space.

As relating to existing theories of the commons, my endeavor here reflects the now decade-old critique that feminists have presented to theory that skirts the questions of the reproduction of everyday life. As Federici says,

> This, however is true of the discourse on the commons as a whole, which has generally focused on the formal preconditions for their existence but much less on the possibilities provided by existing commons, and their potential to create forms of reproduction enabling us to resist dependence on wage labor and subordination to capitalist relations (Federici 2012 : 142).

This is why, in my research and analysis here, I move back and forth between looking at formal aspects of childcare groups and the living neighborhood and networks that underpin and feed them.

The childcare commons analyzed here are 'resurgent' in the sense of Stengers and Gutwirth (2016). They emerge, transform, collapse, reemerge, compose, articulate –in and out of the everyday flows of life and relation that exist in the lively political microcosm that is Poble Sec. They are driven by a force of invention and articulation that is collective, shared, carried through time by multiple agents –these more or less visible or graspable flows are as important as the concrete forms and processes that commoning activities take. From a feminist viewpoint, it is important not to reduce commons to a set of criteria, functions or relations, but rather to see them as part of a dynamic of life that is all encompassing, transformative and resurgent –and necessarily collective in its intelligence, as the many reverberating voices and narratives throughout this text and research process testify.

In the words of Pepi Dominguez, the midwife and educator pivotal to the emergence of the childcare microcosm in Poble Sec, we can say that the childcare projects here can be said to proceed via 'vínculos,' ties and links, always being made and unmade. Reproductive commons are commons of linkage, ties, articulation. In a properly feminist and ecological perspective –that allows for longer times of analysis, taking into account many layers of composition, agency and effect– there cannot be a question of evaluating these experimental commons as successes or failures. Rather we must look towards the multiple effects and ties they produce and sustain.

6.5.4. Needs in common: the relation between commons and community

The relation between the commons and community has been the subject of many discussions and works in recent years (Federici & Caffentzis 2014, Mies 2014, De Angelis 2017) and, indeed, it is also relevant to this study of childcare commons as reproductive commons. Ecofeminist and feminist-Marxist positions insist that 'there is no commons without a community' (Mies 2014), and that 'commons require community' (Federici & Caffentzis 2014), in the sense that

> This community should not be selected on the basis of any privileged identity but on the basis of the care-work done to reproduce the commons and regenerate what is taken from them.… Thus, when we say 'No Commons without Community' we think of how a specific community is created in the production of the relations by which a specific common is brought into existence and sustained (Federici & Caffentzis 2014: 102).

This reflection is particularly relevant to us since we are speaking about care-based commons here, and we are trying to define some specificities of reproductive commons. These are self-organizational by nature, building on relations rather than resources (more on this further below). Care commons emerge from shared need and from the subsequent creation of relations, not from the initial availability of a specific resource (space, money, etc.).

This positioning of *needs* as central is common to feminist theories of care and economics, which see societies and organization as driven by needs and push for a visibilization and valorization of needs and interdependencies, to show that everyone has needs, and as such everyone is vulnerable, not just children, ill people, disabled people, the elderly, poor people…(Tronto 1994). To politicize needs is to break with the politics of pity and false autonomy inherent in patriarchy and capitalism. Thus, in thinking commons, we must also think of needs and the relations and organizations they spur. These always build communities –not as non-conflictual, homogeneous wholes, but as diverse and metastable assemblages. In this sense, neither communities nor needs are pure or absolute, rather, they are in an interplay akin to how Gilbert Simondon describes the moment of the collective invention of solutions:

> …the accumulation of people blocked by a rock, one after the other, progressively constitutes a simultaneity of expectations [attentes] and needs, and so a tension towards a simultaneity of departures when the obstacle will be removed ; the virtual simultaneity of imagined departures returns to the simultaneity of efforts, where the solution lies. Anticipation and prevision are not enough, because each traveler is perfectly capable of imagining by themselves how they would continue walking if the rock were displaced ; this anticipation still has to return towards the present, in modifying the structure and conditions of the current operation; in the given case, it is the collective anticipation that modifies every one of the individual actions in building the system of synergies (Simondon 2008; my translation from French).

Commoning, and particularly the creation of commons as dispositifs, is such an act of collective imagination and invention in my understanding. Yet, while we might affirm the interconnectedness of community and commons, how exactly do we think of their relation? With care commons we may say that the commons and community are often co-emergent, rather than one coming first. What tends to come first is bodily needs, as shared needs that thus become a social matter. When we speak of social reproduction commoning (Barbagallo, Harvie & Beuret 2019, Gutiérrez-Sánchez 2017), we refer to activities and projects that address our basic needs: for shelter, food, water, care, etc. In this context, needs are starting points for reproduction commoning as a way of building community not on the basis of identity or status but of shared material and life conditions -and indeed also, but not primarily, of desires.[29] We may visualize different ways of thinking the relation between community and commons as follows:

resource commons:[30] resource → organization
organizational commons:[31] organization → resource
care/reproductive commons:[32] needs → organization/composition

In this third perspective on commons, it is relations and practices that are central, as modalities of *commoning* (De Angelis 2017) rather than capital-C Commons. Though practices of care commoning also inhabit and build infrastructures and different forms of collective wealth that may come to be considered at resources, from shared spaces -the post-partum classes as temporary zones of shared interdependency at the public healthcare center, the shopfronts and backyards of the self-run nurseries, etc.- to networks like the PEPI and organizations like the grupos de crianza compartida, all the way to the equalization of time resources between women and men (theoretically, at least; more on this below).

The self-organization of care and reproduction via commons is, however, all but obvious in our contemporary western contexts. Since care commoning –via larger communities and extended families alike– has been nearly eradicated in the course of centuries of patriarchal and capitalist enclosure, we must start from basic questions again:

> What happens when what we call care is a commons and takes place in more collective contexts? What happens when care is a commons and is done in common? What dilemmas and difficulties do those who share it face? What's its relation to other environments and dynamics? (Vega Solis, Martínez Bujan & Paredes Chauca 2018: 17).

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[29] On the relation between need and desire, see the reading group on 'Social Reproduction between Need and Desire' that I co-facilitated with Bue Ruebner Hansen and Paula Cobo-Guevara in 2015 https://murmurae.wordpress.com/proyectos/social-reproduction-between-need-and-desire-reading-group/, accessed 24/7/2020.
[30] Also known as common pool resources, as theorized by Ostrom (1990).
[31] As based in collective practices of social movements, groups, cooperatives, organisations (Stengers & Gutwirth 2016).
[32] As conceptualized by (Vega Solis, Martínez Buján & Paredes Chaua 2018) or Federici (2013).

These questions stem from a book on *Care, communities and commons* edited by feminist scholar-activists across Latin America and Spain recently (Vega Solís, Martínez Buján & Paredes Chauca 2018). Taking a historical and geographical look at practices of care commoning, they analyze the relation between the neoliberal 'plot' or 'weave' ('trama neoliberal', see Gentili & Sader 2003), communitarian-popular horizons ('horizontes comunitario-populares,' see Gutiérrez Aguilar 2017b) and the politics of the commons as concerning the organization and provision of care, across these geographical and grassroots-social ['popular'] contexts. The editors argue that bringing together the tradition and analyses of *comunitarismo*, which differs from the meaning and history of the Anglo-Saxon notion of 'communitarianism,' and *commons* with recent theories and movements around care is an important undertaking. In particular, because this allows us to broaden our analyses around the reproduction and sustainability of life towards fields of practice such as those concerning food, health, water, land, life-space and socialization. They seek, thus, to broaden and intertwine existing analyses of care, reproduction and commons:

> To analyze the communitarian side of things [el polo comunitario] allows us to think the potential it has to build arrangements that are not controlled by social and spatial privatization in the nuclear family, by the exclusive and individual assignation to women, by the recourse to precarious women, or by the economic resources of each one. A*ppropriating* the capacity to care is a form of valuing collective and embodied life that displaces capitalist profit and atomization by creating communities for whom attention is not a minor question, but something that ties together life in common (Vega Solis, Martínez Bujan & Paredes Chauca 2018: 17; my translation from Spanish).

They point out that the genealogies of what we may call *cuidado comunitario* (which I will translate as community-based or communal care, to avoid confusion with Anglo-Saxon communitarian traditions) vary in different places and that rather than melt them into a unitary theory or concept, it is useful to explore their specificities and ways in which they learn from one another. Moreover,

> the *comunitario* organizes itself in hybrid processes where there is 'touch' with public instances, monetary economies or relations of parenthood. What matters is that the realization and the design of care is in the hands of a collectivity that creates its own conditions of execution and benefits (Vega Solis, Martínez Bujan & Paredes Chauca 2018: 24).

In *Cuidados, comunidad y común* there is an affirmation of fluidity between the public and the commons. The case studies the book presents illustrate the ways in which communitarian care often cuts across these spheres, from community use of institutions to policy that claims to be based on community. This fluidity is based in care commons being organizational commons that are driven by social needs. Javier Rodrigo, an activist and parent in Poble Sec and the PEPI network, points out the possible tensions between 'crianza comunitaria' and commons:

> Community-based management [gestión comunitaria] is a figure that exists as the political project of various organizations and installations of very different nature (could be a circus, a neighborhood center, or even an urban garden); they defend the idea of direct democracy, not sovereignty over resources, and say: the communities demand that, before a city infrastructure is put out via a public tender to a third agent […] they [the communities] can govern them directly, the might have the knowledge and capacity and moreover be able to do this in a way that's much more sustainable, ecological and efficient. So what has been called 'economy of commons goods' (a referent here is Elinor Ostrom who came to see the fishermen of Valencia, Vigo etc.) came to 'demonstrate' that a local community, with a local resource, and a model of governance, with a protocol of how we manage and organize ourselves, was much more efficient with these resources in the long run than the wholesale exploitation of a company. This is easy to understand when we speak of a mountain, of mountains, of fishers cooperatives etc., but the big question is: what happens when we do this with a *grupo de crianza*? Can one really make an economy of common goods in relation to the *grupos de crianza*? (Zechner et al. 2018; my translation from Spanish).

The possible contradiction that Rodrigo points out between 'economies of the common good' and community-based childcare projects can be partly resolved through the differentiations that Stengers and Gutwirth (2016) propose regarding commons. Do not conflate those commons centered around a resource (or 'a good') with those that are centered more around organization (and thus time, relations, bodies). To what extent does the governance of care-based commons differ from that of more resource-based ones? Surely there are many singular arrangements and overlaps. Yet, one key characteristic of care-based commons is the fact that they revolve around one or several living beings, and as life evolves and changes permanently, the primacy of relations – as the shifting centers of commoning –is stronger than in commoning that revolves around more or less stable resources. Most grupos de crianza, however, aspire to establish resources themselves, to build infrastructures that can last and become proto-institutions or institutions of the commons (see below my report on the micropolitics of municipalism, as well as Radio Reina Sofia 2011 and Sguigla 2004).

The language that people use to speak about collective childcare projects in Poble Sec also reflects a fluidity and openness, which sometimes also expresses itself as ambivalence, between the 'comunitario' and the 'común.' In speaking of more collective, self-organized forms of childcare, Spanish and Catalan words such as 'crianza compartida,' 'crianza en común' or 'crianza communitaria' are often used interchangeably. This happens particularly in everyday language –one local activist, mother and cooperativist mentions the words 'co-crianza' and 'comaternidad' (Alba 2018), another local activist, mother and urbanist Lucia, speaks of 'criar en comunidad' (Zandigiacomi 2018) –but also in news articles (Botwin 2016, García

2016, Nave del bebé 2014). What all those names have in common is a focus on the collective aspect of childcare and childrearing, be it as sharing, commoning or socializing. These dimensions and nuances are inextricably linked, yet for the purpose of this study we shall define particularly three of them: 'grupos de crianza [compartida]' as self-run childcare groups; 'crianza en común,' which refers to the commons aspect of childcare; and 'crianza comunitaria,' which refers to community-based traditions and practices.

The most common denominator of the self-run childcare groups is '**grupos de crianza [compartida],**' with the adjective sometimes varying. The main studies of collective and community-based childcare in Barcelona (Puig & Segura 2015, Keller Garganté 2017, Ezquerra & Mansilla 2017) go by a technical definition of such groups, differentiating roughly between those that revolve around a self-organization of *childcare* as a specific activity and labor, and those that revolve around more diffuse mutualism and collectivity in *childrearing* (as the global process of bringing up a child). This study is mostly concerned with the former, yet it will make reference to many of the latter, too, as what is at stake here is understanding an ecosystem of care. I will mostly stick with the above academic-technical terminology for the sake of clarity and continuity, yet it is important to note that the different functions of these two kinds of groups blur into one another in many ways, and indeed in both kinds there is a 'sharing' [compartir] of care. Many of my quotes here show this: in everyday language most people skip the adjective 'compartida' even if they are familiar with the definitions.

Another term that is often used is '**crianza comunitaria**,' which literally means 'community-based childrearing' but has a broader history that is relevant to this research in several ways here. In speaking of 'crianza comunitaria,' many parents, educators and/as activists refer to the tradition of community organization rooted in Latin America particularly as a response to stark neoliberalism in the 1990s and onwards (Gutiérrez Aguilar 2017b). These histories and practices were not just important referents for the Spanish anti-austerity movements of the 2010-years, but they also informed the municipalism of Barcelona en Comú, resonating with the cooperativist revindications of the 20th century in Catalunya.

In the context of Barcelona and Spain, instead of the liberal notions of 'communitarianism' that exist in Anglophone contexts,[33] anarchist and libertarian

[33] I refer to these terms in Spanish because these Latin and Anglophone traditions differ considerably when it comes to speaking about community and the communitarian or 'comunitario.' In English, the notion of 'communitarianism' goes back to anglophone debates in the 20th century, concerning the relation between the individual, community and society, in opposition to an emergent liberalism. It has its principal advocates in Charles Taylor, Michael Walzer and Alasdair MacIntyre, and it is concerned about the destruction of family and community fabric through the institutionalization of care and individualist rights-based models. It is, as such, a conservative tradition that affirms the value of the family and the community along more or less traditional lines, and opposes state intervention in matters considered private, of which childcare would be a paradigmatic example. Moreover, the English 'Communitarianism' is a philosophical-political notion with very different contextual roots and context than the word 'comunitario' in Spanish, which stems from grassroots-popular culture [cultura popular].

communitarianisms are a more likely reference. These relate to the powerful experiences and practices of self-organization and neighborhood struggle in the civil war that continue to be alive and present today in neighborhoods such as Poble Sec. This communitarianism is anti-hierarchical and confederalist, as in the thought of Murray Bookchin whose libertarian ideas of municipalism are also an important inspiration for the municipalism of Barcelona en Comú. Taking this mixed lineage into account, we see that both the community and the commune are present in the term 'comunitario.' And, indeed, the relevance of 'crianza comunitaria' -perhaps best rendered as 'community-based childrearing'- in the current moment in Poble Sec is proportional to the relevance of communitarian municipalism in the city government, as we shall see below.

In this sense, the 'comunitario' and the 'común' are enmeshed, and it would be awkward to try separate them. Rather, the problem at hand requires us to see that what is at stake is a new way of articulating the family, the home and the community of belief (not merely religious) with the broader local community, the neighborhood, the city and its institutions. In this sense, we might use 'crianza coomunitaria' and 'childcare commons' interchangeably. But there is also a historically and theoretically specificity to the commons that is relevant to us here.

'Crianza en común' refers to the commons and a history and tradition linked to land and natural resources that belong to everyone. One specificity of the commons is that they start from legal frameworks –the English legal term 'common land,' the Magna Carta, etc., and thus bear a specific relation to the state (existing within and beyond it) (see *Report 4. Case Studies in Italy* and *Report 2. The Common*, section 2.4.4). With the rise of modern capitalism, enclosures of the commons arose through British aristocratic and colonial rule, leading to many kinds of commoners' struggles. With industrial and digital capitalism, enclosures and the struggles against them expanded into new domains. The current of contemporary commons theory most relevant to the present case study, broadly speaking, draws on communist and autonomist traditions and seeks to historicize and re-politicize struggles across the centuries and different places.

In Anglo-Saxon and Italian-influenced thought of the past 40 years, the analyses of Linebaugh, Federici, Caffentzis, Negri, De Angelis and others may be seen in this light, as they point to the dimension of social reproduction. These theorizations and practices of the commons extend from the material into the domain of immaterial commons (and back again) and encompass self-organizational processes as commoning. As such, they propose a political way of talking about the use, inhabitation and creation of spaces, infrastructures, even proto-institutions, as relating to social and political struggles (see the introduction to this fieldwork report). In contemporary Spain, and particularly in the municipalist Barcelona of this report, the

It is important to note that when speaking of 'crianza comunitaria,' neither parents, activists nor academics in Poble Sec are referring to this tradition, particularly not in its anglophone roots.

aforementioned currents of commons theory have been widely received, discussed and adapted to different forms and levels of political practice.

6.5.5. Feminisms that center around life, feminist spaces for childcare

In relation to childcare, it is mostly feminist-autonomist debates and feminist theories of care that have addressed how care work and childcare institutions function in economic, social and political terms –ranging from a critical analysis of the home and the family to kindergartens and schools. In Spanish feminist-autonomist-inspired movements, the problem of childcare has been addressed through courses such as 'El ADN de la Vida' (Nociones Comunes 2013) or 'Como coño se sostiene esto?' (Nociones Comunes 2014) which have addressed the intersections between the politics of parenting, maternity, childcare, activism and institutions, as well as the affirmation of a politics of the 'Retaguardia' in the 'Otros Vinculos' (2016) project or 'Trincheras Permanentes' (León 2017) and best-selling *Dónde está mi tribú* books (Del Olmo 2013). These debates also influence the municipalist politics of Barcelona en Comú, which starts from a claim to making politics of the commons possible at a municipal level. The latter part of this study is dedicated to this aspect.

Thus, globally speaking, a lot of traditions, definitions, struggles and practices come into play in this research project on childcare and childrearing commons. In the experimentations and struggles around collective childcare at stake here, in Poble Sec Barcelona 2017-20, we find intersections of libertarian, autonomist and, also, conservative notions of community and care. The projects this chapter focuses on –*grupos de crianza compartida*– do not aim to abolish or directly attack the home and nuclear family but seek ways to extend and support different kinds of family and household. They propose egalitarian and feminist forms of organization while accepting that certain traditional divisions of labor persist. They aim to create an alternative to public institutions without denying the importance of the latter. They work closely within the neighborhood communities whilst allowing for different levels of participation (see also *Report 1. The Political*). They aim to expand and render their community-based model more accessible without, however, focusing all their attention on this level.

By putting children and their wellbeing at the center, these projects navigate complex familial, social and political constellations, in slow and careful ways. Indeed, navigating complexity, openness and contingency with care and a slow but steady pace is a characteristic of most reproduction commons. The strength and resilience of the Poble Sec childcare commons feeds off the centrality of care, making their slowness and openness (and sometimes even indefinition) emerge as strengths. This is based in a conscious practice that embraces contingency. It is not rare to hear someone say, perhaps with self-irony, 'vamos lentos pero vamos lejos' ('we move slow but we go far,' a Zapatista-inspired saying) at the end of an assembly where only half the agenda came to be addressed, or when trying to walk a group of toddlers to the park. This slowness constitutes a politics of care –making sure everyone can

follow, avoiding certain modes of pragmatism and efficiency as a matter of pedagogy and politics– that is being taken increasingly seriously in Spanish movements and politics since a powerful new feminist wave (Gil 2011) emerged around the time of the 15M movement in 2011. It is articulated around a politics of care whose main claim is about 'putting life at the center' (Orozco 2014).

It is crucial to see these commons in the context of neoliberalism. As Carolina del Olmo (2013) notes in her book *Dónde está mi tribú*, the present generations of women who grew up in neoliberalism are well aware of the triple burden (housework, waged work, childcare) and of their slim chances of gaining stable employment in today's economies of precarity, particularly as women and mothers. In Spain in June 2019, only 10% of contracts are permanent[34] and extremely precarious short-term contracts are on the rise (Olías & Sánchez 2019). They embrace motherhood and childrearing as a political act that also reflects a refusal of precarious labor and triple exploitation, rather preferring to invent and defend other ways of caring and living. Del Olmo has to some extent pioneered this discourse of 'new maternities' [nuevas maternidades], which questions the narrative that waged labor means empowerment whilst staying at home to care is regressive:

> Some go home to care, others choose professions of less prestige and less salary that leave them more free time. The usual way to analyze this is in terms of patriarchy and this, to be honest, angers me a bit: for sure one has to ask why these ones do this and the others that, but it's not enough to pose that question whilst taking for granted that these ones win and these ones lose, that these ones are being submissive whilst the other ones choose (Del Olmo 2014; my translation from Spanish).

This approach to reproductive and waged labor shares much affinity with some theories and economies of the commons, privileging the creation of autonomous –or rather, interdependent– circuits of value generation over the integration into existing job or financial markets. It advocates that women's inclusion in the labor market is not necessarily the prime way to overhaul capitalist and gendered forms of labor, opting for more horizontal and collective ways of articulating life and work. The question of 'choice' is acutely political here as in many feminist debates. *Dónde está mi tribú* has been very widely read in Spain (2018 saw its 8th edition), and it is one of the reasons many grupos de crianza compartida speak of themselves as 'tribús.' The approach to motherhood and work is a differentiated one, characteristic of a new wave of feminism and a new politicization of motherhood that draws on social movements, queer politics and feminist commons (Del Olmo 2013; 2014, León 2017, Llopis 2015, Merino 2017, Vivas 2019). This 'fourth wave' of feminism in the Spanish state insists upon care, interdependence, vulnerability, feminist economics and commoning as bases for another politics, not as a matter of equality or labor market integration but as a redefinition of political subjects and practices. The political focus shifts, thus, from

[34] See these statistics of the Spanish government, http://www.mitramiss.gob.es/es/estadisticas/resumenweb/RUD.pdf, accessed 1/9/2019.

work to life, from integrating women into existing systems to redefining those systems altogether.

'This space supports the Feminist Strike.' March 2019 Facebook Screenshot from Petit Molinet Group.

The shift from work to life also comes with its contradictions and pitfalls, however. Whilst the participants in Poble Sec's grupos de crianza compartida generally do not embrace the idea of stay-at-home mothering or Christian values, and are mostly overtly feminist, in practice the groups do reproduce many of the traditional gender roles that feminists seek to abolish, since women take on a disproportionately large amount of their work. Everyone is acutely aware of this problem, which is quick to come up in a discussion of the groups, raised by members themselves. There is an awareness that this gendered division of labor is the effect of a rejection of neoliberal precarity and the triple burden[35] by women, where, however, they cannot count on a wide-ranging emancipation of men and are thus left to politicize care from a women's standpoint largely.

6.5.6. Some historical precedents in self-organized childcare

It is useful to ground our analyses in some historical analyses, particularly as we may note parallels to self-organized childcare that emerged as part of second-wave feminism and the social-political transformations of 1968. Collective experiments in childcare reflect different moments and positions within women's movements as well as social movements more broadly. On the one hand, it is clear that more radical projects emerge from moments of great social mobilization –1968 with the Kinderländen in Germany (Binger 2018, Sander 2008), the 1970s women's

[35] This term of feminist sociological analysis refers to women's key role in reproductive work, productive work as well as community care.

movements in the UK (Bargbagallo forthcoming) and 2011 with the 15M movement in Spain (Keller Garganté 2015, Nociones Comunes 2013, León 2017, del Olmo 2013 and 2014)– and that, with time, these projects tend to follow social and political shifts that occur at a broader level, often in the sense of normalization, deradicalization.

As parent-activist Lothar Binger (2018) writes in his account of the early Berlin 'Kinderläden' that emerged from the '68 movements –self-run childcare groups that evolved in ways very similar to those that sprung up in Poble Sec after 2011– these groups were initially radically feminist and saw an active and relatively equal participation of men (though sometimes also an usurpation in theoretical and representational terms). The women's movements and women's central council (Zentralrat der Frauen) played an important role in these projects, politicizing and socializing care, in a way perhaps similar to the role that feminist movements, from sex- and domestic workers movements to the women's strike, play for the grupos de crianza compartida. Binger recounts how, when he again becomes father in the late 70s and seeks out a Kinderladen for his kids, he finds these groups to be more depoliticized and operating on the basis of a more strongly gendered division of labor. An effect, there too perhaps, not just of social normalization but also of precarization and the triple burden.

The tension between affirming the choice between different forms and models of childcare, versus affirming a unitary public model of education accessible to all, is not new in feminist debates. Barbagallo, in her study on feminist demands around childcare since the 70s (focused on the UK), notes that

> The tensions, both practical and ideological, between, on the one hand, demanding more childcare provision so that women could choose to work and, on the other, conceiving of childcare provision as necessary to transform the sexual division of labor by changing not only who provided care, but also how and why caring activities took place, exposed a fault-line that existed in the women's movement. It was a fault-line that existed primarily along the divisions of class (Barbagallo 2016a: 12).

In contemporary Poble Sec, this fault-line certainly also exists, but the grupos de crianza do not uniquely set out from feminist demands. They embrace self-organized childcare also because of alternative pedagogies, reflecting a key demand and perspective of the post-68 anti-authoritarian education movements for instance, such as those around the Kinderläden in Germany (Binger 2018). The contemporary childcare groups are akin to the more anti-authoritarian experiments post-68 and the more feminist experiments that gathered force in the 70s in that they try out alternatives without, for the most part, focusing general critique on the public system. In this sense, they share an anti-capitalist consciousness. The contemporary style is less ideological, yet commons and the community still act as strong models and motors of conviction.

To grasp where some of these positions come from politically, and how they sit within a broader spectrum of childcare politics, I will now briefly outline some main approaches. Broadly speaking, we can identify four positions in relation to childcare, as concerning its situatedness between the home, the community, the state and the market. Putting it simply, they tend to demand, sometimes exclusively or in articulation:

1) More home /**conservative and anti-systemic liberal values**. This is the domain of conservative family politics that seeks to maintain tradition, familial and often patriarchal authority, to keep economic and social life centered on the family, often as advocated by the church. Yet this domain harbors conservatives as well as (to a much lesser degree) anti-systemic liberals. Homeschooling, the building of alternative families and the transformation of the home into a place of extended families and egalitarian relations may also be part of this domain. The 'attachment parenting' current, advocating a very strong bond of care between mother and child particularly, is very popular today in progressive circles, yet it emerges from the evangelical thought of William Sears (Sears 1984, Sears & Sears 2001).

The attachment approach has been embraced by some Christians and ecofeminists whilst being frequently rejected by feminists who advocate for equality, particularly in Anglo-Saxon debates (Warner 2005, Badinter 2012). The 'immersive mothering' it encourages demands that women dedicate themselves exclusively to their children, and promotes an education that is very labor intensive, child-centered (largely ignoring the mother's needs), expert-driven, emotionally absorbing and financially demanding. Feminist mother and scholar-activist Núria Verges describes this current as follows, in relation to Poble Sec:

> There's the feminists who are more radical, cultural, agrofeminist, who maintain that being a woman is beautiful. Life is at the center, there's an elation of motherhood, of reproduction: 'we're goddesses, I'm the mother, I'm my own mother… women's knowledges, me with my daughter I know everything and I'll understand everything.' There's an interesting critique of obstetric violence there, but it falls into essentialism and into renaturalizing (Zechner et al.. 2018; my translation from Catalan).

This debate touches on some of the core contradictions that the self-organized childcare groups face, who largely embrace a (more or less) attachment-based, labor-intensive, child-driven, emotionally and financially challenging approach. Indeed, some equality-feminist critiques ignore the fact that in countries like the United States but also Spain, where maternity leaves are very short (4 months in Spain) or virtually nonexistent (the US), mothers' struggles to get more time to rest and be with their children is indeed a struggle of self-care and emancipation from work.

2) More community. This brings us to a second set of feminist influences on childcare commons: **community, anarchist and libertarian feminisms**. This is where most examples and references in this study are located, as they call for the strengthening of

community and neighborhood ties, for an increased porosity between families and communities, as well as a community appropriation of institutionalities. 'Comunitario' refers to communalizing resources, work and institutions in the sense of making them both community-run and commune-run. This current is particularly relevant in the context of a rising municipalism, giving rise to new city politics in places like Barcelona of Barcelona en Comú. It often goes hand in hand with communal and commons-based notions of economy and labor as well as politics. Where it tends towards the 'more market' argument at the same time, this approach touched partially upon the neocommunitarian current, which seeks to privatize care through voluntary community work (see Zechner 2013a, Hodgson 2004).

Here, it is the community and collective that is at the center of politics, as Núria Vergés puts it:

> The state and market have to be as small as possible: self-management, collective responsibility, also with reproduction, with the body, the family... the kids within the community: 'my daugther is also everybody else's daugther, in a certain sense'… I've seen that this demands a lot of time and I didn't have that much, because I had to go on with my job (Zechner et al.. 2018; my translation from Catalan).

This too is a labor- and time-intensive option, but in the sense that it (ideally) involves everyone's labor. To be sure, strictly state- or market-based provision of care indeed is equally time- and labor-intensive. It is impossible to rationalize time or effort in major ways when it comes to care, without stripping it of its key characteristics, which are time-based as they involve attention, sustaining, growth/development/healing (see Multitudes 2009). The difference with state- and market-based provision of care is that the work in these domains is naturally allocated to precarious, subaltern women, without much discussion about gendered divisions of labor, triple burdens or indeed class- and race-based exploitation.

3) More state. This is the domain of **socialist as well as some Marxist feminisms**, which sometimes join a call for a simultaneous strengthening of community ties and transformation of the state towards less centralized entities. It is the domain of claims for getting women out of the home, for enabling more equal gender relations through subsidies and leave. In many cases, these claims go hand in hand with a push for women towards the labor market and for the remuneration of care work, in a broad affirmation of wage labor and economies based thereon. This approach tends to be endorsed mostly by gender equality feminisms, who seek to decrease the difference between female and male roles in care. But gender equality is far from realized in this domain too, and as researcher and mother Christel Keller Garganté says:

> the [public] Bressol daycare centers don't have the capacity to put childrearing [crianza] at the center of social life, because in the end they're still spaces that are closed to the community and the rest of the neighbors (Zechner et al.. 2018; my translation from Spanish).

4) More market. This tendency aims at the marketization of care in the broadest sense, meaning the privatization of domestic, auxiliary and care work, arguing it will greatly increase the volume of national economies and GDPs. (**Neo)liberal feminisms** have promoted the so-called glass ceiling approach in this vein in order to get women onto the labor market, convinced that waged work will lead to women's liberation, and striving for women's access to male roles. This approach tends to be driven by feminisms of gender equality that seek to assimilate women to men. Similar, and sometimes, going hand in hand with the argument for more state involvement in care, this approach demands for economically accessible care to be available to all via subsidies/redistribution. Alternatively, it argues that the use of cheap (and mostly informal) migrant labor is legitimate for women's liberation and that this ultimately also benefits poor women at the center as well as at the end of global care chains.

We will now move on to analyzing the concrete position that the self-organized childcare projects take in relation to the state and the market, and how this is reflected in their modes of self-governance. We will see that these groups occupy a complex and intelligent position in relation to the public as well as the private sphere, opening onto new paradigms of (self-)governance and the political. They operate through a politics of ties (vínculos) and are sites of subjectivation and politicization of care and belonging as well as motherhood and masculinity. Going into depth and detail regarding Poble Sec's groups, this section draws on the 'Comúnes y Crianza: Hace falta un Poble Sec para criar?' [Commons and childrearing: does it take a Poble Sec village to raise a child?] workshop in autumn 2018, which I organized in conjunction with local mothers, activists, educators and policy makers in the context of this research project (see also the appendix for details). This section begins to render the social and political intelligence, cooperation and agonisms that exist between social movements and institutions in Barcelona, which my study on micropolitics and municipalism further develops.

6.6. Tensions between commons and the state in childcare

> The greatest subsidy of capitalism is the free care of children by women, domestic work turned into love and servitude and the devaluation of the costs of women's care work, particularly [the care of] the women of the world's south for the women of the world's north. We are subsidizing power structures that impoverish us. There's no equality to be found here (Galindo 2019; my translation from Spanish).

The 'Crianza y Comunes' colloquium explored the possible local articulations of these three dimensions from various viewpoints: those of parents and particularly mothers, in the first instance; those of parents and 'acompañantes' (accompanying adults/pedagogues) in self-organized childcare groups and the PEPI network; those of parents and teachers in public kindergartens and schools; and, of course, in as much as

possible those of children, via their presence and parents. Interestingly, the debate in Poble Sec is not polarized. It is characterized by an attitude of mutual respect, listening and the desire to build bridges. This is a sign of the culture of encounters, sharing and debate that characterizes the neighborhood, aided by the fact that the municipal government of Barcelona en Comú tried to strengthen both the public system and commons-based neighborhood initiatives, avoiding pitting one against the other. This takes various forms, such as attempting to common the public in some instances, creating common-public cooperations, and politicizing the commons in relation to the public (see also the following chapter).

As Javier Rodrigo notes, reducing the debate around self-organized childcare to a polarity between private vs. public one loses out on a lot of effects and conditions: from the fact that these groups are spaces of democratic learning and experimentation, and that their 'direct governance is very efficient, with commissions, democracy, it's a school for mothers and fathers' (Zechner et al.. 2018; my translation from Spanish) to the way in which the practices and knowledges produced in these groups spill and cross over with the public system. 'This governance that one learns when it's a school with democratic politics later has a lot of linkages, many influences and it's difficult to reduce it to either the private or the public' (Zechner et al. 2018; my translation from Spanish). What parents and children learn in the grupos de crianza compartida, they then bring it with them into the public school system, enabling transformations therein.

Rodrigo affirms modulations between different kinds of systems, meaning that the commons and the public can coexist, one being publicly and the other autonomously organized. There can even be crossovers between public and commons daycare spaces, and, as Rodrigo puts it, there can be 'intermediary spaces. The more biodiversity of childrearing, the better, I think. So, it's not about this idea of competing over whether you're private or public, which moreover seems a debate that's of the 80s, with all due sympathy and respect' (Zechner et al. 2018; my translation from Spanish). The given social and political climate in Poble Sec makes it possible for the strong ambivalence that characterizes the relation between commons and state to take on a positive, productive dynamic, leading to experimentation and debate rather than polarization or a sense of disempowering contradiction. Different positions exist and indeed also shift, there is a shared and public debate.

Within the grupos de crianza compartida, there are different tendencies as regards demands to the city council and the question of whether it should grant free use of spaces or give funding. Marc Alcega Alcivill from the XELL (the network of free education in Catalunya) is one of the activists interviewed by the 'Tribú en Arganzuela' project in 2016 about the XELL's 'demands towards the administrations, such as that they grant use of spaces, give some kind of subsidy, etc.:'

> There's a debate about that. In our environment there are movements that absolutely want to do without the state and its mechanisms, and others that say

> ‘no, we’re part of society, the state also represents us.’ In this case, what can we ask of them [the state]? For now, we’ll get them to not persecute us, that they leave us in peace and help us with things that don’t cost them money. This is where licenses come into play: to find one that serves us for regularizing the spaces of our schools (Alcega & La Tribú en Arganzuela 2016).

For some however, there are problematic and possibly insurmountable contradictions when it comes to the relation between commons and state in childcare. Raquel Gallego, head of the IGOP policy research center in Barcelona and co-coordinator of various projects on care provision, institutional and non-institutional models of early childcare (0-3 year old), says of ‘innovative’ non-institutional models like the grupos de crianza compartida:

> So, the problem is that if they don’t want to be regulated, how will they demand public spaces …? That’s contradictory: you can’t demand to make use of public resources if you don’t accept to be regulated; it’s contradictory because if you’re not regulated then you’re outside… On the other hand, if the government –the local one for instance– regulates it [self-organized childcare], then it’s taking on responsibility, and we also don’t know if it wants to take that on. So, here’s there’s a certain difficult match on both sides.…If the government regulates, it has to take on fiscal responsibilities, if you give them [the grupos de crianza] funding then that has to be audited, it [the government] has to make sure that the money is used for the thing it has to be used for, it has to have instruments of control, of follow-up, of inspection…of course, that’s extra work that it didn’t have so far (Gallego 2019; my translation from Spanish).

In the case of Poble Sec groups and the PEPI, the notion that childcare groups would not want in any way to be regulated is however questionable. The closeness of many activists and parents to the commons debates and policies (before, within and beyond Barcelona en Comú) means that there is a notion of openness regarding possibilities for municipal support and regulation. The ‘Urban Commons’ policies (Ayuntamiento de Barcelona 2017b and 2017c) that ‘regulate’ spaces such as the Can Battló community center show that public-commons agreements need not pass via total control and permanent audits. Spaces are being handed over rent-free to local communities (as associations) and new modalities of accompaniment and ongoing evaluation are being elaborated. Can Batlló, which was claimed by neighbors in 2011 in a powerful campaign after years of being left empty, is a proto-institution that belongs neither to the private nor to the public entirely. After years of negotiation, planning and probing with the city government of Barcelona en Comú –and years of legal and administrative labor and struggle on the part of the latter– the city has found a legal modality for conceding Can Battló’s spaces for civic use. The spaces are granted to the Asociació Espai Comunitari y Veinal Autogestionat de Can Batlló for 30 years (Redacción la Vanguardia 2019). Other similar examples exist, such as the Ateneu Nou Barris neighborhood center.

A similar model of granting a space for limited community use might well be imaginable in relation to the grupos de crianza compartida. Indeed, the city commissioned studies on those possibilities earlier on in the mandate, regarding commons-based care and childcare in specific (Ezquerra & Mandilla 2017, Keller-Garganté 2017). Due to reasons unknown, also to the author herself, the childcare-specific study remains unpublished. As we will see further on, debates and negotiations around public-commons policies for childcare are complex and sometimes fraught.

6.6.1. Limited models: barriers to inclusivity in self-organized and institutional childcare

Raquel Gallego, cited above, was embarking on a big 3-year research project on institutional and non-institutional models of early childcare (0-3 years) when I interviewed her in 2018. This research project will yield a statistical picture of this field, asking why people choose one childcare model over another. Gallego has a troubling suspicion regarding the more innovative, non-institutional models:

> It's very curious because with experiences like those of social innovation we realize that they don't help with the problematics of people who really suffered from the crisis. Rather, they answer to the aspirations of people who have a high educational level, that have a medium but sufficient socioeconomic level. As always, it's the population who suffers most from the impact of the crisis that doesn't in the least benefit from what we call an alternative economy. Not just that, I think it [alternative economies] isn't even known [to this most affected population]. And I doubt that if they knew it, they would choose it. I think that finally you end up seeing –I won't know for sure before we finish the research project but I have this feeling– that the social and solidarity economy is neither social nor solidary in the end. That's to say that in the end it doesn't come to resolving problems of the population that really suffers from the negative impact of the economic crisis. There's a vast sector of the population that doesn't benefit from the social and solidarity economy, I'm afraid I might say that even the term itself, of social and solidarity economy, is misleading, because it's not thought for the disadvantaged sectors of the population. This is a sad conclusion from my viewpoint, but it's what I seem to be seeing on the basis of my research… (Gallego 2019; my translation from Spanish).

For Gallego, who has followed a host of research projects on solidarity- and commons-based economies at the IGOP research center, this problem of the accessibility of self-run childcare projects reflects, thus, a broader problem with social and solidarity economies. This problem can indeed also be seen in the social, cultural and ethnic composition of Poble Sec's childcare projects. They are largely made up of white people with a relatively high level of education and lower-middle income. This is self-critically confirmed by Poble Sec based cooperativist and activist Xavier

Latorre Tapis, speaking about his many years of working in the social and solidarity economy networks in Poble Sec:

> We also have a self-critique… in our spaces the majority are whities… I have to admit this and in Cooperasec [local solidarity economy platform] we also have a self-critique, we always say that our networks are having trouble opening to more of the cultural diversity in the neighborhood. We're conscious that we're not reaching all the diversity that exists in the neighborhood, we're mostly white folks (blanquitos)… (Latorre Tapis 2019; my translation from Spanish).

But, of course, there are many different kinds of initiatives in this broad spectrum of social and solidarity economies. A spectrum we may see to overlap largely with what we call 'commons' here, as it builds mainly on community-based practices: food coops (La Seca at la Base), self-organized nurseries (as those of the PEPI network), social centers (La Base and Ateneu Rebelde), cooperative cafés (La Raposa), but also exchange and gifting networks (Trocasec and Poble Sec Regalos), anti-eviction and mutual support networks (el Sindicat de Barri), the domestic worker's cooperative 'Més que Cures', etc. While the more consumer- and service-oriented cooperatives cater mostly to people with median income and high educational status, who are willing to spend extra money on goods and services that come from community-based initiatives, the anti-eviction network, gifting and exchange platforms (two extremely active Whatsapp groups and regular exchange sessions) directly support people and families in dire economic circumstances. Hence, while the critique of Gallego applies, it is worthwhile differentiating initiatives and keeping in mind that diverse initiatives and participants makes the Poble Sec solidarity economies lively and indeed also resilient.

Gallego's main hunch is that people do not choose grupos de crianza for economic motives, but rather for social, personal or ideological ones. This is certainly true, yet, as Xavier Latorre points out, cooperativism also invites us to question notions of economy in themselves:

> When we organized the Solidarity Economy fair, we also invited people to a space that made conflict visible, with a stand of the Sindicat de Barri, because we also understand that the Sindicat de Barri is an economic actor, based on our broad vision of community economy [economía comunitaria]. There was a bit of tension over that [chuckles] with the association of shopkeepers (or maybe with a sector of it)… it was an interesting debate to unfold the concept of what we understand by economic actors, based on the more traditional view, because all strands of mutual aid are about satisfying needs, that's generating another economy –but it's to generate another model of economy of what we call the communal base [base comunitaria]. The Sindicat de Barri is a network of mutual support that is really trying to satisfy needs as important as housing, and based on collective power they manage to renegotiate agreements [rental] and stop evictions. I mean they had some small victories, not in all cases but…many

> negotiations with owners finally led to less unfair agreements, when they saw that this person or family has a more broad collective force behind them, some owners accepted to not raise the rent. This is our vision of the solidarity economy…the network of barter and all the networks of exchange too, Trocasec [local exchange platform], that's also about encouraging the capacity to exchange things that one maybe doesn't need anymore, but the other does…(Latorre Tapis 2019; my translation from Spanish).

Generally, and in many ways, social and solidarity economies do and can include those socially and economically most vulnerable. The 'Sindicat de Barri' in Poble Sec stops evictions, negotiates against rent raises, operates a food bank and runs campaigns against speculation. When Cooperativist activists mapped Poble Sec's cooperative initiatives, showing some 15-18 projects and groups, the Sindicat de Barri was included as well as 'the Petit Molinet and Monstre de Paper for now, set up on an associative rather than lucrative base' (Latorre Tapis 2019; my translation from Spanish). They are looking to include more.

Returning to childcare commoning, we may thus ask the critical question of what to include in this category of commons. What level of lived, not just discursive egalitarianism must initiatives practice in order to deserve being called commoning? While there are plenty technical, legal and organizational definitions on the subject, very few take an intersectional approach to land this abstract debate in the muddy soil of real social composition and privilege. Here we encounter a blind spot of much commons theory and anthropology, which largely fails to address questions of race, class and gender. If commons are to be transformative social practices that lead not just to more democracy but also to more equality (making democracy accessible to all), then what basic requirements must they meet in terms of social inequalities? Is it enough for commons initiatives to practically, not just discursively, address one of the great axes of inequality –bringing justice in terms of class, gender, race, age or ability, for instance? And, furthermore, to what extent must commons initiatives engender successful egalitarian *practices* versus just having egalitarian *ideals*?

The commons are not a framework for evaluating and defining practices in detailed technical terms, that much is clear. They aim to describe a broad band of social practices that share an organizational horizon that brings us beyond the paradigms of the private and the public. Yet, when it comes to thinking policies of the commons, as is the case with the policies of Barcelona en Comú 2015-19, then specific and rigorous criteria must apply. The debate on these criteria within governments is quite new –with some partial referents in Ecuador and Bolivia (see the work of Alberto García Linera, for example). While there were many discursive advances within Barcelona en Comú's 2015-19 mandate, the precise administrative, legal and technical modalities of commons-based municipal policy only had only just begun to be explored and tested. As we shall see below, a key line of tension within this debate is about the relation between the commons and the public. Broadly speaking, the tension between the public and the commons is the reflection of a contradiction between

models of universality that want to include everyone and, as such, put social-organizational matters second, and models of self-organization that set out from collective innovation and seek to be broadly inclusive in a second step.

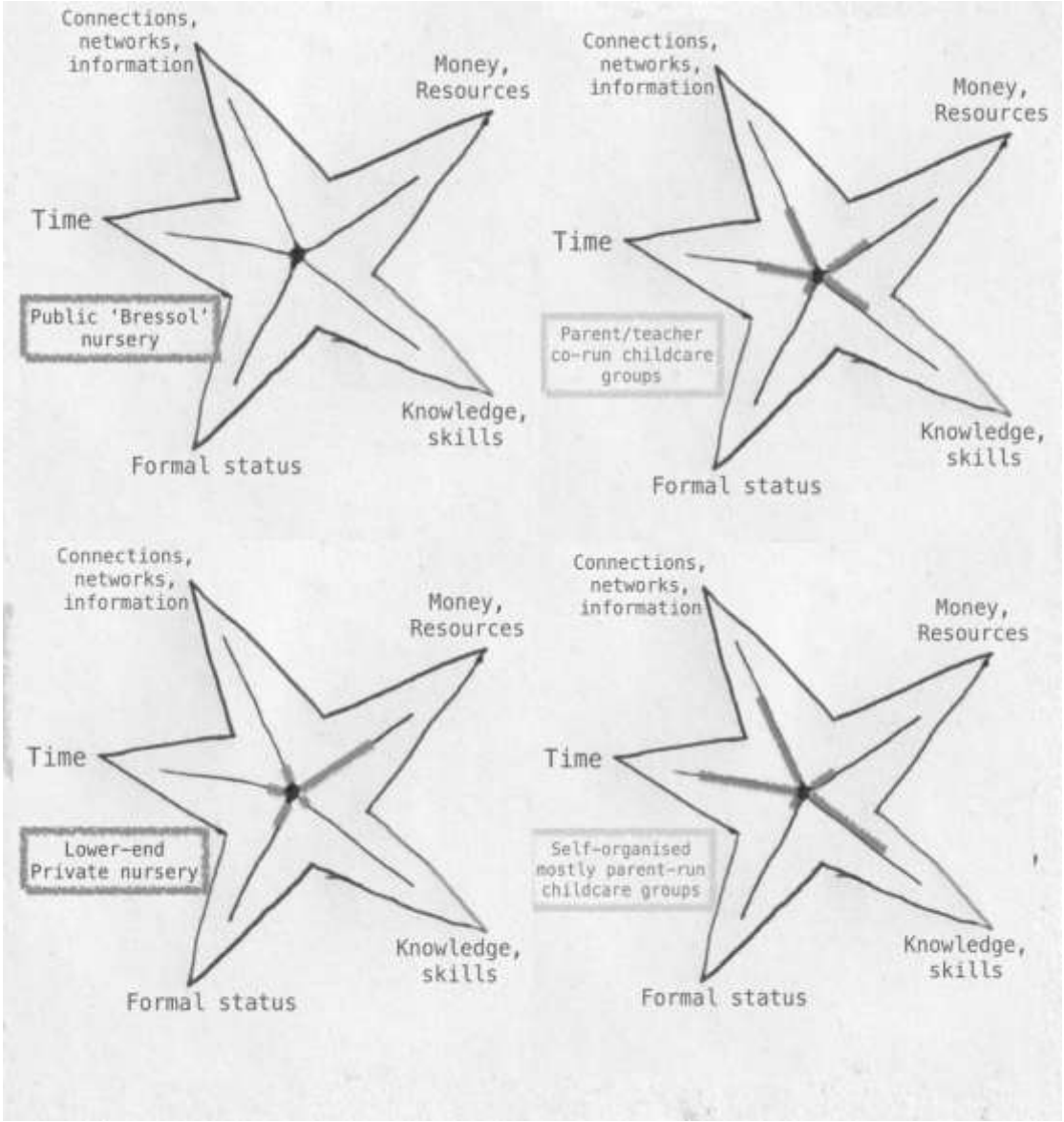
Looking at the dimensions of race, class, gender, ability and age, we can see that Barcelona en Comú has made vast progress in matters of gender, ability and age. To a considerable degree, it has addressed problems of class, and stalled largely with regards to race. This is a reflection of the broader political movements and tendencies of the time, where calls for women's equality have become mainstream (the feminist strikes of 8th March 2016 and onwards, globally the #metoo movements, etc.), while anti-racism is only just beginning to make its way into institutions, in the US in particular, with figures like Alexandra Ocasio-Cortés and Ilhan Omar. At the same time, class remains an absolute taboo that can only be rendered as problems of social mobility, poverty or exclusion. The liberal political paradigm that dominates institutions across the Western world has taken on debates over inequality to the extent that they promote mainstreaming and quotas, yet it has largely failed to address underlying structural causes. In this matter, Barcelona en Comú has a broader vision, yet mostly succeeded in implementing real changes in some domains. A lot is left to be done. In the case of childcare commons, policies have been debated, rigorous assessments made (see sections below), but proposals have not come to mature during Bcomú's first mandate.

Here, too, the question of the public and the commons arises. What is the difference between a public and a commons-based approach to social justice? Since they are self-organized, most commons processes set out from a specific social base, either revolving around a community or a resource, yet al.ways with a need and, thus, certain social parameters in common. This is their strength and limitation at once. It is impossible to get from the particular to the universal. But if commons are neither entirely one or the other, there must be other ways to think about inclusivity and accessibility within them. How might we critically look at these dimensions regarding the real composition of commoning projects, and develop a productive debate from there?

6.6.2. Limits and ambivalences between public, commons and private daycare options

In the following section I set out some basic tools with which we may analyze different axes of accessibility and inclusion with regards to commons initiatives. Whilst such analysis does not give a normative answer to the broader question of what should count as commons, what levels of rigor and inclusivity we should expect of commoning initiatives (questions that perhaps can only meaningfully find singular and situated answers), I believe it does provide a first step in the debate. It is mostly the commons movements themselves that provide the most rigorous and grounded analysis of dynamics of social composition within their practices. As my interviews show, activists and commoners in solidarity economies and childcare groups alike are the first to point to their own limitations, and they are struggling to find solutions to

this. Below I adapt a visualization tool that has been used in militant research, to illustrate some key factors for accessing the different kinds of childcare.[36] These intuitive diagrams show different access criteria and how roughly they play out in different childcare models:



Access criteria in different childcare models.

Let's take a look at each of these models for a moment.

The **Public Bressol daycare centers** have been weakened with austerity (Rodriguez 2017), leading to worse teacher-child ratios and less general resources and, thus, both less quality as well as a failure to meet demand. Barcelona en Comú created 5 new Bressol centers with some 500 places during its 2015-19 mandate, but still only 20% of children can get a public place in many neighborhoods. Lower-income and migrant

[36] These star diagrams have been adapted from the Serpica Naro and Carrot Workers Collectives, see Carrot Workers Collective/Precarious Worker's Brigade (2017): 33.

families are more represented in the public system than in any other childcare model because of a differential fee system and a points-based application system that prioritizes local, vulnerable and mono-parental families. While, in some respects, there are bureaucratic hurdles within the application process, these processes tend to be more transparent and regulated than those of self-run centers. Thanks to a strong public ethos however, Bressols are not stigmatized in Barcelona (Barcelona en Comú has helped improve their revindications and image in 2014-19) and classes are diverse, mixing the autochthonous with migrants from near and far, as well as people from different backgrounds. These centers embody the diversity of the city and the neighborhood, yet they usually do not give rise to strong communities or 'tribús.' The relation of Bressols to the neighborhood is, thus, both more organic, more representative of its diverse population, linked with different social services, and more alienated. People from Bressols participate in neighborhood social life only in their own capacity and name; to that extent the public system is more individualizing.

The pros: more affordable, income-based, transversal and inclusive, transparent, stable, and spaces are more appropriate in some respects. All Bressols have outdoor spaces, but often it's many kids to a room, and educational models are quite updated, within the limits of a very low ratio. The downsides: the ratios and lack of places. The public system's claim to universality thus fails due to underfunding. Núria Vergés, a mother and feminist activist from Poble Sec says about her experience of a local Bressol:

> …daycare centers like the Bressol NIC are not enough for everyone and there's been the construction of a welfare state which in the end is poor and not very socialist. Moreover, you need to meet certain criteria, it's done via a draw and you have to get lucky. What kinds of parents do they have in mind? For example, all of September there's half-day care only. They're thinking of a mother who works half the day, because moreover they always talk to me rather than the father. It's interesting to think about what parents this model has in mind (Zechner et al.. 2018; my translation from Spanish).

Vergés argues that private daycare centers have more realistic offers for working families, in fact. 'A private nursery is the one that thinks most about both parents working: they have longer hours, summer activities, etc.' (Zechner et al.. 2018; my translation from Spanish) This is an interesting contrast to the widespread idea that the public system is for working people. Indeed, it best accommodates traditional family models with fathers in full time employment and mothers doing part-time work or housekeeping only. Yet, many full-time working biparental families still opt for the public system over private or semi-private nurseries, for two main reasons. On the one hand, low wages and high rents in the face of which even two salaries are not enough to pay for private daycare; and pride in public education, on the other hand.

The **grupos de crianza compartida** appeal particularly to families with high educational and, to some extent, also economic credentials. Their emphasis is on the

ratio, the quality of care, the creation of flexible social support structures, and the lively collective participation in the neighborhood. Of course, Bressols are also support structures, they are just more rigid and limited. The grupos de crianza, on the other hand, are precarious in their inhabitation of space (rent contracts or agreements of use) and as such do not meet institutional safety standards in their spaces, which is why they cannot officially be registered as private daycare centers and get potential subsidies from the Catalan Generalitat. They compensate for this precarity and lack of infrastructure, from child-sized toilets to kitchens, nappy changing areas, patios etc., with the presence of many carers who can improvise and avoid accidents.

The grupos de crianza compartida are very precarious in their organizational and financial balance, and they often encompass experiences of failure that, by virtue of their reproductive and intimate nature, can be quite distressing for everyone involved (see autoethnographic appendix). They form strong groups and networks, as well as strong links to the neighborhood, albeit mostly with a less diverse range of families than the Bressols.

It is useful to apply at least three layers of analysis to these groups, based on the perspectives of race, class and gender, and to question how the intersections between those occur. A key main problem with grupos de crianza compartida is their uniform social composition. A large majority of parents have high education levels and a middle income, they are white and liberal, with at least one parent working part time or flexible hours. Both in the case of educators and parents, it is mostly women doing the work in these childcare groups.

There is an open debate as to how much weight each of the factors outlined in the star diagram above has, and indeed depending on whether one looks at it from a decolonial, class-based or feminist angle, one might argue that one or the other kind of exclusion is more determinant. This dilemma is not new. Looking at the debates that marked the early 'Kinderläden' in Berlin after 1968 (Binger 2018: 108-109, 160-161), there was much disagreement about what was then called *primary* versus *secondary contradictions*, anti-authoritarian pedagogy versus education that involves the working classes, in this case. With Ezquerra and Padilla, we may say that these heavily ideological debates failed to see a 'modulatory' resolution whereby contradictions could be fluidly and openly navigated and articulated (Ezquerra & Padilla 2017). This is not the case with the childcare groups of Poble Sec, which set out from a social praxis that is less centered on ideology and identity and more on subjectivity and composition (cf. Guattari & Rolnik 2006), on commoning as fluid and embodied practice of transformation. It is not rigid principles or roles that underpin them, but situational ethics and ways of relating. In the contemporary context, it is clear that an intersectional analysis will not yield a clear hierarchy of oppressions. Rather, it invites us to try to understand singular trajectories and composite conditions in view of complex pathways of decision-making and becoming. These are shaped by biopolitical, biographical, social and coincidental factors alike.

Economic accessibility for instance, as relating to class, is often taken to be the key problem with these projects –see the analysis of Raquel Gallego above– and indeed it plays a big role. With monthly rates ranging from about 200-400€ for less than full-time care (usually from 8.30/9am until 3pm), these projects are expensive for the majority of inhabitants of Poble Sec, where the median income in 2016-17 was approximately 1100€ a month per person (Institut d'Estadistica Catalunya 2018). Moreover, more so than in public nurseries, their hours require that there be a parent available in the afternoons, as well as for assemblies and commissions. The economic aspect should not be overrated, as Christel Keller Garganté points out on the basis of her study of Barcelona's grupos de crianza compartida:

> any option in childcare costs us this much money or more, but it's above all the family's availability of time for participating in the self-organization, and the belonging to these networks is what in the end is to do with the social mix, that's to say, if there are groups of white folks [blanquitas] that's because more racialized people aren't in contact with these networks, which end up being the ones that generate the projects (Zechner et al.. 2018; my translation from Spanish).

In this view, the main social composition of the grupos de crianza compartida is limited from the outset, being determined by cultural-educational background rather than by specific fees or hours necessarily. It is as much a cultural issue as an economic one –not in the sense of supposed minorities not being able to 'integrate' into the grupos de crianza compartida but rather in the sense of the subcultural networks that bring forth the grupos being somewhat self-enclosed and possibly also self-referential. This points to a real dilemma for thinking the inclusivity or diversity of commons initiatives, if we start out from the idea that commons always come with community, and as such always entail strong sociality and shared cultural codes. The key question here is, however, if commons always begin from shared cultural codes or if, in beginning from shared needs, they can sometimes also create new cultural codes between diverse actors. This could be a potential strength of both resource and reproductive commons, if they set out from given communities but they entail processes of composition –as Kioupkiolis (*Report 2. The Common*: 45-47) points out, commons and community need not refer to closed, self-referential entities (via ideas of nation, race, nature, and so on).

In applying a decolonial and class analysis of the grupos de crianza compartida, the forms of employment of educators also reflect mainstream racial and class-based inequalities. In Poble Sec's groups, many of the educators are Latin American, and often their roles are more adjunct and rotational than those of their Spanish or European colleagues due to problems with papers and precarity. More generally, however, most grupos de crianza compartida are not able to offer secure employment with workers' rights. Carers -almost exclusively women- either work informally or are contracted as self-employed workers, and wages range from being miserable,

particularly as projects start up or when children drop out, to decent, in more stable projects and moments).

6.6.3. Feminist analyses of childcare commoning

Finally, from a gender perspective, as Keller-Garganté points out, we can 'question the capacity of the grupos de crianza compartida to redistribute the work of care' (Zechner et al. 2018), because the vast majority of work within them is done by women. From a feminist viewpoint, this can lead to different assessments. As Ezquerra and Mansilla point out, 'We are living a moment of indetermination and transit between familialism, (neo)subservience, social handouts [asistencialismo] and precarized professionalization' (Vega Solis 2009: abstract), which makes multi-layered and open analyses necessary.

On the one hand, joining a grupo de crianza compartida can be seen as a step in the mutual empowerment of women, who reject being bound to the house and gather to socialize their work, in the sense that Federici describes in relation to many cases of women's commoning in Latin America and Africa:

> historically and in our time, women have depended more than men on access to communal resources and have been most committed to their defense.… Women have also led the effort to collectivize reproductive labor both as a means to economize on the cost of reproduction and to protect each other from poverty, state violence and the violence of individual men (Federici 2013).

This analysis is also pertinent to the childcare groups in so far as they strive to enable temporalities and divisions of care that escape the brutality of the Spanish 4-month state maternity leaves. The irony in the grupos de crianza compartida is that while participant mothers can find this mutual support, the mostly female educators do not have any paid maternity leave at all if they work without contract, and thus they cannot access this support network in the same way.

An affirmation of women's collectivizing care, as in Federici, posits that the possibility of change lies in the production of other ties, linkages and common force. The 'vínculo' that Pepi Dominguez speaks about is part of a claim to subvert social structures at large, and to build collective power, rather than to dwell on achieving freedoms and privileges within the given heteropatriachal and capitalist system. In order to overcome segregations along the lines of class, race and gender, what matters is collective strength and transversal struggle, in this view. Whether childcare groups are indeed emancipatory would thus depend on whether they pursue forms of connection and struggle that look outwards, beyond their immediate self-interest, to build solidarities. In this sense, in the terms of Joan Tronto, they also engage caring-with, the fifth dimension of care (Tronto 2009a). Some groups in Poble Sec do that more than others, but the claim is there in most.

On the other hand, from a perspective more akin to feminisms of equality, such women-driven childcare commons reproduce the divisions of labor that feminists

have long sought to overcome. As long as men do not engage in them on an equal footing, they will fail to produce profound change of gender roles and subjectivities. This view remains idealistic and ideological in the sense that it fails to see and value the steps in a process of emancipation, rather projecting all-encompassing change, which, without a step-by-step transformation of relations and subjectivities, can however only be imposed vertically. As limited as they may be in this aspect, the grupos de crianza compartida do function as experimental sites for the involvement and re-subjectivation of men as carers, since they do constantly interpellate and involve male subjects as equals. Fathers are part of the whatsapp groups, the cooking and cleaning commissions, the assemblies. They are not as active as the mothers, which is a problem, but they are learning: a set of skills, knowledges and sensitivities traditionally passed on to women. As the parent-activist Javier Rodrigo says (Zechner at al. 2018), the grupos de crianza compartida are 'democratic schools for the parents.' Particularly so for fathers.

6.6.4. Initial conclusions

By and large, we can say that the grupos de crianza compartida manage to effect real change in the forms of relation that permeate society, particularly when it comes to collective organization, democratic engagement, gender relations, local community –it is not just children who learn sharing and caring. These groups are pedagogical spaces in a very expanded sense. In this way, the potential of the grupos de crianza compartida lies in micropolitics. They transform (some) relations but they largely remain unable to subvert larger economic and political dynamics. They mostly do not overcome social and cultural segregations, rent prices, migration laws, social security regulations, wage hierarchies and so forth, hence these inequalities come to be reproduced.

Accepting this partial transformative power as a challenge rather than defeat means positing commons and commoning not as a utopian sphere or activity but rather as ongoing material-embodied struggles that require us to 'stay with the trouble' (Haraway 2016). Silvia Federici points out that in a lot of cases, we mostly do not care as we would like to (Federici 2018). Indeed, there are some major fallacies when we speak about choice and childcare. Terms like 'option,' 'decision' and 'choice' allude to a level of autonomy and voluntarism that might not truthfully represent how people go about finding childcare, how they negotiate life and work. As Camille Barbagallo (2016b) points out in her study on the feminist and neoliberal constructions of discourses of 'choice' around childcare and childrearing, constraints and desires are tightly entangled in the search for viable options in childrearing and childcare, and for many parents the 'ideal' option never comes to materialize. Moreover, 'while choice is central to feminist politics, it is via the discourse of choice that neoliberalism enters the domestic sphere and reorganises the practices and processes of reproduction and the subjectivity of motherhood' (Barbagallo 2016b: 1).

The discourse of choice can alienate and produce culpability in women, narrowing the horizon of possibilities to some seemingly legitimate options, while disabling other affirmative pathways. The discourse of choice always makes reference to the market, in such a way that public nurseries are not seen as matters of choice. Commons-based initiatives in this sense can come to be seen and represented as spaces of hyper-choice. Javier Rodrigo: 'Almost all of us who build the grupos de crianza compartida are middle class, white subjects (and we have to say that), we are the great convinced ones' (Zechner et al. 2018; my translation from Spanish). This relation between choice, privilege and public provision is a complex one, and it takes new policy paradigms to address them. This leads us to the commons-inspired politics of Barcelona en Comú, which governed the city of Barcelona during the time of this study.

This section explores some of the affinities and politics of Barcelona en Comú with childcare as a social and economic phenomenon: an issue that in many ways lies at the core of the municipalist feminist politics and has been approached by it in a series of ways. In looking at the potentials and complications of progressive municipal policy on childcare commons, I narrate some of the dynamics between the grupos de crianza in Poble Sec and the organs of the municipality here. This leads us further towards the question of the micropolitics of municipalism, the subject of the second part of this report, where care and reproduction emerge as key vectors for thinking progressive politics and sustainable ways of inhabiting institutions. This chapter thus seeks to contribute towards an understanding of feminist politics of care within, around and beyond the institutions, pointing out some of the tensions and strategies that emerged around childcare and municipalism between 2017-20 in Barcelona.

6.7. Childcare commons in Barcelona en Comú's municipalist policy

6.7.1. Municipal support for childcare commons initiatives?

Where do we locate the grupos de crianza compartida, across the spectrum of public-commons-private? And how, if at all, should these initiatives feature in municipal policy? Carolina López, the local Barcelona en Comú councilor of Poble Sec, affirms that the commons-based route via the Solidarity Economy section (part of the municipal department of 'Economy, Competitiveness and Housing') of the city administration is the only viable way to include the *grupos de crianza compartida* in municipal policy-making, since the Education department is fiercely opposed to the groups being included and funded in its area. The struggle around policies of the commons as regarding childcare happens between three major areas of municipal politics: 'The ongoing debate is basically, as I already said, about a confrontation between Education and Economy, but then comes a moment where Feminisms also come into the debate' (Zechner et al.. 2018,; my translation from Spanish).

López recounts a certain tragedy of policy commons in the way the childcare groups end up being caught in a field of tension between different policy areas, narrating herself as defender of these groups who fought hard to have them included in the electoral program in 2014 and now finds herself very frustrated and blocked. She tells of a path that leads from the Education to the Economics and Feminisms departments:

> When Education comes into play and tells us that they won't support, under no circumstances, the grupos de crianza compartida, …we decide to talk to Economy because that's the cooperatives, it's the community economy [economía comunitaria], it's the economy of care, it's feminism and economic feminism. So we thought to take it from the viewpoint of furthering cooperatives, of promoting the associative culture [associacionismo] around this issue, and we made a lot of headway because in Economy we are putting all our possible efforts into creating cooperatives and into creating community economies [economía comunitaria]…. Feminisms also stop us and say that we can't do anything whatsoever until we have clarity about what can be done, something that again stalls the processes (Zechner et al. 2018; my translation from Spanish).

For the education department, the grupos de crianza compartida are a threat to the public system, looking too much like private initiatives. For feminists they are too marked by traditional gendered divisions of labor, as in traditional patriarchal families, not to mention their problem of almost-exclusive 'whiteness.' The grupos de crianza compartida, despite collectivizing and socializing care, are associated with the private sphere and private initiatives, and as such treated with caution by public institutions and even Barcelona en Comú. Correspondingly, they end up in the 'economy' category. López sees the social and solidarity economies, and particularly the 'urban commons' policy pilots of the City of Barcelona as the most feasible way to recognize and support the grupos de crianza compartida, and emphasizes the importance of having a single interlocutor like the PEPI in order to liaise between the groups and the public institutions (notably the district).

> Another one of the reasons for which we needed an interlocutor is that there is a whole series of programs, amongst them the subsidies of 'Impulsem', the program of 'Urban Commons', which precisely try to render this kind of community action [acción comunitaria] visible. We started with urban gardens, but people are thinking about other [projects] and this [crianza comunitaria] should be one of the issues that the Urban Commons completes. What happens when we can make an 'Urban Commons' or get some subsidies from the City? It can't then be about the tension between the public and the private. Out of all the private associations, how would I favor this particular one or this particular type? By creating a larger platform, creating a project that directly brings returns to the neighborhood (Zechner et al. 2018; my translation from Spanish).

Thus, towards the end of the first mandate of Barcelona en Comú, a broad conversation was started and first organizational steps as well as negotiations were on the way, but no concrete policy progress had been made regarding the grupos de crianza compartida. At the level of Poble Sec, negotiations between the PEPI and the district seemed to have collapsed, due to a series of problems and incompatibilities, at the symptomatic base of which is the difficult scheduling and re-scheduling of meetings with district councilors and staff. The PEPI finds itself somewhat frustrated by the negotiations with neighborhood and district councilors of Barcelona en Comú, the councilors in turn are frustrated by internal resistance within the party, etc. At the level of the city, a research paper on the grupos de crianza compartida had been commissioned –a key step for drawing up policy– but the paper remained yet unpublished by the end of the legislature in 2019. What happened and will happen with this study remains unclear, as one of the authors (Christel Keller Garganté) mentions.

This already brings us deep into the micropolitics of municipalism, the subject of the sister study in my research for Heteropolitics. The tensions between different departments and priorities is obviously a strong marker of new institutional openings, as we shall see further on. Beyond the somewhat predictable levels of institutional tension, what is remarkable about this situation is that a local councilor refers back to an event at a social center (La Base) that hosted a radical feminist thinker (Silvia Federici) and led to a broad intersectional debate about the politics of care in the neighborhood. Councilor López remembers how a widely attended event with Silvia Federici in 2014 was key for spurring a critical debate on how the feminisms and care commons can escape being 'white ghettos.' López says this was also a key concern for her as regarding the grupos de crianza compartida. Hence, she initially proposed that the municipality offers funding for some families, an option that was however discarded.

That councilors, activists and families share the same reference points for political debate is characteristic of the 2015-19 mandate of Barcelona en Comú: it concerns another key aspect of the micropolitics of municipalism in this time and place. Indeed, this example shows not just the inextricable connections between movements, parties and institutions, but also those of theory and practice, in this kind of politics of the commons. Feminist thinkers and historians like Silvia Federici or Raquel Gutiérrez Aguilar have been ongoing referents for social movements in Barcelona and Spain, being part of workshops and debates organized by activist groups, sharing examples and experiences of reproductive and care commons, and dialoguing on the local situation and challenges. The theoretical frameworks provided by these kinds of figures -whose ways of inhabiting and embodying critical thought, as well as carrying and translating experiences across contexts are in themselves radical practices– are key to the grupos de crianza compartida in that many families and carers are familiar with them and share their radical claims.

Similar kinds of figures –thinker-activists like Naomi Klein, Susan George, Raquel Rolnik, to mention but a few women– are key 'acompañantes' or companions of Barcelona en Comú. Unlike most political parties, they do not refer to male historical figures as stable and static referents, but to lively actors who are also interlocutors, and often women. Across the movements, neighborhoods, new municipalist platforms and institutional actors, the period in question saw an incessant, multifaceted and complex back and forth between practice and thought. The grupos de crianza compartida would not have developed the same way without it.

6.7.2. On the right to play in the city: Barcelona en Comú and childcare commons

One current that runs across and beyond the debate of tensions between the public and the commons, promoted by the city government of Barcelona en Comú, is the concept of the 'playable city' ('Ciutat Jugable') (Ayuntamiento de Barcelona 2018a) and of increasing the rights of children to inhabit public space. Inspired by the ideas of Francesco Tonucci, influential pedagogue and thinker, this policy basically consists in valorizing the democratizing force of children in public space, and it promotes a vision of the city wherein all space must be safe and accessible, rather than just featuring fenced-off public spaces for children. This perspective combines urban planning and pedagogy, drawing on studies that show that the presence of children in public space strengthens neighborhood bonds, making people relate, communicate and rely on one another more. The 'Ciutat Jugable' policy transcends the commons/state binary by proposing public measures for enabling spaces of commoning (safe and accessible spaces for free play and association). As Tonucci put it in a colloquium on Children's rights in Barcelona:

> If we see children moving alone in a city, this means that the city is healthy. The children gift the city with security, a security that the city by itself cannot achieve, because in a neighborhood where kids move, the children oblige the adults that live there to take care [hacerse cargo] (Tonucci and Institut de la Infancia 2016, at approx at 3'20sec; my translation from Spanish).

Lucía Zandigiacomi from the Urban Planner's Cooperative 'Raons Públiques' in Poble Sec has been involved in workshops that contributed to drafting the policy (Zandigiacomi 2018). She points to a possible policy shift from 'public' to 'community' spaces:

> There are studies that say that if there are kids playing in the streets then neighborhoods are more thriving, the life and health of the community that lives in the neighborhood is better, the relations between neighbors are better. This is a bid to create unity in public space. I think on a first reflection we could exchange this idea of 'making a public space/making a space public' for 'communitarian space,' as a place of encounter (Zechner et al. 2018; my translation from Spanish).

The notions of the public and the commons, or the public and the community-based, often flow somewhat into one another in the Spanish and Latin American context (Vega Solis, Martínez Buján and Paredes Chaua, 2018). Barcelona en Comú tries to contribute to making these spheres more interconnected and fluid, without however confounding them or making them interchangeable. As Laia Forné Aguirre, participation adviser at the city hall, puts it in 2019 just before the municipal elections:

> One of the challenges of municipalism is to build a new form of public institution that is based on trust and commitment between the institution and citizens, for the development of a framework of *public-communitarian* collaboration. A collaboration that maintains and respects the autonomy of communities while at the same time guaranteeing the public function of resources via criteria of access, sustainability, social returns, territorial rootedness and democratic governance of common goods (Forné Aguirre 2019; my translation from Catalan).

We can see how the new municipalist politics of Barcelona en Comú –perhaps more so than some theories on the subject imagine– practically, tactically and strategically articulates politics of the commons within public frameworks, in ways that do not merely promote islands of commoning but aim to broadly transform the city and its modes of relation and inhabitation. As city councilor Laia Ortiz put it in 2019, speaking of the 'Playable city' policy: 'Playing is a fundamental right, as important for the development of children as the right to housing and the right to food –to prioritize play also makes the city more safe and calm' (Ortíz 2019; my translation from Spanish)

Regarding childhood and commons, Barcelona en Comú seeks to avoid an adulto-centric approach that sees children as objects of policy or education, rather positioning them –alongside youth– as key actors in the city. Ada Colau tasked 1300 children with redesigning the municipal Zoo (Redacción La Vanguardia 2019), routinely animates children to make their voice heard (Europapress 2019) and insisted in her 2019 electoral campaign that '…children are a great opportunity for our city, they are our great allies, they are agents of change…and they are the ones who literally have to be the protagonists of the future Barcelona' (Colau 2019, at 18'; my translation from Spanish) These quotes and cases, amongst many others, illustrate that the commons-focused municipalism of Barcelona en Comú envisages redefinitions of agency and political subjecthood and an opening of the horizon of the commons, which does not merely defend minority interests, as conservative critics would often have it, referring to Colau's and BComú's background in activism, nor indeed counterpose itself to the public.

This political approach does not treat commons-based experiments as separate from the question of whether the (municipal, regional or central) state should invest more in public nurseries. Yet the question of whether –or in fact rather 'how' – the

municipality should seek to include and fund self-organized childcare spaces as a commons-public offer, remains undecided in 2019. This requires an in-depth, transversal and situated debate to approach some key questions regarding the value and role of commons:

> The question is: these childcare spaces that have communitarian values, in which families invest a lot of time, don't they have the added value that they can also strengthen the neighborhood networks? How much should we strengthen the 'Bressol' schools [municipal kindergardens]? Can they [Bressol schools] take on this task? Does a Bressol school have the capacity to do community work [trabajo comunitario], to receive families in the way a smaller childcare group can? Would that be the adequate role for a Bressol school? (Zechner et al. 2018; my translation from Spanish).

In raising these difficult questions, Lucia Zandigiacomi, as mother and urban planner in Poble Sec, asks 'whether if we only foster what is public, then maybe we are losing out on some aspects of in which these networks of care can support and give returns to the neighborhoods' (Zechner et al. 2018; my translation from Spanish). The debate is open.[37] There are many concrete challenges for what we may see as municipal policies of the commons, or public-commons partnerships, since this is an incipient field that requires much experimentation, research, pilot alliances and so forth. It requires a strong neighborhood fabric of parents, neighbors and associations as well as an open and generous public administration that allows for permeability of public institutions. It also takes public workers like Pepi Dominguez who are up to the task of creating and sustaining community, and social movements that keep the debates and struggles around the commons alive. The conditions for such a collective effort of redefining what is public and common were largely given in Barcelona and Poble Sec at the time of this study, coinciding with the 2014-19 mandate of Barcelona en Comú.

This is no doubt a privileged historical moment from which many lessons and developments will continue to be drawn. In the case of childcare commons, it will take Bcomú's second mandate to bring the above cited proposals and debates to full fruition, through the development of adequate methodologies and criteria. A continuous point of orientation for childcare commons are the policy pilots around of 'urban commons and citizen heritage' (Castro 2018, Ayuntamiento de Barcelona 2017b and 2017c). Javier Rodrigo cannot see any reasons why these models should not be expanded towards childcare:

> The city of Barcelona, to put it simply, promotes that there are long-term agreements with organizations to which it grants the use of an infrastructure. The *Ateneu Nou Barris* is the most well-known: 40 years of infrastructure as what they called a 'factory of creativity/creation,' with a budget of 1 million

[37] As a note towards the micropolitics of municipalism, we may say that these questions (which appear as contradictions and dilemmas sometimes) become concrete through the process of making practice and policy.

> Euros and 26 people employed via an association….*Can Batlló* is [an example of] another kind of community-based management [gestión comunitaria], in this case as the infrastructure of factory halls with an assembly-based management, and the resources and support of two specialists of the municipality that help with their tricks [hacer chapuzillas]. The question is: Why can this model not be applied to a model of childcare when there are already these other models? The city of Barcelona has some 50 neighborhood community centers and play spaces, out of which 80% are managed by the citizens: it's not such a rare thing. The problem is that when we talk about education, we're very quick to generate a binary between the private and the public (Zechner et al. 2018; my translation from Spanish).

It is the activists and parents themselves who are pushing for change and new policies concerning early childhood, and it is often them –still close enough to Barcelona en Comú after many of them have participated very actively in drawing up their electoral program in 2015– who expect a municipal government with a claim to the commons to innovate, and fast. There is sometimes a clash between the temporalities of human reproduction and care, those of neighborhood organizing and community formation, and those of institutions. Here again a rhythmic-temporal and generational gaze is crucial. A child goes through very different phases and needs in its first years of life; a rent contract runs between 3-5 years in Barcelona; a legislature lasts 4 years, etc. The families who pioneered radical collective childcare infrastructures after 2011 are now organizing around primary schools. The parents who forged and furthered the political-institutional debate during the 2014-19 mandate of Barcelona en Comú are now moving on into other phases. Many are forced to move out of Poble Sec due to rising rents etc. There is a challenge for the transgenerational transmission of childcare commons and their practical knowledges, which require structures like the PEPI as well as continuous spaces like those of the actual grupos de crianza compartida.

6.8. More provisory conclusions: learning with and from commons

A lot of work remains to be done on highlighting and analyzing the generational aspects of commons. This task will be largely up to feminists as well as facilitators, activists and scholars who concern themselves with micropolitics. David Vercauteren, together with Thierry Müller and Olivier Crabbé, published a book of micropolitical accounts, memories and concepts in 2007, in which they call for 'a culture of precedents,' asking:

> What can have happened so that in our collectivities, the knowledges that could have constituted a culture of precedents, are so minimally present? …what could happen if we nonetheless paid attention to the knowledges that make the successes, inventions and failures of groups? (Vercauteren, Mueller & Crabbé 2007: 7; my translation from French)

The importance of producing 'cultures of precedents' (Vercauteren, Mueller & Crabbé 2007), 'common culture' (Stengers & Gutwirth 2016 : 27), 'écoliteracy' (Capra & Mattei 2015) or 'the stories we need to tell' (Starhawk 2017) has been variously affirmed in relation to social movements and commons. The passing-on of organizational knowledges as well as stories happens through recursive processes, rather than in a linear way, and indeed, often in a subterranean, off-stage way. Regarding memory and consciousness, Stengers and Gutwirth point out a specificity in self-organizational commons:

> But speaking of commons today means to also speak of an eradication that isn't just juridical. …And, so, the commons have to be protected not just against a milieu that will exploit any occasion to destroy them, but also in order to allow them to effectively learn what their existence in the long term requires (after the first enthusiasm) (Stengers & Gutwirth 2016: 23-24; my translation from French).

The problem of resurgence is to no minor degree a generational, relational and pedagogical problem. Childcare commons, as care commons, are particularly vulnerable because of the intense and rapid processes of becoming, needs and dependency they encompass. In the increasing absence of extended family and community networks, intergenerational knowledge transmission becomes complicated.

If we see childcare as both a resistant *and* a resurgent commons (see above), as both universal and singular, then *both* the public and commons-based provision for it must be defended, with view to their mutual influence and an ongoing public debate. The knowledges and practices as well as the ties and networks that stem from the grupos de crianza compartida must spill over into the public system –parents introducing assemblies to primary schools, for instance, as is the case in some experimental new primary schools in Barcelona. Conversely, the public model can provide a perspective from which to challenge and question the grupos de crianza compartida to democratize and render accessible their practices. Both the public and commons models are limited in what they can do. Bringing their singularity and universalism into play with one another, other modes of (self-)governance come to be invented.

The history of cooperativism in Catalunya is one place of memory that counts in this respect, even if it is from a long past historical and political moment. But, also, more recently, as Javier Rodrigo affirms,

> In the 70s, Catalan society self-organized, made cooperatives of teaching/education [ensenyament], already went ahead of the state, made consumer and workers cooperatives.…Historically I think one would have to very much refer to the idea that a lot of cooperatives of ensenyament continued, others became public and others lived other kinds of relations or future paths (Zechner et al. 2018; my translation from Spanish).

Again, the 1970s are a reference for experiments in childcare commoning and democratic education, this time primarily inscribed in cooperativist movements, yet partaking in the second wave of feminist liberation struggles. We begin to intuit waves of struggles around reproductive and care commons, which unsurprisingly coincide with different crises in the capitalist system. Whilst there is no scope for me to develop these historical parallels further, I want to point also to the international and transhistorical, recurrent character of struggles around childcare and education commons. Drawing these kinds of lessons and parallels is why I am writing these pages after all, in order to facilitate transversal and translocal learning from the experiences, dynamics, configurations and strategies described here.

What childcare commoning can teach us -like any commoning around care- is a powerful way of sustaining and transforming bodies, subjectivities and communities. The embodied and relational nature of care is something we cannot, and must not, ignore, as Joan Tronto shows us, for it is at this level that the strongest transformations in our ways of thinking, inhabiting and relating occur. Commoning is thus not least a bodily and subjective process that resituates and repositions us in relation to other people, places and forms of life. Childcare commoning allows us to question and avert alienated modes of schooling, parenthood, local life and masculinity, amongst other things. Collective childcare groups are schools of interdependence, that enable us to value vulnerability and put a feminist politics of care into practice. This politics does not accept categorical divisions between small-p and capital-P politics. We see this in the strategies and struggles of Barcelona en Comú, characterized by an obstinate refusal to belittle care and to uphold traditional masculinist discourse. The new wave of feminism on which its municipalist policies of care are based sets out to shake and rebuild the foundations of societies ravaged by neoliberalism, where social ties have been widely alienated and care has been outsourced and privatized, once again on the back of women.

What does a politics of care at an organizational and institutional level look like, and what is the role of childcare therein? We have shown why childcare must not be considered as a realm that belongs to the private, but rather as a domain of commoning with strong ties to the public and powerful political potentials. We have seen that in order to properly accommodate care, not just as caring-about but also as care as labor and practice, commons need to have the capacity to go slow, to take into account bodies and rhythms that depart from the ideals of independence and productivity. And we have seen that not only do commons need care, but also that care benefits greatly from being thought through commons, since it often exceeds both the private and public in the ways in which it instantiates relations, trust and commitment.

This does not mean that access to care should not be a universal right: commons work best when everyone is equal, and public systems are their natural allies. Far from being neither left nor right, the fact that commons are neither state nor market means that they are a singular approach to building justice, equality and wellbeing for all.

These principles do not underpin the capitalist economy, yet they do underpin democratic and welfare states. In this as well as in the following chapter, we find some inspiring articulations of commons with public institutions and municipal democratic structures. The micropolitics of commons are not in contradiction to the macropolitics of institutions and the public. We shall see that there if these domains of politics -at the levels of bodies and communities, and at the level of institutions and democracy- appear as separate or even opposed, this is an effect of centuries of bad precedents but not by any means a necessity. Feminist perspectives are crucial to undoing those separations, as they have long advocated different ways of articulating care across the levels of the state, community and home. Let us now turn to the micropolitics of municipalism -at the heart of which is the politics of care- during the 2015-20 mandate of Barcelona en Comú.

For detailed materials, See Appendix A.

PART B

This report, the result of three years of research and more years of engagement with municipalism in Barcelona -and to some extent also the broader Spanish state- was written in a period of changing political climate. It aims to trace some of the collective and subjective processes that marked the emergence and first four years of 'new' municipalist politics in Barcelona and Spain, that is to say, the positionalities, tensions, learning processes and social reconfigurations that municipalism means. Its focus is micropolitics, as a way of speaking of the relations between movements and institutions from an embodied, relational and situated perspective. The institutional relation to movements is not a matter of morality or nostalgia, it is a vital strategic matter determining social and political processes and outcomes. My analysis, coinciding in this sense with the contexts municipalism emerged from, draws heavily on feminist and autonomist concepts and experiences, and it proposes the following argument: that municipalism must be seen within a broader political turn from a more pure politics of autonomy in social movements to an embracing of notions of heteronomy and interdependence as basis for political subjectivity and action. I thus try to understand what this means in terms of experiences, concepts and political practice, across the institutional and grassroots levels.

6.9. Micropolitics and the new Spanish municipalisms (2014-20)

6.9.1. Introduction

In 2014 in Spain -following the 15M movement of 2011 that demanded real democracy and an end to austerity and corruption- a wave of grassroots municipalist candidatures emerged and won elections in a considerable number of cities (see introduction and appendix B). This has implied vast changes for the political, social and urban landscape in Spain. The present text sets out to give account of a specific aspect and area of these changes, to trace learning processes and subjectivities within and across movements and institutions, as they emerge through a time as intense as that of Spanish municipalism between 2014-20. The interplay between autonomy and heteronomy plays a strong part in my analysis, not least as I trace the processes of alliance and differentiation that mark the different phases of subjectivation through municipalism.

I have tried to shed light on this complex question of learning and subjectivity formation by dwelling on experiences and lessons articulated from within institutions as well as within movements, focusing particularly on the labors and lives that connect them. One of the core expressions of intelligence of municipalisms during this time was the notion that learning must happen across these levels. The words of Malagueño social center activist and architect Kike Navarra –'The problems of representation are well known and detestable, so is the ingeniousness of certain forms of horizontal organization that leave many things out and sometimes look inward too

much' (Navarra 2019; my translation from Spanish)– thus resound with those of lawyer and politician Jaume Asens –'Social Movements have certain limits, institutions have others' (Barcelona en Comú 2016)– leading to a fruitful climate of reflection and reflexivity. In this dynamic, 'movement' and 'institution' are both seen as sites of struggle, constituting the poles of a potentially fruitful tension that can bring forth new political forms and practices.

In my research, I have found this notion of a productive tension to be accurate. The phase of municipalism I refer to is perhaps best described as a metastable socio-political climate that is very conducive to processes of living learning (Dokuzovic 2016). This understanding of different limitations does not imply equidistance, however, or a relativity or indeed universality of knowledge. It means to concede different sites of struggle with their specific lessons and limits, and to investigate common knowledge across those. My trajectory as researcher-activist has shown me this tension between different playing fields, rules and possibilities, as I went from experiences in different social movements to be an active participant in Bcomú from its beginnings in 2014 until 2017, in the local participatory as well as international aspects of the electoral campaign (see Zechner 2015; 2016a and 2016b, as well as Shea Baird & Roth 2017; 2017b, Delso & Zechner 2017), then into maternity and back to movements, whilst keeping in touch with Barcelona en Comú and reactivating my participation for the electoral campaign in 2019.

In focusing on the relation between movement and institutional dynamics and actors, this report seeks to address the key problem of

> how to prevent the reassertion of top-down rule and homogenization over and against egalitarianism, collective participation and open plurality boils down largely to the challenge of how to rein in centralizing, vertical and bureaucratic lines of force in the hubs of coordination, the centers of counter-hegemonic strategy, and the institutional interfaces of a heterogeneous network of actors toiling for a historical transition towards a commons-based world (*Report 1. The Political*: 246).

It is important to note, as I have already done in the introduction, that the idea of movement-institutions -later often termed 'institutions of the commons' (Radio Reina Sofia 2011)- underpinned the municipalist turn towards re-making institutions from below, based on the claim that institutions and cities could be for everyone: municipalism thus partly emerges out of an imaginary of grassroots institutions.

The Heteropolitics project set out to map out different ways in which this plays out across contexts and geographies. In the present case, focusing on Spain's new municipalisms of 2014-20 (particularly Barcelona), I follow the mixed lineage of autonomous and feminist movements and their instantiations of what we might at times identify as autonomous-feminist politics (as in the work of Raquel Gutiérrez Aguilar or Silvia Federici), as an ethics and politics of care within and beyond the institution (Pérez & Salvini-Ramas 2019, Tronto 1994), and as a feminization of

politics (Roth & Shea Baird 2017a; 2017b). In the many pages that follow, we will witness how these currents mix, mash and clash.

My report draws out tensions and new articulations between the politics of autonomy and heteronomy (see also Zechner 2011 and 2013). The autonomous movements come from affirming a strict distinction between movements and institutions, advocating movement institutions and the need for 'governing whilst obeying,' drawing on Zapatistas, Latin American progressive movement-government dynamics, autonomist-influenced thinkers such as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. Feminisms, which are key to municipalism, affirm care and heteronomy/interdependence as the basis for a new politics, from where new attitudes, practices and strategies of working within and across movements and institutions arise. I will identify three main strands here:

- The *autonomous feminist* approach, with protagonists such as Raquel Gutiérrez and Fundación de los Comunes, (tilting more towards feminism and autonomism respectively), advocates that the desirable relation between movements and institutions corresponds to the 'gobernar obedeciendo' approach, empowering movements over institutions. This posture has been learned from popular movements in Latin America, in their struggle for rights and autonomy. Gutiérrez, as a movement historian of sorts, analyses the Bolivian water wars, as well as different Latin American social movements' way of dealing and negotiating with progressive governments. Key documents here are Galindo and García-Linera (2014) and Lugano and Gutiérrez (2016). Autonomy here means autonomy from the state as purveyor of patriarchy, primarily.

- The approach of a *politics of care* within and across institutions as found in a new sensitivity to interdependence and an emphasis on listening –the 'gobernar escuchando' approach, embodied by Ada Colau in Barcelona, also found in different strands of institutional analysis (in the work of Fernand Deligny, Jean Oury, Félix Guattari, Franco Basaglia) and institutional care experiments such as those of Saint Anne and la Borde Asylums in France, Franco Basaglia's healthcare cooperativism in Trieste (Salvini 2018). This theory and practice are also rooted in care feminisms –which range from ethical approaches (Tronto 1994, Puig della Bellacasa 2017) to critical economic approaches (Perez Orozco 2014, Knittler 2016)– and posit a shared vulnerability and interdependence across movements and institutions as the starting point for politics. Autonomy here means autonomy from hegemonic meaning-making and subjectivity-production, found in a similar way in the autonomy of migrations (Papadopoulos, Stephenson & Tsianos 2008) approach.

- The '*feminization of politics*' is an approach towards changing political cultures within the institution and party based on the protagonism and inclusion of women, attempting to adapt feminist demands and practices to institutional

architectures, at times through a radical feminist politics of care, at times with a more liberal feminist 'glass ceiling' approach, empowering women as a way of addressing broader inequalities. This approach follows in the tracks of more liberal demands for inclusion, centered in identity, in so far as they generally posit female (or for instance black or poor people's) presence in the institution as motor of change, sometimes without addressing state power and systemic mechanisms. But it is also based in a politics of care, which emphasizes cultural rather than numerological shifts, and seeks to include women and care at all level of politics. Examples are the 'Canalla en Comú' childcare spaces of Barcelona en Comú, or Bcomú's internal gender analysis report (Institut Diversitas & Barcelona en Comú 2018), which seek to make political spaces more broadly inclusive.

We will follow multiple synergies and tensions across those three approaches, as well as some histories that inform them. Generally, I understand those as tendencies, not positionalities strictly speaking, as a person or group can adopt any of these approaches at different times. I would propose to map them out as strategic and tactical matters, of relevance and usefulness to movements, rather than matters of the correct line or ideology.

Autonomist movements in Spain had introduced the horizon of the commons via the notion and practice of a new type of social center as 'institutions of the commons,' a political practice and vision that initially inspired municipalism (radical councilors came from the Casa Invisible and Ateneu Candela social centers in Málaga and Terrassa respectively, for instance), but from which municipalist politics increasingly came to differ, turning from the principle of transversality to a more populist interpellation of the people as a unitary subject. Critiquing the fact that autonomist thought does not shine much light on progressive government, Alexandros Kioupkiolis says: 'Hardt and Negri's ''disjunctive conjunction,'' on the other hand, does not heed the need to contrive different forms of organization also for the more ''institutional'' actors or for those who exercise leadership functions (coordinating organs or 'general representative' bodies)' *(Report 1. The Political*: 247).

This certainly holds true of the Spanish autonomous movement's engagement with grassroots institutions as 'monster institutions' or 'institutions of the commons, which are concerned with the bottom-up crafting of forms of organization, positing social movements as principal actors. The same movements have, however, set up platforms and fora for connecting and articulating those institutions -social centers, occupied spaces, cooperatives- with municipalist politicians and platforms, via the MAC encounters or the Instituto DM (Democracia y Municipalismo), for instance. There was indeed an autonomist strategy for influencing and checking municipalism in these encounters and networks, providing a counterweight and indeed counterpower (the 'C' in the MAC acronym) so that municipalist governments could obey to the people: a mission that could only be possible if there were strong social movements, this much was clear to all.

In the following pages we will thus trace some of the ways in which the relation between movements and institutions unfolded, identifying some of the important factors that shaped this relation, and narrating some breaking points therein, in accounts both personal and collective. At the discursive level, this includes the shift away from the more transversal narratives of the 2014/15 electoral campaigns, which stemmed directly from movements (the translation of Bcomú's initial electoral flyers into a dozen minor and major languages is a playful example of this bursting-open of the political space of signification and subjectivity),[38] towards more unifying populist interpellations of neighbors, citizens or people. We witness a shift from multitudinous enunciation, where movements essentially interpellate and reference themselves as a subject that can infinitely grow and include, towards a more centralized enunciation coming from the party or institution, who interpellate an outside, and a specific one at that. For, as in ancient Greek democracy, 'citizens' today does not mean everybody, it means those with rights. This is perhaps an inevitable consequence of the key dynamics of professionalization and institutionalization that come with inhabiting highly formalized spaces and processes. All this means that the communication and relation between movements and institutions becomes a crucial site for politics, indeed its determining factor. The neighborhood is a crucial dimension of this relation. As we have seen in relation to childcare (in the final section of the childcare report), neighborhoods are powerful sites of commoning as well as struggle, and as such key political interlocutors, in Barcelona.

All of the above entailed vast learning processes and processes of new knowledge productions, many of them singular articulations of situated and tactical, sometimes strategic knowing. The learning processes at stake involved personal experiences and the reconfiguring of relations as well as getting to know institutional politics as a playing field with very different limits from those of social movements: official roles, competences, processes and the media played key parts in this new field, as we shall see below. Naive notions of institutional politics -as all powerful, internally unified, and so on- showed themselves to be untrue, as both movements and municipalists needed to adapt to the new complexity revealed by the 'institutional takeover.' I try to emphasize this aspect of learning in order to avoid giving the impression of closure, or determinism. Telling of this phase of municipalism is to tell of experimentation and invention. This is an account in time, not just because it maps out chronological phases and moments but also because it is marked by its moment of writing, 2020, and the learning that has been done by then.

In a text of December 2019, ex-councilor Gala Pin expresses the same concern that drives my research, though people like her have another task of narrating institutional municipalism from within. 'I'm worried … that we don't politically, humanly and philosophically reflect on what the step into the institutions, as well as the experiences

[38] They were translated into Catalan, Chinese, Guaraní, Romanian, Portuguese, Esperanto, Persian, Italian, Urdú, Greek, German, Finnish, English, Arabic, Turkish, Ucrainian, Russian, Berber and French.

of power of some political formations (mine, the electoral commons formations [els comuns], but also Syriza, the CUPs [nodes of the radical left independentist party], the governments of Latin America…) meant, because I think that in this reflection we could find some tools for intervening in the current context' (Pin 2019b; my translation from Catalan).

The questions of 'what learning? Learning how?' run through all the pages of my work here, as I try to grapple with how knowledge is produced -from my situated position, one with a certain level of inside knowledge but also more than one foot outside the municipalist political projects. It is not always easy to see how and what knowledge is produced, and it is often easy to mistake a repetition of facts for a production of knowledge. While learning also implies reading and revisiting, I am particularly interested in the kind of knowledge that is not already out there, that has not already been digested and absorbed. The kind of knowledge that sits at the tip of our lips for months and even years on end sometimes, which produces subjectivity, rather than producing facts or data. This kind of learning is uneasy, confusing, uncomfortable, and bears no absolute truths. In this view, subjectivity and action are constantly co-produced. As Neera Singh points out: '…contrary to the expectation that actions follow beliefs, actions –such as participating in the governing of the environment– often lead to new beliefs and, thus, new subjectivities' (Singh 2003: 190). The same applies to governing at the level of political institutions. So, how do we understand the differences this experience of governing makes?

One crucial aspect of this learning concerns the imaginaries of power that inform politics. There has been a major shift in understanding power, since municipalism rose to power. Rising to power, just like taking power, sounds like a relatively simple matter, of having a lot of decision-making capacities conferred upon -at an early stage of municipalism, during the electoral campaigns particularly, this was the imaginary of many. 'If we have the capacity to imagine another city, we have the power to change it' was Barcelona en Comú's slogan. The reality soon showed a complex set of functions, limitations and rules that made power all but a simple thing to 'have.' In many instances, such as housing or healthcare, cities turned out to have neither great legislative nor budgetary power, since those depended on the autonomic government of Catalunya and the Spanish state. In organizational terms too, it turned out that decisions needed not just to be taken, but also to be induced, processed and conveyed. Participatory process, in particular, turned out to be something far more complex and twisted within given institutional architectures than social movements had initially imagined.

For those inside as well as outside of municipalism, modes of relating to power often changed, and with them tactics and strategies. In the face of limited competences, cities like Barcelona turned to the invention of local schemes and dispositifs that operated as social as well as political machines, from housing or migrants' cooperatives to neighborhood-run cultural centers, in a myriad of experiments of situated participatory local politics. Those implied genuine experimentation, risk-

taking and learning on the side of both the city administration and social as well as neighborhood movements, negotiating cooperation, limits, opposition, critique and visibility in new ways. Barely anyone of the agents in the generations of municipalism had an experience of this kind of political shift. But what many did have is a sensitivity to 'institutional analysis' in the sense of Félix Guattari, concerning

> a domain that was neither that of institutional therapy, nor institutional pedagogy, nor of the struggle for social emancipation, but which invoked an analytic method that could traverse these multiple fields (from which came the theme 'transversality') (Guattari 1996: 127).

The way in which this expressed itself most succinctly in Barcelona en Comú is around debates on gender and care. In 2017, the party tasked Instituto Diversitas with doing a study of gender dynamics, matters of care and inequality within the organization, a document of 112 pages that shows a deep concern for the creation of another kind of political culture. This is the most 'micropolitical' official document I have come across in my research, yet from interviews and fieldwork I know that despite the failure to create more formal and durable commissions for care and micropolitics, the very relations, forms of power, communication and care matter a great deal to municipalists. The account that follows is nourished by self-critical analyses and reflections of those who engaged more intensely with institutions as well as those around them. 'Institutional analysis,' for better or for worse, has mostly only these kinds of dispersed, dense kinds of documents to speak for it. Processual and analytical documents hidden in drawers or on hard discs that remain invisible to larger narratives and histories. Yet these labors matter, as multi-context, inter-disciplinary, open-ended analytical experiments for producing knowledge around institutions, from a viewpoint of movements, participants, users. They can allow for insights and, indeed, also a politics very different from those of an organization's leadership, party lines and strategic documents. It is this kind of knowledge that I have dug through in order to try to understand municipalism and its micropolitics.

6.9.2. What is micropolitics?

Connecting to the need to *remember* and *pass on* in social movements and commoning, we get to the term 'micropolitics,' a term coined by Félix Guattari, working in tandem with philosopher Gilles Deleuze and a host of collective and institutional arrangements, in the 1970s. *Micropolitics* in this context –one marked by ideological positions and mots d' ordre, at a turning point after 1968 and emerging postmodernity– was a way of referring to the politics that happens in groups, in relations, in institutional configurations and organizations. Drawing on a range of psychoanalytic and clinical approaches, micropolitics was developed by Guattari in close proximity to schizonalysis, as a conceptual toolkit inherently oriented to practice, both learning from experimental practice and aiming to feed into new practices.

In their book on the *Micropolitics of groups*, David Vercauteren, Thierry Mueller and Olivier Crabbé (2007) –drawing in their turn from experiences and elaborations as the Belgian 'collectif sans tiquets'– note the importance of social movements establishing and cherishing 'cultures of precedents:' ways of knowing, telling and passing on their experiences, stories, tactics, lessons, ways of doing. They note that activist cultures often pass and forget too quickly, drown out failure and evaluation in new activity. Concerned with ways of learning and remembering, they wrote a book of micropolitical concepts they found to operate in much collective work in social movements: *meeting, deciding, power, roles, silence, self-care, subsidies*…and so forth. In line with Guattari's thought, they aim to give account of a process and to develop new concept-tools for thinking social-political practice, in tune with the affects, (dis)encounters, needs, contradictions, hopes and horizons, and bodies it is carried and marked by. A way of looking at collective psychic and systemic processes without separating the 'subjective' from the 'objective.'

Cultures of precedents do not leave it up to historians to tell the story of collective experiments and trajectories, they oppose the distant knowledge and judgements that academics or journalists may produce about social movements. Rather, they draw on different figures within groups –just like Starhawk, the authors of the 'micropolitics of groups' elaborate on specific roles and group dynamics.

> Once upon a time, in groups, there lived a figure whose name varied between different territories. Here it was called 'the ancestor, there, 'the one who remembers,' even farther away 'the caller to memory'…Often inhabiting the periphery of a group, this person tirelessly told small and big stories. They were sometimes situations, sometimes '[slippery] slopes,' dangers into which the group had gotten, like many others before and around it, sometimes successes and inventions that had allowed for the gathering of collective forces. The ancient also transmitted pragmatic ways of building a common becoming (Vercauteren, Mueller & Crabbé 2007, 7; my translation from French).

The question of a common becoming is at the heart of my endeavor here, writing about processes of (child)care and municipalism in the Barcelona of 2015-20. Commons, rather than just matters of material resources or given identities, are matters of becoming: what is shared in commoning is not just relations, things or knowledges, but fundamentally also the production of subjectivities, as Guattari and Deleuze called it. This means that collective ways of inhabiting, knowing, moving, embodying, communicating and so forth are established, which make qualitative differences for politics, for how politic feels and moves, irreducible to quantifying sociological categories or anthropological descriptiveness. Commoning then is, as with the post-Heideggerians Esposito, Nancy or Agamben, a becoming-other and becoming-with-others rather than a starting from given identities or things (see *Report 2. The Common*: 44-47).

6.9.3. Why care about micropolitics?

My writing here thus starts out with recognizing the importance of recording, analyzing, discussing and transmitting 'ways of building a collective becoming,' and sets out from both my participation in and my reflections on municipalism's relation to grassroots practice. The questions of affect and care in collective organizing (Zechner 2013a; b), becoming and subjectivity in municipalism (Zechner 2016b) and on the city as horizon for radical democracy (Zechner 2015), particularly regarding migrations and citizenship (Zechner 2016a), are some of my key starting points here.

Much has been written in about recent Spanish municipalism, its genealogy, outlooks and policies (Rubio-Pueyo 2017, Izquierdo-Brichs forthcoming), in a myriad of disciplines and areas[39] and in English too: from urban dynamics (Charnok & Ribera-Fornaz 2018), looking towards macropolitical dimensions of party-formation and populism (Kioupkiolis 2019), techno-social configurations (Gerbaudo 2018, Toret Medina 2014), political ideologies and traditions (Ordoñez, Feenstra & Frank 2017), and so forth. Much of this writing attempts to trace contradictions, sometimes also networks and conflicts, in rarer cases also relations and affects, yet it often draws on research that is short term and non-embedded.[40] A research project that wants to address micropolitics and trace collective organizational processes from up close needs to engage the lived social and political dimension with its conflicts, commitments, interests, encounters, dynamics of trust, complicity, ambivalence, hope, fear, stress and becoming. Hence, I set out here not merely to interpret some materials but to draw a narrative and a sense out of a more widely collective lived process, as concerning the relation between social movements, parties and political and public institutions.

My micropolitical approach to commons can broadly be said to set out from what Kioupkiolis (*Report 2. The Common*, chapter 2.4) identifies as anti-capitalist commons theory, as seen in the works of Massimo De Angelis, Silvia Federici, George Caffentzis, etc., which emphasizes that change has to come from society. The micropolitical approach consists in emphasizing that change has to come on the basis of subjectivity, not of ideology (see Rolnik & Guattari 2006), meaning that it matters if and how actors in society inhabit, embody and practice change, not just whether they have 'consciousness' but also whether they find modes of subjectivity, and by extension culture, to make this change inhabitable and sustainable at the individual as well as collective level. Thus, with micropolitics we can say that change has to come not just from society, rather than the state or market for instance, but also from subjectivity as the singular and living modality of politics, rather than from ideology or rules merely. This view affirms commoning as a practice that must inevitably be

[39] As member of the international commission in Barcelona en Comú 2015-17, I witnessed just how many interview requests came in from PhD students and postdocs every week, the most common area of interest being housing probably. The publications emerging from these studies are now slowly appearing.

[40] In municipalist platforms themselves the predominant fly-in, fly-out aspect of academic research is often criticized for its proto-colonialism and extractivism.

experimental, open to change and transmutation, creating thus living systems that are metastable in the words of Gilbert Simondon. In this sense, I would posit that micropolitics is a vital part of all commoning, if by commoning we understand self-organizing and self-governing systems that function horizontally and deliberatively.

6.9.4. Research questions and hypotheses: municipalism and micropolitics

There were different sets of research questions that guided me along the way of this 3-year drifting exploration –indeed such temporalities allow for drifting (Precarias a la Deriva 2014) and snowballing not just to follow but also to establish and even consolidate some tracks, though participatory action or militant research (see the present report, section *Militant Research between Institutional Critique and Feminist Epistemologies*). One of this set of questions concerns the social, affective and relation shifts, dynamics and qualities that come with a shift from grassroots activist registers to political platforms or parties and furthermore to institutions. This continuum, circle or cycle, and the pathways between and across it, have been a key interest in my interviews and observations, preceded by a question of how people imagine this constellation.

There are series of discourses and imaginaries that operate across different moments and registers of speaking about municipalism. For example, positing a binary between movements and institutions, or a differentiation between movements, parties and institutions, or breaking things down further into movements, political platforms/organizations, parties, political institutions, public institutions and public spaces in a perhaps more cyclical or transversal vision, and so forth. I will attempt to follow up on some such imaginaries and discourses in a brief discursive analysis below, as they are key to understanding subjective engagements and attitudes around municipalism. Generally, my analysis of municipalism is informed by a (post-) Guattarian notion of micropolitics as well as Foucauldian notions of the microphysics of power. Subjectivity, subjectivation and power are key terms in both these currents (for a detailed analysis of differences in Guattari's and Foucault's notions of power and subjectivity, see Zechner 2010; 2013a).

The various diagrams, tropes, figures of speech, debates, gestures and practices I will be tracing throughout this writing correspond to rough viewpoints or dispositions in speaking and thinking about the political situation and municipalism, but they are flexible, open-ended, in progress, living processes. I will not try to settle on any truth in them but rather I am interested in understanding them as expressions and functions of municipalist imaginaries and stakes, in the same way Foucault speaks of the author-function, for instance. This means seeing imaginaries in terms of subjectivity (Zechner 2010), as contested and lively, rather than in terms of ideology and a search for the right model or truth. It also means situating imaginaries, discourses and strategies in the muddy and giddy terrain of the everyday, or relations and collective articulations. Micropolitical inquiry is about seeing and understanding the relations

and dynamics of becoming and power that operate in a given situation and context, in relation to other powers and processes.

This difference between subjectivity and ideology is the basic tenet of Guattari's concept of micropolitics, by which he means politics that obeys to dynamics that are not primarily ideological but relational, social, affective, ecological, and psychic. In Guattari's notion of micropolitics, which emerges at the margins of a poststructuralist turn, subjectivity, the psyche and desire play a key role. ' "Micropolitics" is the name Guattari gave to the strategies of desiring economies in the social field' (Rolnik 2007), the micropolitical level is 'precisely that of the production of subjectivity' (Guattari & Rolnik 2006: 78), and 'micropolitics, a molecular analysis that takes us from power structures to the investments of desire' (Guattari 2009: 222). In the context of international reappraisals of Guattari after the 2000s, in contexts of culture and activism particularly, the notion of micropolitics came to serve as a conceptual tool linked to a myriad of experiences, practices and stories of collective organization and struggle. As in *Micropolitiques des Groupes* (Vercauteren, Mueller & Crabbé 2007), micropolitics came to stand for a way of valuing (and caring for) knowledge produced collectively in movement and struggle. The publication of Guattari and Rolnik's memoirs of a journey through the Brazil of the 1980s –containing notes and conversations with movements, analysts, artists and even politicians like Lula– documents and reflects on the relations between traditional institutional politics (unions, parties) and new movements (lesbians and gays, the indigenous, students, anti-psychiatric currents).

The notion of micropolitics leads us into specific research questions on municipalism, such as: *How did the relation between movements, parties and institutions unfold in the course of the first five years of municipalist mandate (2015-20)? What key dynamics do different actors see there, and what phases might they correspond to? What were the predominant actors, affects, dynamics and events in the different phases of this municipal legislature?* This leads us into a temporal mapping that allows us to distill some qualities of different moments, as we explored in a research workshop with activists and city councilors in Malaga's Casa Invisible social center in 2018 (more on this below).

Interested in the lived experience and living knowledge of municipalism as a matter of micropolitics, we may further ask: *How do people involved with municipalism at different levels, as social movement or neighborhood activists, municipalist activists, party members, municipal councilors or consultants, or indeed politicians, negotiate the tensions between ideology and subjectivity?* Or perhaps in other terms: *how do people involved with municipalism at different levels negotiate the tensions between social movement ways and institutional ways? What are these ways? What are differences along the movements-institutions spectrum in terms of habits, expression, relations, embodiment, horizons, orientations?*

These are very basic, yet key questions that I have spent a bulk of my time exploring, in order to track and map the basic qualities of these different modalities of politics. In a micropolitical sense, this means looking at *how these different modalities of politics make us think, feel and respond, per se and in relation to one another*. And from there, with Spinoza, *what capacities to act do these modalities and spaces of politics confer upon us?* And, I would add: *how is subjectivity produced and articulated within these spheres of politics, as well as across them?*

In relation to municipalism, this means *looking at the ways in which municipalism has altered the relation between movements and institutions, as well as how it has affected relationality and subjectivities within institutions, parties and movements. When and how did municipalists change standard ways of doing politics, beyond a pure antagonism between movements and institutions or, conversely, the subsumption of movements by institutions; beyond classical party politics; beyond traditional logics of government and opposition; beyond the traditional divisions of labor and competency of mainstream politics?*

This latter question points us to a crucial aspect in my research, which is a transversal approach, looking across the different phases and places of politics, asking how they relate and respond to one another (see also the second part of the childcare commons chapter for this). Whilst I initially approached this matter with a more linear vision in my mind, with time –partly due to my research process, but in large part also due to the evolving processes that came with the municipalist government in office, entailing learning and consolidation– this gave way to a more transversal and complex imaginary in my mind, as in the minds of many of my interviewees and actors I observed across different political spaces. With Barcelona en Comú entering and maintaining office, it emerged out of a first phase of consolidating itself as an organization and within the halls of power -a time when the focus lay with those spaces. This gave way to a more informed focus on ways of creating transversal articulations after 2018, I would argue, the result of which can be seen in the preceding chapter on childcare commons.

My approach is based on an ethics of storytelling and conveying experiences, on the micropolitical sense of processing and passing on (see above), on the conviction that the world –academic and otherwise– does not need another list of policies, of cities, of votes, or similar. Speaking from my singular and situated position, I am certain that it would be both useless and boring to attempt to provide a complete account of sorts, or to reach any kind of closure on the ambivalences and complexities traversing this moment in history and in place that is municipalism. Hence, I opt for this narrative approach, whereby we will move in and out of local stories and broad dynamics, recurrent themes and contradictions, without positing an all-encompassing grand schema. This does not mean withholding analysis and critical thinking, but it does mean restraining judgement and grand claims in favor of a vivid understanding of genealogies, dynamics, tendencies, events, actors, affects and effects.

Last but not least, it is important to define my entry point into the specific sites, trajectories and networks of municipalism at stake here, and to trace the research questions that stem from there. My entry point into questioning the relation between social movements, institutions and parties is one defined by autonomous movements broadly speaking –where the notion of micropolitics has also been circulating most vividly in Spain and beyond. Autonomy is not ideologically pure or even explicit therein, unlike in the *Autonomia* movements in the 1970s. Rather, it is expressed in a myriad of positionalities within, beyond and against the state. I will be focusing particularly on autonomous politics that has taken up the commons as practice and horizon, working towards proto-institutional dispositifs. This can be seen in the trajectory from social centers (okupas) to 'monster institutions'(Universidad Nómada 2008) or 'institutions of the commons '(Negri 2008), in the PAH housing movement and its 'Obra Social,' in the 15M movement and its spurring of new cooperative movements as well as campaigns and alliances, such as the 'Plan de Rescate Ciudadano' and the early grassroots electoral experiments like the Partido X, Partido del Futuro and Guanyem.

There have been some crucial agents of articulation and mediation between movements and institutions, in this autonomous commons-based dynamic. The Fundación de los Comunes as an umbrella agency, specifically and its Instituto DM as well as MAC forums, as well as the Traficantes de Sueños publishers/bookshop and Hidra cooperative, for instance. These latter agencies have been key sources and channels of speculative, critical and analytical thinking in relation to municipalism and specifically the tension between institutions and movements. I will be referring largely to knowledge produced in this context, as one where analytical and organizational tools that address the movement-institution conundrum were most rigorously implemented. The weight of these efforts is not coincidental but stems from the crucial part that these autonomous political projects and their people played in formulating the horizon of new municipalisms initially.

My account here mainly focuses on Barcelona, and to some degree on Málaga and Madrid, because these are key urban nodes of the aforementioned experimentation and reflection, having seen a series of political efforts at shifting from autonomous movements to commons and institutional dispositifs. During my research I was based in Barcelona, the origin as well as the main continuing metropolitan stronghold of municipalism (as well as the birthplace of the PAH), its success story with the famous mayor Ada Colau. This city constitutes the core of my examples here. Málaga gives a contrast, as a city where the Casa Invisible social center had permitted the articulation of commons and institutions, and where municipalist campaigns led into the political opposition and down a road paved with deceptions; a place I also had knowledge of and ties to. Madrid is a third pole that I will refer to once in a while, as the site of Spain's central government, tormented by power struggles at multiple levels, from movements to parties and the state as well as private capital. Here municipalism saw a myriad of configurations and splits, marked by wider state politics. Madrid is where

the Fundación de los Comunes most strongly emanated from, and with it a wealth of debates and publications concerning municipalism, social movements and institutions. While I will not closely analyze political dynamics in Madrid, I will be referring to its knowledge productions frequently.

In this section, we will go through a broad genealogy of phases of municipalist micropolitics, as concerning its relation to social movements principally, in Barcelona and to some extent also Málaga and Madrid. Starting with the social movements that provided the base for mass politicization and the formulation of demands after 2010 and continuing into the vibrant electoral campaigns of 2014/15, where political imaginaries, hopes and proposals were articulated in unique ways, we trace the foundations of municipalism and its particular potentials and powers. We then move on to look at the years of the 2015-19 mandate of municipalist platforms, a period marked by general political turmoil, repeat elections and the Catalan independence movement: our gaze however goes to internal and micropolitical dynamics. Mapping out the first two years of governments from 2015-17, we find a *steep learning curve, vivid collective experimentation, struggles to situate oneself, a tension between confluence and unity, beginning professionalization, as well as engagement with the public sector and its workers. Looking at the period 2017-19, where some thrived and some faltered, we see consolidation, hierarchization, activist drain, further professionalization, internal power struggles, splits, message control and new municipal electoral campaigns as key dynamics. We arrive thus at the municipal elections of 2019, which brought a decline of many municipalist candidatures and opened new challenges and lessons for those still more amply represented in town halls. Their aftermath, which is when this research terminates, brings a new maturity and the possibility to see programs through in places like Barcelona, whilst in others like Málaga it is marked by the closure of the municipalist cycle and the attempt at reorienting energies within movements.*

6.10. Phases of municipalism and its micropolitics, Spain 2014-19

6.10.1. Exponential emergence of social movements, 2010-13

The movements that prepared the ground, the 15M movement, the PAH (Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca, an anti-mortgage eviction platform), historical republican municipalism, and several others -a series of collective processes and practices laid the ground for an 'assault on the institutions' ('asalto institucional' as running for the elections was widely referred to, see Subirats, Ertör & Ortega 2015, Fernandez Patón 2019). The 15M was primary amongst these fundamental movements as it focused on the corruption of the political system, and it channeled energies towards reimagining politics and democracy from below, in urban space, from the streets to the squares and into the neighborhoods. The emergence of the PAH (before 2011) and the period of the 15M (2011-2013 roughly) marked a time of highly intense mobilization, grassroots experimentation and everyday political debate. As

these movements and debates matured, they went into neighborhoods. The big 15M assemblies first differentiated into thematic, then into neighborhood assemblies (see also Pastor 2012) and began to increasingly campaign around specific public services and sectors. The Mareas as proto-unions were movements around public health, education, migration, cuts, unemployment, water…(Pastor Verdú 2013). This involved a learning process around making specific demands regarding the public sector, its governance, funding and management, allowing the movement to spread as a self-learning process into different places and areas (Pastor Verdú 2013).

6.10.2. Initial electoral experiments (EU elections), 2013-14

The initial electoral experiments in the context of the 2014 European Elections, prepared the ground for the wave of municipalist campaigns: the Partido del Futuro, later Partido X (Zechner 2013c), that emerged from pro-democracy hackers of the 15M in Barcelona, and Podemos, which started in Madrid with 15M-inspired 'circulos' and demands. Both Partido X and Podemos were initially tested in the European Elections of 2014, for which the former gave the latter technical support (Jímenez & Vargas 2014), and wherein only the latter obtained seats. Key slogans of the moment were about 'Converting popular indignation into political change' (slogan of Podemos, see Podemos 2014) and 'Democracy, full stop' (slogan of Partido X), interpellating 'citizens' ('Solo la ciudadanía puede cambiarlo', slogan of Partido X) and 'popular' classes or power (Pablo Iglesias, Podemos). They picked up directly from the 15M in calling out corruption, using assemblies and 'Wikidemocracy' (the 15Mpedia is an impressive example of wiki-based organization), and continued the PAH's slogan 'Si se puede' (rendered also as 'Claro que Podemos').

6.10.3. Municipalist electoral campaigns, autumn 2014-May 2015

As the time of the municipal elections approached (May 2015), and as the first lessons of the EU-campaigns were learned, a combination of social movement actors in major cities (Barcelona initially, then Madrid) as well as medium-sized cities and villages decided to form municipalist candidatures, employing a host of experimental and radical methodologies (Zechner 2015, see also Zechner 2013c). After a lively period of gathering energies and signatures (in Barcelona 30.000 people signed the initial support letter in 2014), came a time of negotiating alliances -'confluencias'-, which were eagerly distinguished from coalitions, and fixing names. Many candidatures stabilized around the mottos 'ganemos/guanyem,' 'en comú(n)' (in common) and 'ahora.' In Barcelona, for instance, the initial candidature was called 'Guanyem' but then officially registered as 'Barcelona en Comú' (see also Riveras 2015). These electoral campaigns were highly transversal and experimental, an extension of social movements or perhaps social movements in their own right, keen to differentiate themselves from traditional parties. 'We are not a party' was the reply any journalist or researcher got when interpellating these formations as 'parties' in this phase. Though alter-politics was not a concept they employed, their claim was clearly to transform and reinvent politics (along the lines outlined in the *Report 1. The*

Political). This moment brought a lot of democratic debate and a genuine opening of the political space to a vast array of people and groups, vitalizing the political space in unforeseen and often stunning ways: a time of both 'turmoil' and 'boldness' (Pin 2019a).

6.10.4. Elections and coalition negotiations (municipal and beyond), May-December 2015

The municipal elections then decided the fate of each of these candidatures, with many winning the chance to form governments in big and small towns alike, many others entering into the opposition, and others failing to win representation. This phase lasted some weeks past the election date and is where trajectories and phases begin to differentiate between places, leading some platforms into government and others into opposition. It is important to note that at this, as well as at other moments during the 2015-19 municipal legislature, a series of other elections had a strong impact on local processes and negotiations, such as the general elections in December 2015, where Podemos, strengthened by the municipalist success and support, obtained over 12% of the vote, and the autonomic elections of 2015 and 2017 in Catalunya, relevant for all of Spain and particularly for Barcelona.

6.10.5. First phase of government/opposition work (2015-2017)

In this initial phase, nascent municipalist formations grappled with the ins and outs – most notably perhaps with its limitations and rigidities– of the institutional political system and municipal administration, with the fierce power struggle between parties (a political culture very far from trust-based movement habitus), and with ways of negotiating the dialogue and sometimes also antagonism with movements, a big challenge for people and formations that still strongly identified with social movements, yet now spoke and acted from another place of power. Ada Colau said of this initial phase:

> In the first year it took us some time to situate ourselves and get started with the administration because we were new. We almost needed a year to properly understand how the administration functioned: it's one thing that you decide to do something, and another that it gets executed. In order for it to get done, one needs to have the capacity to manage and to know the procedures (Colau, Spegna & Forti 2019; my translation).

In this phase there was probably a first realization within the institution –that perhaps did not transpire into social movements fully– that government and policy-making is also a matter of technical skill, as councilor Gala Pin says 'the left(s) [izquierdas] have a very dangerous habit, they think that because they are from the left they are the good ones and they'll do things well, that's part of the human conditions but it's an error' (Pin 2019a).

The initial learning process was marked by a grappling with the very space and architecture of the town hall –its thick walls, long corridors, closed offices and doors,

embodying a series of political and work cultures foreign to the municipalist activists; and with the workers therein, their ways of relating to tasks and hierarchies, which were all very different from the previous environments of associations, cooperatives and social movement cooperation most municipalists had come from. In this phase, attempts were made at forging a new climate of cooperation with municipal public sector workers, where Barcelona en Comú activists asked people to participate in a number of private seminars to address relevant problems of the institutional infrastructure. Some three sessions in groups of 15 people, a total of about 50 people, out of thousands municipal workers, where organized to discuss topics such as privatization and externalization, the relationship between citizens and workers, the relationship workers/politicians, and so forth.

The new municipalist administrations started out to transform the very culture of town halls, towards climates of listening, collaboration and a more feminist understanding of power, relations and spaces. Repeatedly, during this period, women of Barcelona en Comú commented on the way meetings were male dominated and how they found it challenging to get respect from 'over-40 males in ties' (Pin 2016), resulting in their launching a call for a 'feminization of politics' (Shea Baird & Roth 2017a; 2017b). In 2016, women of Barcelona en Comú started a Telegram group of women in the city hall, with some 25 participants, that became an important space for pinpointing discrimination, mutual support and exchanging analyses (Pin 2019a).

In these first years of government of Barcelona en Comú, we can identify thus a series of learning and relational processes in and through institutions that bring forth new perspectives and tactics in official municipalist actors. This translated and trickled down into the municipalist platforms to different degrees, along increasingly vertical lines, as the platforms themselves consolidated some into more formal roles that also implied hierarchies. The learning processes from within institutions affected thus and transformed the party, as Bcomú shifted from platform to party, consolidating internal organization and rules, particularly its more official and core members. At the base of the party, these new insights and decisions already got lost somewhat, since they could not be transmitted personally.

For the 'ejes' -the thematic and neighborhood 'axes' that had drafted Bcomú's program and were vital to the candidature and campaign– the news and proposals from city hall often came via a series of mediators and translations, filtering down across the emergent flat hierarchy[41] and causing a myriad of debates, misunderstandings, internal struggles and exits. I experienced this in the migrations

[41] In 2015, after the 'confluencia' phase of making electoral pacts, Bcomú entered into its 'Phase D' as an organization, consolidating spaces and rules. The outline of the different parts of their municipalist project is as follows: Institutional Spaces (city hall municipal team, city and district councilors); Spaces of Bcomú: eleven large permanent spaces of participation (registered members, the plenary, the political council, the general coordination group, the sector-based coordination groups, the technical coordination commission, the coordination of territorial assemblies, the technical commissions, the thematic axes, the neighborhood groups and the district assemblies). For more detail, see Barcelona en Comú 2015a.

axis, which was in the unfortunate condition of not having a councilor respond to it directly, seeing thus most of its proposals and efforts frustrated by a lack of interest and attention in the city hall's corresponding areas. The group struggled for 2 years and then dissolved. Where the relation between councilors and axes worked well, the latter survived and could do good work. They, too, had to get used to a new role after 2015, which largely came to be understood as one of connecting with the grassroots and social fields, channeling critique and proposals, exercising thus some form of radical pressure on councilors whilst also absorbing social and movement critiques of government and taking on different forms of popular pedagogy, or, in unfortunate cases, also demagogy, around policies and issues in their area.

In these first years, we see thus the learning and relational processes of municipalists in the institutions and the movements diverge, in an often unbridgeable way that led to the disengagement of some activists.[42] Bcomú's activist core has seen a certain level of replacement of activist types with more professional types, leading to a professionalization of the organization and, by consequence, also of its politics. This often meant that strategies of mobilization and communication came to be more focused on a general (voting) subject seen as 'normal' or 'citizen' (see also Zechner 2017), repeating certain white middle class 'common sense,' as opposed to addressing and listening openly to the specific constituencies or affected persons that movement and neighborhood activists would address. There is, thus, a subtle displacement of political register, towards a more neutral, and by virtue thereof, also paternalistic approach to people and groups as populations. In electoral terms, this kind of political professionalism is effective to a likely high degree, yet in terms of movement-building it has its limits. If anything, it attracts and reconfirms mainstream political agents and their hegemony of common sense. Whilst the party supporters, some 15 000 people termed 'El Comú' in Bcomú's organigram, who initially registered in Bcomú's online voting platform (Participa) and can vote on broad decisions, remained mobilized across the first mandate, with participation in fact increasing over the years,[43] the activist base was rather stagnant, if not shrinking in real terms.

Málaga councilor Santi Fernandez Patón notes in relation to the professionalization that made itself notable in the way the electoral program of 2019 was drafted: '…the institutional takeover was now a war of maintenance, a scenario where we already knew –so we thought– how to move, when in fact we only knew its functioning, which is not the same; …Once more we had thought that doing things well internally guaranteed what we might call external success' (Fernandez Patón 2019: 40). The tension between micropolitics and macropolitics is not such that one follows from the

[42] While it is not easy to put numbers to this, we can say that this concerned particularly the people who had come from social movement or NGO activism to support Bcomú but did not take up any office or defined role. There were, in 2017, around 1000-1500 people registered as 'activists' of Barcelona en Comú, as opposed to members generally, where it is 15 000. These have different voting rights on the Participa platform, for instance (Shea Baird 2017).

[43] In July 2015, for example, 2148 people participated in the election of local councilors (Barcelona en Comú 2015b). In 2017, 3795 people voted on breaking the electoral pact with the PSC (Franch 2015). In 2019, 4042 people voted on entering a new coalition with PSC (40% participation; see Sust 2019).

other. This is a lesson that many social movements, particularly those of autonomy perhaps, had not fully learned.

A crucial macropolitical factor in the processes of (dis)engagement that marked Bcomús' two years in office, entailing processes of alienation at the institutional, party and movement level, is the escalation of the independentist struggle. In 2016, on 1st October, a people-driven referendum for Catalan independence was brutally repressed by the central Spanish state, leading to an escalation of political conflict between the autonomic government and the Spanish state. In 2017, Bcomú voted on breaking its coalition pact with Catalan socialists (PSC) over the latter's support for repressive legal measures on Catalunya (the infamous paragraph 155). This moment was marked by a myriad debates and growing distances between different parts of the municipalist alliance, which brought together both pro-independence, neutral and anti-independence councilors, activists, supporters and voters.

Gala Pin remembers October 1st, 2016 as the end of a phase in municipalism, marking the sharpening of conflicts and divisions and an ever-growing weight of the independence issue over politics. Since then, this stalemate between Catalunya and Spain came to determine media and electoral discourse almost entirely, bringing with it a period of political instability and elections (general elections on December 2015, June 2016, April and December 2019; Catalan elections in September 2017 and December 2017) that led to a strong expense of energies for municipalism too. For Bcomú's councilors, the binary and nationalist capture of political discourse was very hard to deal with, not just internally and externally but also at the level of policy, since debates on public policy –as well as failings of state and autonomic governments– were increasingly and, for the latter, conveniently overshadowed by the question of secession/unity. Internally to Barcelona en Comú, recounts Pin, the pro-independence process increasingly 'mined' an organization that had been very friendly and open: 'people that were allies in thinking the city stopped being allies for thinking the national level' and 'the question of how Catalunya en Comú[44] positions itself affects municipal politics more and more' (Pin 2019a).

Social conflict rose to high levels of intensity during those years, peaking with the October 2016 referendum and its brutal repression, as well as with the harsh sentences given those who organized it, in October 2019 during Bcomú's 2nd term, and the riots that followed across Barcelona. Bcomú's position remained one of conciliation and refusal to give in to the polarization of politics, made increasingly difficult.

2017 may be seen, thus, as a moment of inflection, macropolitically as well as micropolitically. At the state-wide level, the third MAC gathering on municipalism, government and counterpower in A Coruña brought forth many analyses and debates across municipalism and social movements, with position papers from different cities

[44] Candidature of Podemos and Comunes at the autonomic level in Catalunya, launched in 2016 to replace 'Catalunya si que es pot' and 'En Comú Podem.'

(Barcelona, Madrid, Málaga and Aragon).[45] At the micropolitical level, certain reflections and conclusions on government, politics and power became more articulate and public. Around the same time, certain new concepts had been brought into play–from the feminization of politics to municipal disobedience and remunicipalization- marking the beginning of a new phase of debate and relationality.

Barcelona en Comú released a short documentary called 'Two years later' in 2017 (Barcelona en Comú 2017a), featuring reflections by members of its cabinet. In this film, which follows in the footsteps of the 'Alcaldesa' documentary of 2016 (Faus 2016) that had accompanied the everyday of Ada Colau (who used to work as an actress, amongst other things, and is quite captivating on screen), yet it decenters our gaze towards other agents of the government –we witness people narrating their experience and its contradictions. In this vein, Jaume Asens (deputy mayor for citizens' rights, participation and transparency) says about going from movements to institutions:

> It's like a clash of identities, there is a point when you confront yourself, who you've been and who you are now –I think that's how we experience this very differently from professional politicians, who I guess experience this in a much more compact and gentle way because in most cases they haven't been on the other side (Barcelona en Comú 2017a, 15').

Asens, who was a lawyer before entering politics, probably still knew a lot better what to expect of the institutions than many of the more straightforward activists that entered government.

In Málaga, in a non-public reflection on this period in the context of a workshop with both city councilors and activist remember in Casa Invisible in February 2018, a myriad of dynamics and sentiments were described, in a style less polished than that of the many videos, articles and interviews of 2017. Both social center activists and councilors remember the initial phase of being in the opposition as one marked by

> [the] tension between [logics of] confluence and unity; a sense of being cheated; realpolitik; internal tensions [in the Izquierda Unida party]; … the creation of a new type of activist/militant in Málaga Ahora, between the movement and the institution; [that] the decision of rupture was taken very much in the style of a political party, very much according to the principle of realpolitik; micropolitical rupture; that the rupture [split within Málaga Ahora] was a key moment and was mishandled; a becoming-bloc; feeling the electoral support as strength; people leave, groups stop functioning (neighborhood councils, etc.);

[45] Debates and workshops focused on (re-)defining common goods, economic recuperation and municipalist movements; on policies in culture, mobility, sustainability, on debt audits and remunicipalization broadly; on the state of Europe and the rise of the far right, technopolitics and municipalism, freedom of movement, rent, and feminisms; on citizen-run centers, public bicycles, as well as on the problem of organization and municipal disobedience.

> total disillusionment, rupture with one's brothers…(Notes from Málaga-Workshop 2018)

These notes give a more complex and messier image of the happenings of within and beyond municipalist platforms in their first years, in the honest and sometimes brutal tone of people who recognize they have failed to a large extent, both on the side of the movement and the institutions. Movements failing to organize to pressurize the new municipalist councilors, the latter eager to push for change but requiring popular pressure to make it happen. This interdependence between streets and city hall was clear to municipalists from the start, and they developed a series of pedagogical approaches to make the relation between movements and institutions fruitful, as we shall see below. Thinking the relation between movements and institutions in terms of interdependence marked a feminist as well as, to some extent, ecological shift in seeing the relation between movements and institutions, one that constitutes an epistemological and subjective turning point.

Soon after taking up government, in a majority of places, municipalist councilors put forth a key motto for the relation with social movements: that institutional change can only come through thorough pressure from outside, from movements. 'We want to be in tension, that movements keep interpellating us, and we need them to accompany us because otherwise our changes won't transform into profound changes' (Barcelona en Comú 2017a, 23.28') This enabled the positing of a de facto sharing of power between institutions and movements, positing two different kinds of power (institutional vs. popular) and affirming a necessary link between the two. In Barcelona en Comú, it was clear and proclaimed from the outset. Without social movements, this candidacy and government is nothing. 'Municipalism is thus an empty word without the practices and the transformative power of republican cooperativism, of social struggles, of the feminist movement and of the associative and neighborhood fabric' (Forné Aguirre 2019; my translation from Catalan).

While this functioned as a rallying cry and point of cohesion at the outset of the legislature, it took on a less romantic meaning as time wore on, with many people realizing their fundamental dependence on social movements for being able to make progressive policies. The institutional relation to movements is not a matter of morality or nostalgia, it is a vital strategic matter. And it implies at least two consequences, as the sociologist Ferran Izquierdo-Brichs writes:

> 1. If BComú stops behaving like a social movement and constrains itself to political and electoral competition instead of fighting for their goals with mobilization campaigns, it will lose its strength in the face of political, economical and mediatic elites, and will not achieve its goals.
>
> 2. If BComú doesn't keep its social movement dimension, their leaders will get into the elitist dynamics of a classical social democrat or centrist party upon losing the pressure of popular mobilization, and then ally with other elites in a purely electoral and slightly reformist game. If they don't get caught

> up in this dynamic, the result will still be the same since when weakened, the party will become marginal and its leadership elite will lose its place in the political game (Izuquierdo-Brichs, forthcoming).

With the 2019 elections approaching, this realization intensified as polls increasingly pointed to municipalist candidacies losing seats. Outside pressure would likely be ever more crucial for enabling transformative policies.

6.10.6. Second phase of government/opposition work, 2017-19

Between 2017 and 2019, we may say that the political and institutional work of municipalist parties like Barcelona en Comú became more mature and consolidated, with actors slowly ceding to the inevitable interpellation as 'party' and accommodating themselves with different levels of un/ease to the hierarchies that imposed themselves. In the political platforms or parties themselves, this phase was often marked by a consolidation of hierarchies –in Barcelona en Comú this meant organigrams being redrawn slowly but surely, internal divisions of labor and decision-making formalized. The main spaces of Barcelona en Comú, according to internal informative videos of 2017 and 2019 (Barcelona en Comú 2017b; 2019) were as follows:

- Neighborhood groups (19 in 2017 and 2019)
- The thematic axes and commissions (18 in 2017 and 2019)
- 4 specialist working areas: organization, communication, administration and logistics, participation and transparency
- The institutional area: the municipal group and district councilors, and teams of temporary projects
- The committee for democratic guarantees
- The activist base (1500 in 2017 and 2019)
- The 'comú' as in registered members (15000 in 2017 and 2019)

By then, initial activist communications channels, at the level of thematic 'ejes' particularly, had been remodeled to permit more oversight, at the same time as more centralized channels of organizing and communications were inaugurated -in this process, message control was increasingly imposed as the municipal elections 2019 approached. The experience of fierce attacks from political opponents, including a considerable amount of dirty campaigning and fake news driven by established parties and lobbies, made activists more tough and pragmatic when it came to safeguarding the organization and enabling another electoral win in 2019. Without anyone's specific intent, a set of external and internal dynamics led to a decreasing potential for experimentation, invention, free organization and bottom-up decision-making in the organization.

Formalization is an inevitable part of building an organization out of a movement, and to be sure BComú did rather well at making this process a relatively open one. Indeed,

> [i]t is not the distinction core-base itself, allowing for various tiers of participants between extremes, which is undemocratic, oligarchic and hierarchical in itself. Rather, the specific ways in which the lines are drawn and the relationships between different layers of participation are played out, as well as the particular modes in which the directive power is laid out will, or will not, beget standing divisions, rigid hierarchies, top-down command and the concentration of power in the hands of few (*Report 1. The Political*: 246).

The ways in which these lines are drawn differs greatly between spaces and groups in BComú, and there will be examples to both testify to hierarchization and lack of transparence, as well as to successful participatory process (see the section on participation for a further discussion and an example). It is impossible to make an absolute evaluation, however it is important to acknowledge that the configuration of directive and decision-making power substantially changed between the movement-phase of municipalism and its more consolidated institutional phase, making thus for a very different kind of politics. To speak of municipalism as social movement no longer quite makes sense.

In Málaga, in October 2017, the assessment of the first two years of municipalism was mixed, as can be seen from the document prepared for the MAC meeting in A Coruña.

> On the one hand, institutional presence permits us: access to information; time and means accessible for processing this information;… for spreading this information, and at the same time for questioning the model of the city, engaging debates and proposals; contacts and the possibility of establishing ties with diverse processes and everyday conflicts of citizens…; resources and means…for evaluating…and introducing public policies; to introduce new modes of political action in the institutional sphere, stemming from the social movement and 15M tradition… While on the other hand, the institutional presence has provoked: the diminishing of activity in social movement environments; the inevitable dedication of time/energy to institutional labors that are of little use, which persist though experience reduces them; the entry into alien environments, close to power and to the forms of old politics (parties), which attracts subjectivities, dynamics and practices that scare away the subjectivities of the 15M, of social movements, feminists, etc.…; personal and political ruptures in local networks occur due to this process…; institutional work its means wear [us] out due to the enormous personal and temporal availability it requires… (MAC3 Málaga 2017).

This document is an example of the careful exercise of a double perspective and evaluation, taking into account both the movement and institutional side of the municipalist process, and as such it is exemplary of the extraordinary politics of

articulation and experimentation that marks the new Spanish municipalisms. It undertakes a balancing act of evaluation and envisioning, concluding that

> Barely two and a half years later, the conflicts, the wearing down of people and networks, as well as the ruptures, make it difficult to believe in the possibility of sustaining these spaces, unless this is done at the cost of sacrificing the model of democratic municipalism (autonomous and horizontal) initially laid out (MAC3 Málaga 2017).

In Málaga Ahora, this period came with a third split (involving a court case) and an increased disillusionment of activists from the movement side of the party. As in a myriad of other cities and towns, the splits occurred between the newer movement-based parts of municipalist platforms and the more established and traditional leftist parties they had formed coalitions ('confluencias') with in 2015: Podemos and Izquierda Unida. These splits were often nasty, happening in ways activists identified with traditional politics, as betrayals driven by electoral speculation, power struggles, personal aspirations.

Here we find a faultline and key lesson in the new municipalisms, concerning the possibility of doing politics differently within the existing system, of transcending the politics of personalist calculus and electoralist betrayal that characterize not just right but also left parties. The betrayal through careerist individualism is a recurrent theme within and across movements and institutions, of course. In movements, political careerism is met with outrage and sometimes even serves as a blanket condemnation of anyone choosing to associate with institutions (in anarchist circles particularly, this is seen as selling out). Those who went from movements into institutions generally characterized careerism and backstabbing as a miserable but common form of human condition (Pin 2019a, Delso 2017, Fernandez Paton 2018) -an acknowledgement often marked by sadness or defeatism rather than (out)rage. Careerism and lack of collective solidarity are no doubt a dynamic very common to party politics: the need for a 'feminization' of politics, and a politics of care and trust, also arise in relation to this.

On the other hand, beyond the frustrations of new municipalist activists unaligned with the logics of the bigger parties, grassroots activists from the social center la Casa Invisible in Málaga –which had been a key pole for the formation of the municipalist candidacy– were frustrated with their ex-comrades that now took to the municipality with Málaga Ahora. Some of them, who went from the social center to Málaga Ahora and then split off with Podemos, felt doubly betrayed. Social center activists lamented a lack of radicality in the municipalist visions of management of the commons, whilst the new municipal councilors lamented the lack of strong pressure and organization on the side of movements and the social center. A climate of disenchantment and disappointments ensued thus, which left the previously united municipalist movement fragmented, and reinforced divisions along several lines: grassroots movements/movement municipalists and movement municipalists/leftist party actors.

A climate of increasing fragility and broken social ties (betrayal by people previously perceived as comrades weighed very heavy) seemed to point the way to the inevitable outcome of upcoming electoral defeat in 2019. No way to persist or govern in a state of fragmentation and fragility, particularly for those who refuse to overcome this alienation by orienting themselves towards party lines and state-wide political priorities, as was the case with Podemos particularly.

Frustrations with the modalities of governance became manifest in cities like Málaga or Madrid around 2017, often channeled through social centers and their claims, and dominated movement sentiment well by 2018-19. The government of Ahora Madrid also went through a series of splits and purges since its outset, and strong personalist and uncollaborative tendencies in the politics of Manuela Carmena alienated both fragments of Ahora Madrid, as well as social movements.

In May 2017, grassroots activists occupied a large municipal building in central Madrid, naming it 'La Ingobernable' -'the ungovernable'– and making it a hub of new movement activity that looks beyond the electoral promise and the institutional logic. Rejecting the political games and splits that municipalism in Madrid had produced, a vibrant social center was established in the tradition of autonomy and a radical politics of the commons. The Ingobernable in Madrid, just like the casa Invisible in Málaga, remained a model of movement-institution (Úniversidad Nómada 2008) or institution of the commons (see Radio Reina Sofia 2011), as previously theorized and put into practice by key agents of the 15M. The gap between the two notions of institution and commons again opened, after having been successfully articulated in municipalist campaigns that drew on 15M. Now, it became clear that the 'común' of municipalist governments could not be the same as that of the social centers.

> …the new kinds of social centers are experiments of new institutions. In this sense, obviously without overestimating or fetichizing them, they generate answers for the current social movements. They are institutions that, like those in other fields, generate new spaces of autonomy, and their potency lies in their capacity for collaboration, for cooperation with the struggles that happen at present: today it is for the access to housing or for the rights of migrants. And tomorrow, for other [struggles] that will come, that are emerging in the context, let's call it terminal, of neoliberal capitalism (Sguigla, Sánchez-Cedillo, Carmona and Herreros 2008; my translation from Spanish).

The idea of movement-institutions, later often termed 'institutions of the commons,'[46] underpinned the municipalist turn towards re-making institutions from below, crucially the claim that institutions and cities could be for everyone, just as the movement-institutions hypothesis insisted on the precariat and the subaltern as political subjects: 'an *institutional dispositif* (a form of *movement institution*) that has already shown itself to be valid and in a way irreversible for the politics of subaltern

[46] In the context of texts, gatherings and colloquiums such as Museo Reina Sofia & Fundación de los Comunes 2009.

subjects in the metropolis' (Universidád Nómada 2008; my translation from Spanish). The question of the political subject remained crucial. The municipalist platforms soon adjusted their claims towards 'citizenry' in general, a notion and politics that per se excludes large parts of the subaltern, those without papers or citizenship, lacking the right to vote amongst many other rights.

The grassroots institutions of the commons set out from the key claim to lift up those who were kept out, off and invisible, those who lacked rights, be they labor, social or citizen's rights, whilst institutional municipalism -affected by repeat electoral campaigns- veered inevitably towards addressing subjects of rights: voters and citizens rather than just inhabitants. A key category of municipalist discourse was and is 'neighbors' ('veins' in Catalan; in Barcelona this notion is very strong), a more inclusive category in theory, yet one that is also difficult to detach from autochthone undertones, and difficult to broaden in practice since local Catalan and Spanish communities tend to be quite separated from international migrant communities. Progressive discourse in Barcelona insists on calling migrants and non-whites neighbors too, yet this insistence is contradicted by the various institutional exclusions those neighbors face. They have no representation in the halls of power, and their organizations barely have any weight in public and political terms; only the radically political struggle of undocumented street vendors makes it into the news occasionally. At worst, migrants are seen as helpless victims, at best as people to be integrated as citizens, but rarely as people and communities in their own right and richness. The 'City of Refuge' policy of Barcelona reflects this, as despite improvements to services and the best of intentions it ended up reproducing a discourse of migrant victimhood and Catalan benevolence, which on top ended up asserting the contentious differentiation between refugees and economic migrants (see Ruebner-Hansen 2020 for details).

This is the limit of the notion of democratization itself: a notion that largely serves those entitled as citizens, inherently based on exclusions, of woman and slaves in ancient Greek democracy, of subaltern and migrants in contemporary democracies. Indeed, democratization can also lead to an affirmation of divisions along lines of class, as the Barcelona node of the Fundación de los Comunes affirms in their assessment of municipalism in 2017:

> Improving infrastructures, or implementing plans for urban participation, even improving the sociability of a neighborhood, can generate perverse effects. If urban conditions improve thanks to public intervention, the price of land can go up and give rise to the expulsion of those who can't afford higher rents. More urban improvement or more participation aren't always synonymous with more equality. Democratization doesn't always imply redistribution. The property developers and stock markets of financial capital know this very well… (MAC3 Barcelona; my translation from Spanish).

Critical elements within municipalism –in this case the Hidra cooperative, who put together this analysis, and from the ranks of which participation officer Laia Forné also came– diagnosed this limitation of municipalism to certain classes, and lamented the focus of its politics on producing narrative ('relato') instead of organization (MAC3 Barcelona). A differentiation along class and racial lines had more or less thoroughly affirmed itself by the second phase of government around 2017, with working classes becoming less visible as protagonists of politics. In the 2014 municipal elections, the poorer 'barrios populares' had been key, whilst in the 2019 municipal elections the same more peripheral neighborhoods were largely lost to other parties, and migrant and subaltern subjects, too, had to some degree disappeared from the political stage of municipalism, particularly as actors.[47]

There is likely a considerable degree of opportunism in Jamshed's moves, but whether or not her claims about direct racism are correct, her case reflects the failure of the new municipalist candidatures to integrate subjects from outside the traditional white spectrum of citizenship. A failure that certainly cannot be attributed to individual failure by municipalists but is down to the persistence of systemic inclusions in the architecture of institutions and democratic rights. Despite a myriad of progressive discourses and anti-racist campaigns (see for instance the guide for inclusive communication, Ayuntamiento de Barcelona 2019), the political project of municipalism within western democratic frameworks showed itself to be rather more capable of representing the already-established citizenry and its social movements than the subaltern that were at the heart of movement-based visions of institutions.

2017-19 showed, thus, the limitations of the populist modalities of municipalism - 'governing for all' turned out to often be about governing for specific sectors, given the institutional architectures and economic dynamics. It was a time when some actors reaffirmed the critical importance of confronting neoliberalism and economic power, engaging more antagonistic politics in different aspects (the Fundación de los Comunes prime amongst them) in order to develop counter-power from within the institutions.

> For sure, it is necessary to shift participation towards forms of self-government and community action, but at the same time to eject private capital from the institutional architecture. If the opposite occurs, and this is an analysis shared by various departments of the city administration, participation ends up being a way of managing and containing urban conflict (MAC3 Barcelona).

[47] The case of Huma Jamshed, elected as councilor of Ciutat Vella district, tells a peculiar and complex story. Jamshed was expelled from Office for mismanagement/corruption in 2016, and in turn accused Barcelona en Comú of racism (as she wrote on Facebook or in an article for the right-wing platform 'El Español'). This case is no doubt complex and Hamshed's account has its contradictions. It is however symptomatic of the difficulty BComú found in properly integrating people of non-European and non-Hispanic origins. This is due to a deep and persistent divide between the autochthonous and migrants in Barcelona, particularly non-white and non-European migrants.

The benefit of such a dual approach would be that it could not just keep the lines of conflict clearly within view, but that it could also make urban self-organization more resistant and resilient, and as such consolidate new popular identities shifting them away from neoliberal imaginaries. This battle seemed increasingly weakened as the 2019 elections approached.

6.10.7. Municipal electoral campaigns 2019

In 2019, electoral logics again took over many other dynamics in the political platforms. For Barcelona en Comú, the pre-campaign phase started in autumn 2018 and came with an incentive to more centrally control -to micromanage- messages and create new popular support where the previous neighborhood and thematic groups had faltered or, indeed, had been disabled. This meant launching new groups and platforms that could mobilize votes, as well as building door-to-door activists and campaigns. It was also the time for the drawing up of lists, and this opened onto a second cycle of reflections on governance through the statements of continuity or withdrawal of councilors, as well as through a series of articles debating the success of Bcomú's first term and the desirability of continuing to govern.

Gala Pin for example, the governor of Ciutat Vella district during Bcomú's first mandate, decided not to repeat her candidature in 2019. Asked about the challenge of not losing one's anchorage in the reality of the neighborhood, and whether Barcelona en Comú lost this anchorage, she says:

> Some more and some less. Sometimes we fell into this logic of the party. It's complicated to get out of there when you are constantly surrounded, but I think in general we didn't [get lost]. And that's been possible because a big part of our base hadn't ever been active in a party before, that makes you have a base that pulls in another direction (Pin & López 2019; my translation from Spanish).

The role of neighborhood movements is seen as key by Barcelona en Comú, not just because of their historical power in the city but also because of their capacity to make very specific demands and evaluate proposals with expert local knowledge. Laia Forné Aguirre, of the governorship of participation and districts, describes the situation during Bcomú's first mandate as follows:

> In Barcelona – as opposed to other cities – there have been many communicating vessels between the streets and the public institutions. There's been the neighborhood movements that, through their situated knowledge and social struggles, have prefigured many of the municipal public policies. This relation, however, hasn't been organic, nor has it translated into governance based in public-communitarian collaboration. Sometimes it served to coopt movement and condition their demands, and later, to neutralize social control over local politics, whilst pacts were made with the private sector for the externalization of public services management (Forné Aguirre 2019; my translation from Catalan).

Forné-Aguirre, who is also a member of the research cooperative 'La Hidra' that took on many policy drafting processes for the City of Barcelona with Bcomú's government, insists on the vision of public-communitarian collaboration and models, a key horizon for Barcelona en Comú since the outset (more on this below, see also childcare case study). By 2019, there is a sobering up of initial claims and visions, a recognition that many things are not easy to achieve and take time, and a renewed critical claim to achieving them within the institutions. Broadly speaking, in the face of 2019 local elections, municipalist actors in Barcelona emphasize that it is worthwhile to keep building on the work done, and that transformations are possible and worthwhile. 'We need another mandate to accomplish things properly,' many councilors and activists said, insisting on the specific potentials of institutional work: '...social movements have many potentials, but also limitations; institutional politics has many limitations, but also a transformative potentiality that I think should not be underrated' (Pin & López 2019; my translation from Spanish).

This phase of re-evaluation, preceding the 2019 elections, offered refreshing reflection and (self-)critique, addressing itself to and involving the initial constituencies and activists that brought Bcomú to power, many of which had become disconnected –and some disenchanted– with Bcomú. Half analysis, half electoral prod, texts from spring 2019 evaluate institutional politics by dwelling on realism, pragmatism and continuity. During that time, the renowned geographer David Harvey, too, was asked to comment on the advancements of municipalism in Barcelona and whether he was disappointed:

> No, I'm not. I think we have enough experience at the local level to know what's possible and what isn't. It doesn't surprise me, I don't expect a new administration to enter and magically go things. I might desire that things had gone better. But I hope they keep governing. It's very easy to critique from the outside. But quickly you realize that there's been a very strong opposition to Colau. That the media have not been on her side. That capital isn't on her side either. That they have no economic resources. That the regional government is not on your side and tried to boycott you (Harvey 2019; my translation from Catalan).

Spring 2019 is thus a time when a certain soberness and pragmatism, but also determination, dominates municipalist political discourse in Barcelona. In other cities, the situation is quite different. Madrid is caught in stories of betrayal, splits and accusations, in a large part of the social movement's profound frustration with Manuela Carmena, and the formation of a new candidature of councilors expelled and exited from Ahora Madrid, by the name of Bancada Municipalista, that ran in the 2019 elections as part of En Pie Municipalista, an alliance between Izquierda Unida Madrid, Bancada Municipalista y Anticapitalistas Madrid.

In Málaga, disillusionment over splits remained present and chances of winning looked slim, giving way to a more open and unexpectant kind of analysis from within

both the municipalist platforms and its associated movements, digesting the failings of institutional politics and of a successful articulation of movements and institutions:

> That's why it's so hard to understand the people who evaluate political combats solely based on the rules of winning or losing within the institutional ring when the real conflict is in life; in how we treat it, how we care for each other, in what desires we are capable of releasing, in how we relate. To change the city (and the world) is to change life (Navarra 2019; my translation from Spanish).

Foreseeing electoral failure and the burning out of the institutional horizon, activists in Málaga proceeded to shift the focus back to everyday struggles and relations.

6.10.8. The 2019 municipal elections

The elections finally yielded very disparate results across the Spanish state. In most bigger sized metropolitan areas, municipalist candidatures' seats were reduced to half (see appendix 1), having been shaken by splits that usually involved Podemos breaking away from the 2015 'confluences.' In the two major cities of Barcelona and Madrid, results held (both obtained only one seat less than in 2015), but only in Barcelona –and only just about, with the help of a political manoeuvre[48] – did this lead into municipalist platforms governing. Pragmatism was further emphasized, for example in the act of blocking the independentist winners of the election from forming government and getting Ada Colau into office instead: 'Ada: Pragmatrix versus Matrix;' 'We're facing a debate that we continually have to confront, which is about seeing how you move between ethical purism and pragmatism' (Pin 2019c). Pragmatism is of course a rhetorical shell that can be filled with any political priority. Convinced of their work being worthwhile still, staying in government was the key priority for councilors as well as the base of Bcomú,[49] to see its policies to maturing in a second mandate.

In Madrid, the right and far-right formed a coalition to marginalize Manuela Carmena and Más Mádrid. There were also some remarkable exceptions, like Cádiz, where Podemos sustained the mayorship, even growing from 8 to 13 seats by absorbing the smaller Cadiz en Común, or indeed smaller towns like Cárcaboso or Áviles that obtained the same amount of seats with the same candidature as in 2015 (see table 1, appendix). Overall, the municipalist grassroots candidacies however declined by half or more (see table 1, appendix). Málaga Ahora, the alliance of social movements with traditional leftist parties, was caught in total defeat, losing all 6 of its seats, 3 of them to Málaga Adelante, the split-off coalition of the parties Podemos and Izquierda Unida. Their tonalities after the election night were humble and restrained, and indeed also relieved, as a member of the municipal Málaga Ahora team wrote:

[48] Barcelona en Comú came second to the republican independentist ERC by some 7000 votes, but with the support of anti-independentist forces (the PSC, the Catalan social democrats) got to form a government, much to the anger of the independentist movement.

[49] 71.4% of Bcomús registered members voted for making Ada Colau mayor by governing with the Catalan socialists (Sust 2019).

> Despite all this [losing the elections] I have to confess that after the bad experience, the moment of tragedy that we already foresaw in the course of the electoral night, the moments of necessary warmth and mutual care that we gave each other after the results came through, the first thing I felt as I walked home was relief. Making the jump into the institution after years of autonomy meant a long process of changing skin for us. It was only possible thanks to the political climate [of the 15M] and the collective determination. We prepared and meditated on it, but all the previous immunizations turned out to be insufficient for what we faced: personal ambitions, betrayals, a climate of conspiracies, experiences of 'entryism,' defection. Add to that that the real enemy, the regime of 78, received us with its tentacles wide open (Diaz 2019; my translation from Spanish).

In some places, like Málaga, 2019 marked thus the end of the municipalist dream and effort, leading actors back into movements one way or another, with a lot of new knowledge and experience. In Madrid, the experience is very similar, though marked by various continuities of (rather troubled) electoralism at the different political levels. In Barcelona, municipalism sustains itself as model of governance in relation to social movements, institutionally and in large part also socially, though Bcomú's coalition with the socialists leaves them in a weaker position and solicits more explicit criticism from movements in this second mandate. Here, the conflict between Catalunya and Spain's centrists led to an overdetermination of politics by the independence issue, marking a harsh macropolitical conjuncture and period of profound instability in which municipal politics, too, was increasingly captured. There was, as ex-councilor Gala Pin says in 2019,

> the feeling that suddenly the calculus of institutional politics counts more… people expressing discomfort with the elaboration of the [electoral] program [of 2019 municipal elections], which in reality is not a matter of process but a discomfort about how the electoral calculus has come to the forefront. I think that at the level of the organization that also causes disaffection, not ruptures but disenchantment (Pin 2019a; my translation from Spanish).

While the electoral program of 2015 had been elaborated across squares, social centers and offices of cooperatives, the 2019 program was elaborated behind closed doors and with selected collective interlocutors, a fact that saddened many. Discomfort and disenchantment are not the end of it all though, nor are they necessarily a disempowering thing, as Pin insists in a text of December 2019, where she insists on the need to go beyond scandalizing power.

> If there's one thing I learned in these recent years…it's that politics needs to be done in a situated way, and from there, we must assure that politics knows how to inhabit discomfort. Our own, not that of others. It's not about making others politically uncomfortable, but getting uncomfortable. We have to flee the spaces

> of comfort, because they stop us from advancing, progressing, transforming, challenging ourselves' (Pin 2019b; my translation from Catalan).

Looking ahead at a period of increased political instability, a steep rise of rightwing populists and adjacent fascist groups, ecological disaster and increasing violence against those who defend solidarity and the poor, this is a pragmatism which -almost Lacanian style- insists on going outside, getting unsettled and developing politics from there.

This above list of dynamics and variants –and, of course, cities– is far from complete, but in it we can see some possible continued trajectories of the relation between movements and institutions. Let us now, after this timeline of some events and dynamics, look closer at the relation between movements and institutions.

In this section, you will find in-depth discussion of the relation between movements and institutions, as a relation concerning movements and the state as well as movements and the city. Following Latin American examples and referents that were important for Spanish municipalisms, we trace some ways in which progressive governments and social movements relate(d), and the kinds of agonism or antagonism they engaged. Raquel Gutiérrez Aguilar and Maria Galindo will accompany us here and in the next chapter, as figures that have been vocal and helped think about the relation between movements and institutions from feminist autonomist and anarchist viewpoints in Latin America. We will also trace the reflections of Barcelona municipalists Gala Pin and Laia Forné, and the role of the Fundación de los Comunes in creating fora for debate and reflection on this matter in Spain. The role of spaces of dialogue, debate and encounter is what we explore in some depth at the end of this section, mapping such spaces at a local, movement, party and institutional level. Such intermediary spaces and agencies are the make or break for relations between institutions and movements, as are chains of relation and care running across these spheres in a continuous way (which we will explore further down).

6.11. Movements and institutions

6.11.1. Grappling with power and the state: Latin American referents

Focusing on Barcelona, let us outline some of the early debates on the relation between movements and institutions –inevitably also debates on capitalism, the state and communitarianism– that took place in anticipation and preparation of the municipalist turn. The Fundación de los Comunes is a key agent for propelling these debates –often together with the editorial work of Traficantes de Sueños– and the Latin American experiences of popular movements, leftist government and constituent processes were key referents. Thus, in April 2015, two weeks before the municipal elections, upon the invitation of the Fundación de los Comunes, Bolivian vice-president and ex-political prisoner Álvaro García Linera conversed with philosopher

and ex-political prisoner Antonio Negri on the relations of the state with the left.[50] The notions of constituent process (Negri), the autonomy of the political (Gramsci),[51] community and communitarianism, and indigenous struggles (García Linera 1995, Gutiérrez Aguilar 2008; 2017b) were key for unfolding debates on how to approach the state as movements. In 2017, a moment of inflection in the reflection on the relation between movements and institutions or the state, the Fundación de los Comunes hosts a series of talks of Raquel Gutiérrez Aguilar in Spain, to present her book *Horizontes Comunitario-populares* (Traficantes de Sueños 2017), where she analyzes the tense relation between movements and new socialist governments in Latin America. Latin America plays a key role in the ways in which movements and municipalists understand and conceptualize their challenges in the early years of municipalism (2014-17 particularly), inheriting reflections, relations and debates that were constitutive of the formation of Podemos and later fed into municipalism. Many municipalist activists had not just spent time with the Zapatistas in the early 2000s, but also worked with governments in Ecuador and Bolivia in some function -the FLOK society was key amongst them (Commons Transition 2015). Thus, Javier Toret, who coined the notion of technopolitics and played a key role both in relation to Podemos and municipalist digital strategies, argued that Podemos emerged from the combined knowledges and energies of the 15M movement and of the Latin American state-focused processes:

> The know-how of the 15M and the refined knowledge of electoral campaigns and progressive governments in Latin America (in Bolivia, Argentina, Venezuela and Ecuador) produced an explosive combination. This strange combination of the know-how of the 15M and of the Latin American experience are central for the successful launching as well as the viability of the initiative [Podemos] (Toret 2015; my translation from Spanish).

The formation of Podemos was to some extent a testing and learning ground for municipalism, in that it prefigured a turn from movements towards institutions but also showed some key flaws to avoid, concerning mainly processes of verticalization that destroyed Podemos' vibrant 'círculos' (akin to the 'ejes' in Barcelona en Comú), the dangers of hyper-leadership (Pablo Iglesias in Podemos, Ada Cola in Barcelona en Comú) and the subsumption of the political process by dynamics surrounding the central state (concerning both the influences of big capital on the central state, and the framing of Spain vs. Catalunya). Municipalism ended up replicating some of the

[50] In the context of the event on 'Forma Valor y forma comunidad' de Alberto García Línera y 'El poder constituyento' de Antonio Negri' in Barcelona on 17 April 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZhSUlHIBPQ0.

[51] The way in which this notion came to be used by many activists, depreciatingly, perhaps stems from a comment of Antonio Negri in the aforementioned conversation with García Linera. The autonomy of the political was often referred to as the runaway tendency of the political class into corruption, as was the case with myriad corruption cases shaking Spain's political parties (particularly the then governing Partido Popular, ousted from government by a motion of non-confidence in 2018). This autonomy was understood to be undesirable, and that movements were to challenge it, since being in power would inevitably make municipalists part of the political class.

fallacies of Podemos, except for the latter, where a clear strategy was devised to escape the binary capture of the Spain-Catalunya conflict and nascent nationalisms, a strategy involving a vibrant internationalism as seen in the Fearless Cities summits, for instance. Raquel Gutiérrez, the Latin American militant and academic, reflected on this dimension of the state and municipalism during her 2017 visit to Spain:

> In Barcelona I heard a bit more interesting things [than in Madrid], that aren't only to do with governing for everybody. I find it ['governing for everybody'] to be a bit thin: to govern a bit better and to govern without corruption. I think that we indeed need some kind of possibility of dialoguing and to get back to working with the spirit of inside and outside [pinza de adentro y afuera], in the street and in the institution, like something a lot less vertical, to abandon this position of great giving [patronizing; gran dador] that is the power of the state, that concentrates the entirety of wealth and then divides it, and that at the end constitutes a fundamental base of the masculine symbolic order, very well entwined with the capitalist world and successive centuries of accumulation. This challenging of the dominant masculine order, in a state that isn't neutral, in institutions that are eminently masculine in symbolic terms, because they are founded in a negation of the creative energy that life has, is a step we need to make (Gutiérrez Aguilar 2017a; my translation from Spanish).

Gutiérrez radicalizes the idea of 'feminizing politics' into an idea of a politics in the feminine more broadly, unimpressed by the glass ceiling approach:

> feminizing politics seems a weak proposal to me. And, moreover, I'm worried that it's going to be a reedition of the old trap: add women and mix in. We've already been there. We don't want to be those to manage hell. We want to disarm it, and we want to go build something different that can emerge from the interstices that are left in hell (Gutiérrez Aguilar 2017a; my translation from Spanish).

Feminist critiques played a key role in initial municipalist positions and reflections on government and governance in Spain, and 2017 was thus also a moment for revisiting some of the claims of 'feminizing' politics. Latin American feminisms played an important role in giving another perspective on feminist struggles, as they too had passed through the ups and downs of progressive governments. They also found themselves in a phase of re-energizing struggles in 2017, with Ni Una Menos and the Women's strikes working to get beyond the state-centric narrative of the great failure of progressive governments in Latin America ('fin de ciclo de los gobiernos progressistas en América del Sur; Gutiérrez Aguilar 2017) with a sober discourse on institutional promises and with a praxis that shifts the focus back to movements, since claims to progress and hope had been monopolized by the state.[52]

[52] This is reflected by councilor Gala Pin when she recounts how the huge, historically unprecedented 8th March strikes of 2018 inspired her and other feminists in government to look beyond institutional impasse: 'For me [on the timeline of municipalism] 8th March 2018 is a turning point, many of us who

Gutiérrez narrates the Latin American political-institutional experience as one of failure, yet she also affirms the need to articulate movements and institutions, when asked about choosing between the two:

> This is a question that was often asked in Latin America in terms of an excluding binarism, which moreover is a binarism that sterilizes the real possibility of making actions of sustained and profound force. It was movement or institution, and never could one think movement 'and' institution, and set the terms movement and institution in tendentially less hierarchizing conditions, where tasks are given to those who enter the institutions, because what they have to work on are these hierarchies. The problem is that the state is an entity where a great part of the capacity of public speech is monopolized. So, if those entering the institution preserve this monopoly, or what's more, if they reaffirm it… how is it then going to be possible to enable a dialogue? (Gutiérrez Aguilar 2017a).

The experience of activists-politicians affirming this division of visibility and legitimacy, of buying into the idea of their monopoly over meaning-making, from which, ultimately, the monopoly of violence is derived, is a bitter one. While this had been witnessed in Podemos, it was also reflected in different places and parts of municipalist movements, particularly when the traditional parties and their electoral priorities were involved (see Malaga workshop notes 2018 for an example). The gap between a state institution and an institution of the commons (or movement-institution) came to its fullest in these cases and moments, accentuating contradictions to a point where social movements strongly distanced themselves from the political doings of their ex-comrades. Madrid saw a lot of stark examples of such alienation, as did any other city to different degrees. The internal splits that occurred in municipalist movements had often to do with this position of imposing unitary narratives and of prioritizing hegemonic discourse -a reflection of 'the tension between confluence and unity,' as municipalist activists in Málaga put it (Málaga workshop notes 2018)- and as such with the statist influence of Podemos on municipalist candidatures.

6.11.2. Learning processes and phases, translocal network-building

The shift from a movement-dominated politics to a more institutionally determined one seemed unavoidable, and while in a way no one had expected otherwise, neither in the movements nor in the streets, there was no knowledge of what to do with this expectation: no precedent or indeed culture of precedents (Vercauteren, Mueller & Crabbé 2007) that could guide the municipalists on both ends of the civic architecture, the city hall and the streets, to take the two extremes of this spectrum, which should however be understood as a continuum involving a myriad of layers and configurations. As mentioned, Latin American genealogies were precious in providing

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were affectively demotivated with institutional politics and who were inside the institution, suddenly had the impression that the process lies outside of all that realm and that there's a climate where anything could happen, and that was super powerful' (Pin 2019a).

some referents, but of course municipal politics is not the same as central states, and national and local contexts are not always comparable. What does travel and is translatable, however, are affective states and modes of emotional and empathic understanding and support, and as such the links to Latin America were key not just –or maybe not even primarily– in a sense of providing cases, lessons or facts, but rather in the tacit and often affective grasping of phases and collective states, of moments and modalities of collective becoming.

Those processes of collective becoming -becoming social movement, becoming campaign, becoming electoral platform, becoming party, becoming institution, etc.- are always singular, and what can be drawn and learned from them often passes as much through the modes of inhabitation and articulation of agents. It is in this sense that the presence of people –elders perhaps– like Raquel Gutiérrez, Alberto García Linera, Silvia Federici, Antonio Negri and many more acts on the collective subjectivity. We will return to this dimension of learning and affect, and solidarity and trust, later, since the collective becoming of movements is never just about political moves and organization, but also about embodiments, imaginaries and interconnections.

Thus, in sum, while in one way or another, the imaginary of being able to sustain a movement-based institutional politics was kept alive until at least 2017, it began to show its cracks and the need for a different narrative and understanding of the relation movements-institutions became manifest. Hence, in 2017 we see a series of analyses emerge, leading to a more pragmatic and sober, sometimes also more directly (self-) critical tone in municipalist discourse. This was very much linked to the internal learning processes in the institutions, a key aspect of which concerned the recognition of different fields of political competences, until then ignored by large parts of social movements, but soon showing itself to be highly determinant in municipalist work and claims.

While from the outside, in the 15M movement and beyond, institutional politics had been criticized in a wholesale fashion as corrupt, and some of the workings of power therein were analyzed, there was little notion or experience of the actual mechanisms of government and institutional decision making. The sovereignty and power of politicians was largely overestimated, the complexity and slowness of policy-making largely unknown, and the division of powers across levels of government little understood. Thus, it became clear –at a broader social level– that in the absence of competences on social rights, employment, citizenship and migration, and with very limited legislative power, amongst many other things, municipalism would largely need to operate via a series of ‘minor’ (in the sense of Deleuze) political manoeuvres and *detournements* rather than being able to simply realize sweeping policies. This did not mean limiting its radical claims or failing to use the municipality as a discursive platform to challenge processes at other levels, as Barcelona en Comú did with respect to the arrival of people seeking asylum in Europe, the rise of right-wing

currents and politicians in Spain and beyond, or the fight against supranational lobbies and platforms like Airbnb.

In another turn towards referents, looking to find translocal ways of challenging neoliberalism and building municipalist networks, Barcelona en Comú invested in building international networks of movement-parties, linking up with the sanctuary cities movement and the Working Families Party in the US, as well as with nascent municipalist projects in Europe, Africa and Latin America particularly. This search for, and cultivation of, international referents was a key labor not just for strengthening Barcelona en Comú's profile abroad but also for nourishing it with ideas, inspiration and solidarity from abroad. The Fearless Cities summit in 2017 was a key expression of this drive within the party (Barcelona en Comú et al. 2017).

One referent in this process was Debbie Bookchin, daughter or anarchist communitarian municipalist Murray Bookchin. Around 2018, the latter became an important referent for ways of understanding the specific relations of cities to the state for Barcelona municipalism.[53] This problematic had become increasingly manifest with the surge in Catalan independentist movements, with the tensions between the political outlook of municipalism versus the more state-centered party politics of Podemos, as well as with the difficulty of negotiating limited municipal competences, the inability to legislate and access major budgets on healthcare, housing etc.

In the relation of cities to the state, limited competences could be seen as both a curse and a blessing. As the municipal government's hands were strongly tied on a lot of fronts, they turned to the invention of local schemes and dispositifs that operated as social as well as political machines –from housing or migrants' cooperatives to neighborhood-run cultural centers, in a myriad of experiments of situated participatory local politics. A specific know-how with its tactics and strategies for municipal governance thus emerged, with a more realistic and specific view to relations between movements and institutions, and a strong desire to win a second mandate in order to bring some of these dispositifs and broader strategies of municipalist transformation to a point of maturing. The role of neighborhoods and local actors appeared as key for engaging sustainable and resilient transformations at a local scale. Not just because those actors had long been key protagonists in politics in cities like Barcelona, but also because any durable political transformation would have to be rooted at the local scale, integrated into people's lives and everyday relations. Those are the agents who can best defend programs and policies as their own, and resist enclosures to come. Community-based urban institutions are not just particularly engaging and creative, they are also the most resilient.

[53] See, for instance, the Fearless Cities book (Barcelona en Comú et al. 2017) which has a foreword by Debbie Bookchin, this panel at a Barcelona conference (DSA 2018) or texts such as those of P2P Foundation 2018.

6.11.3. Inside/outside

Before we move on to look at specific places and times of municipalist collective thinking and action, let us pause on the use of the terms inside-outside for a moment, a topographical imaginary shared by almost all municipalist discourse as well as by academic and activist political analysis that charts the institution as 'inside' and the streets/movements/everyday life as 'outside.' Raquel Gutiérrez proposes a powerful inversion thereof, based on the idea that going into institutions is in fact 'entering the outside:'[54] 'There are some that entered the outside. Well, let them enter the outside and respect what we are doing and let them open up terms of dialogue' (Gutiérrez Aguilar 2017a; my translation from Spanish). And she goes on to describe how this way of approaching institutions from an assumed centrality of movements can avoid the compartmentalization or diluting of social desires into participatory processes or policy areas for example, as would be relevant examples in municipalism:

> This I think could be a fertile path for the longing for social transformation not to be transmuted into different levels of political change. Doing that would amount to packaging social desire into micro doses, it would amount to diluting them. When the energy of the 15M was here… That energy was made of the same stuff I think, it was the same energy that we could unfold in the water wars or that was unfolded in the aymara blockades, it was the same longing but with another content. This spread-out human capacity, how can we convert it into a torrent that unsettles and disturbs the institutional? That's my question and let's not assume the opposite, let's not think about how we can channel this process of struggle that is based in a profound collective desire into a change that's possible by establishing terms for diminishing the radicality of the word. This is what the comrades in Latin America did and it's going wrong, this is why they have been falling, this is why it's not going well for them (Gutiérrez Aguilar 2017a; my translation from Spanish).

Gutiérrez addresses a key problem and perhaps dilemma here, which is not just about a choice of terms but indeed, as she points out, about the *energies* carried by calls, cries, imaginaries and demands in social movements, and the way in which these link to social desire. Institutions are known to destroy, to fragment and weaken social longing, by 'blending it in' to rigid or inert institutional architectures (as Gutiérrez says of women being added and mixed into masculine political cultures), submitting it to rhythms and limitations that are not its own, by breaking its radicality down into many micro-doses that in themselves no longer bear the strong energy of the collective process, demand and movement.

[54] Trying to trace this notion of 'entering outside' in practice, some researcher-activists coming from the 15M and following the municipalist processes with a slight difference and distance (in Madrid and Barcelona particularly) have been conducting a research project called 'Entering outside,' where they look at some configurations of the relation between public and commons in community health practices in southern Europe. See the website https://entrarafuera.net/, accessed 24/7/2020.

On the other hand, on the part of movements, there is often a treacherous imaginary of governments and institutions as homogeneous or bloc-like, an idea that not only betrays the complex realities of agonism and antagonism as well as of roles and responsibilities within institutions, but can lead to premature responses of blockade and condemnation as well as misdirected critiques or requests on the part of movements. Asked what knowledge of institutions might be useful to take into account by movements, ex-councilor Gala Pin responds:

> everything is attributed to this unit of action, but in reality the party or government has different layers, and it's important to acknowledge these layers, not to excuse them but in order to elaborate a strategy so that tactics can be much more refined in the movements (Pin 2019a).

Early on in their mandate, Barcelona en Comú undertook sessions explaining the structure and functioning of city hall to its activists initially, to avoid misconceptions and inform activists and movements of possible ways to go about campaigning and demanding.

In Barcelona we witness thus a certain capacity of learning together across movements and institutions, of sharing information and aims despite actors being positioned broadly either on one or the other side of the movement-institution divide. This capacity, and the collective maturing it allowed for across mobilized society as a whole, is no doubt part of why Barcelona was spared the kinds of ruptures and alienation that happened in other cities. As Laia Forné Aguirre of Bcomú's team in city hall, says: 'In Barcelona –as opposed to other cities– there have been many communicating vessels between the street and public institutions' (Forné Aguirre 2019). We shall now turn to the role of these communicating vessels, intermediary and mediating agents and platforms.

6.11.4. Spaces of dialogue and critique between movements and institutions

The importance –generally expressed as a lack of– spaces of dialogue across movements and institutions, as well as across different layers and places of municipalism, is a recurrent motif in conversations about the micropolitics of municipalism. In this section, I will address different kinds of interstices and communicating vessels, in order to map out some of the corresponding efforts and shortcomings of the Spanish municipalisms in 2015-20.

Encounters and debates

The Fundación de los Comunes soon recognized this need for dispositifs to generate encounters across movements and institutions, and set out to organize a series of large-scale, periodical meetings: the MAC encounters, standing for Municipalismo, Autogobierno, Contrapoder (municipalism, self-government, counterpower). Their premise is the loose, non-ideological autonomist base of many of the social movements that initiated municipalist ventures, and the notion that institutions must respond to movements, and not vice versa (see Espinoza Pino 2017). Municipalism

was therein conceived as an autonomous movement, using different vessels and means but self-defining and self-governing beyond a single party or place: 'The municipalist movement claims autonomy in relation to any party or centralized instance, [as well as in relation to] its method of democratic construction and its roots in the cities and localities where the municipalist initiatives grew' (MAC1 2016; my translation from Spanish). There was a vision of being able to support or even spur movements from within the institution, not just of moving institutions in new directions:

> Municipalism also consists in imagining strategies to give resources and propel a new ecosystem of movements and institutional experiments from [within] the institutions -a new institutionality- while at the same time keeping the autonomous agenda of movements themselves intact (MAC1 2016; my translation from Spanish).

The Fundación de los Comunes to a considerable degree inherited the discourse and imaginaries on experimental and commons-based institutions that the Universidad Nómada had inaugurated, where institutionality was not a matter linked to formal or legal status but to social legitimacy and transversality. Transversality (Guattari 2003), in this radical vision of bottom-up institutions, is the equivalent to what inclusivity and participation are in liberal institutions: the difference between the two lies in where they locate the political subject. In the former, more autonomous sense, the agents of politics are the people who organize and assemble their own institutions, whilst in the latter it is politicians who make politics by deciding to include or exclude. In other words, borrowing from group psychology, in autonomous politics, the people are an in-group of institutionality, whilst in liberal versions, they are an out-group.

The first MAC summit was at Casa Invisible in Málaga in July 2016, the second one in Pamplona/Iruñea in July 2017, the third one in A Coruña in October 2017, and the fourth one in Madrid in June 2018. At MAC2, a more sober analysis of the autonomy of the political within the institutions appeared:

> The question of organization has certainly been the great blind spot of the institutional cycle, also in the municipalist initiatives. The consistent lack of organizational experiences has on too many occasions produced a growing isolation and autonomy of the municipal teams. And that's not just in the worst sense of bureaucratization and institutionalization of those very same [teams], but also in [terms of] their incapacity to overcome just the political limits inscribed in the institution (MAC2 2017; my translation from Spanish).

The various attempts at bridging movement and institutional dynamics had showed themselves to be very limited, and a sense of decoupling between the two spheres increased. Institutional actors seemed to be getting carried away by electoralist and careerist calculus, no longer responsive, let alone obedient to social movements. The

initial municipalist slogan of 'governing by obeying' (gobernar obedeciendo)[55] was no longer appropriate. And by the time of the 4th and last MAC meeting in Madrid, the question was no longer one of evaluating municipalism but rather of looking towards resurgent social movements and their capacity to point a way out of a sterile institutional climate that also affected activism (Contraparte 2018).

Laia Forné Aguirre, both a member of the Fundación de los Comunes via the Hídra cooperative and a municipal officer working on participation, once more reaffirmed the importance of autonomy in a 2019 text:

> If you want to build a public policy of the commons, it will have to learn a new way of *doing* that necessarily implies knowing how to conjugate spaces of autonomy with the public function. An autonomy that gives communities the capacity to make emancipatory policy, added to the capacity of city hall's public function (Forné Aguirre 2019; my translation from Catalan).

There are thus two notions of autonomy at play in the Fundación de los Comunes' discourse more broadly: that of the autonomy of movements and that of the autonomy of politics, taken from Gramsci, but read in the negative sense of the tendency of institutional politics to separate itself and act on its own behalf only.

The conversation about municipalism and its relation to social movements was also of interest to social and political movements internationally, addressed in a myriad of encounters, conferences and research projects organized by groups, platforms, foundations or parties across and beyond Europe. The Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, of Germany's Die Linke, was key to many of these endeavors (see, for instance, Rubio Pueyo 2017), but so were a host of social movements wanting to know about the work of municipalism in specific areas such as housing or migration for instance. Barcelona en Comú pursued a lively politics of international outreach and networking, themselves organizing large encounters between political and social movements, such as the Fearless Cities in 2017 in Barcelona, and many parties in other cities, too, tried to enliven municipalism internationally (even so, Barcelona remained the by far most active and successful in this regard).

As the local relations between municipalist parties and social movements changed and weakened, however, this international work also lost some of its more radical potential, in the worst case acting as a replacement relation of sorts, whereby city governments reached out to movements abroad when they could no longer engage in fruitful dialogue with their own local social movement in a specific area. This was the sense I sometimes had at times with Barcelona en Comú's international commission, particularly after 2017. An example of this is the international attention and praise received by the Ciutat Refugi refugee welcoming program and campaign of Barcelona en Comú, which at home however was met with stark criticism from migrant rights

[55] This phrase was very widely used in early municipalist days, for instance as the title of Barcelona en Comús Code of Ethics (Guanyem Barcelona / Barcelona en Comú 2015).

groups and their allies, as undocumented street vendors (Manteros) were being criminalized. The contrast and contradictions between Barcelona en Comú's 2015 migrations group manifesto (Barcelona en Comú Migrations 2015) against the criminalization of the manteros, and the reality of their governance in coming years (see, for instance, Iborra 2016, Macedo 2019), including police deployment and campaigns against illegal vending, was an uncomfortable fact.[56]

Beyond the struggles for autonomy

While this was the predominant sense around the time of 2017 -one of *weakening* relations between movements and institutions- things however look somewhat differently in 2020. Retrospectively, it seems that relations between movements and institutions went through some phases of change, from co-emergence and synchrony to gradual differentiation and dissociation, to later finding new ways of relating and producing complicity. In Barcelona, after the 2019 elections, at a time when electoral repetitions as well as independentist-statist polarizations calmed down somewhat, a new climate for radical alliances with the municipalist institution emerged. This time, alliances were not marked by notions of autonomy -movements had found their way back from or into municipalism more solidly, and Bcomú and its councilors had also consolidated their roles and positions more- but by notions of cooperation.

In other cities where municipalism lost power, and where conditions had been grimmer, the prophecies of dissociation and decline of course turned out to be accurate, and the need for movements to distance themselves durably from this experience and move on was palpable. Thinking with childrearing and subjectivity formation, as we do here, we may see an 'autonomy phase' of sorts in the relation between movements and institutions in Barcelona: an initially exciting, but then also painful process of people breaking away from movements to shape municipalist projects in institutions, involving a lot of struggles around association and differentiation, feelings of anger and abandonment. Autonomy phases, as phases of differentiation, bring upheaval and confusion, and a reorganization of relations and modes of dependency. Following the struggles -both subjective and collective- of becoming-separate, of individuation in Simondon's terms, there arise new subject positions, and with them new possibilities for relation and association. It seems to me that movements as well as municipalist actors in Barcelona had gone through this cycle by 2020, in a way that -compared to most other cities in Spain- allowed for integrity and new kinds of political work.

Autonomy phases, if we can thus think them in relation to political movements and relations, are not once-and-for-all points of identity formation, but points along ongoing processes of life, as becoming and individuation. Just as with human beings,

[56] This is an extremely interesting case for the detailed study of the complexity of power relations within the institution and municipalist parties, from the tensions between Ada Colau and police chief David Battlé, expressions of discord from the migrations axis of Barcelona en Comú as well as different officials of Bcomú, to the difficulty the elected officials have with positioning themselves in this respect, as well as the massive pressure from local shop owners' associations, etc.

cycles of change, differentiation and consolidation leap into one another, leading us not into a fixed identity but into a blossoming of subjectivities and alliances, never final but only ever metastable. The theories on subjectivity and identity of Guattari (Guattari & Rolnik 2006) and on individuation of Simondon (Simondon 2005) point in this direction, where we can see not just human becoming but an integration of processes and phases of becoming across a myriad of bodies, living and livelihoods. The individual and the collective are in constant interplay in processes of individuation (see also Zechner 2013a).

Permanent spaces of encounter

A 2017 text coming out of the Instituto de Democracia y Municipalismo reflected on the need for spaces of encounter in the following terms:

> Sustaining the tension between institutions and the movement dimension requires an organic approach that needs to be capable of encompassing very different social agents within a territory, generating spaces of encounter that allow for dialoguing and the defining of collective strategies. But where to meet? It would be necessary to build enclaves in the territory that favor such discussions, such as ateneos (neighborhood-run social-cultural centers), casas del pueblo (village social-cultural centers) and autonomous social centers– there's a fair few historical examples to draw on. Without open local dispositifs that allow us to centralize encounters, conversations and popular articulation– and whose model could well be different from case to case– it will be almost impossible to pose political challenges that sustain themselves over time, beyond episodical events (Espinoza Pino 2017; my translation from Spanish).

The emphasis on the territory and local dimension of such spaces is important, as it takes continuous, embedded and embodied dialogue and thinking in order to render the tension between movements and institutions productive. Only local and organized agents can build and sustain pressure from below, in touch with local realities and with a broad vision of problems and demands. The Casa Invisible in Málaga is a failed version of such a site of articulation. Whilst several councilors of Málaga Ahora emerged from the Casa Invisible, and the municipalist campaign received support by the social center, the relation between activists and councilors gradually deteriorated. The institutional 'ocupas' that come from the social center, as many of the councilors understood their role, were disappointed by the lack of incentive on the part of the social center, having hoped for them to run campaigns and put pressure on institutional action, so that they could turn the respective keys in the institutions. Councilors point to the calls for discussion that were launched from the city administration, which activists were apparently unaware of. The social center was left weakened and fragile as its ex-activists entered the institution (albeit in an oppositional role), not least by personal disappointments that came with political splits, and no clear strategy for action emerged on the activist side.[57] Both councilors

[57] Common grievances and challenges abound: 'No use is being made of the knowledge of the city we

and activists agree that the lack of micropolitical awareness has been a key problem, leading to conflicts, mistrust, insecurity, personal strategies and ambitions, silence and misunderstandings to take over. This was due to, and exacerbated by, a lack of common spaces of discussion and strategizing.

Speaking of Barcelona, Laia Forné Aguirre names 'republican cooperativism, social struggles, the feminist movement and the associational and neighborhood fabric' (Forné Aguirre 2019) as key territorial actors that operate via collective spaces of debate and encounter that build counter-power, and can act as communicating vessels to the city administrations. It is territorial rootedness that allows social movements to make claims that are radical in the sense that they take complex local realities into account, and ideally, side with those most vulnerable. In a similar account, Gala Pin tells of how, as a councilor, she came to value the agency of radical autonomous movements, and their role in pressuring or mediating:

> One thing I've been thinking these 4 years is that the libertarian, anarchist, autonomous sector –or whatever you want to call it– is super important. I've fought a lot with them in the movements, but suddenly they emerge as a sector that's capable of distinguishing between different layers of society…and can work with the sex workers, the lumpen, the middle class that isn't middle class but wants to be middle class –with its disagreements and tensions, but it knows how to understand complexity and so on (Pin 2019a; my translation from Spanish).

She appreciates the fact that anarchists have a global vision of the city (as opposed to economic sectors) and that because they don't need to prove themselves to the institution, they do not fear conflict, 'because what conflict does is give voice or influence to people who usually don't have that' and because 'it's not all about recognition and that things are super fun' (Pin 2019a). The role of conflict, antagonism and autonomy can thus also be appreciated from within the institution, albeit retrospectively in this case (Pin had left office 5 months prior to this interview).

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have from the vantage point of town hall;' 'a lack of spaces of communication between Málaga Ahora and the Casa Invisible, where we can sit down and discuss, think, share;' 'there's a corporativism and personalism that makes conversations personal' rather than allowing for shared public debate; 'a lack of debate about the genealogy of municipalism within the Casa Invisible,' again these considerations are only expressed at an individual level; 'micro-debates impede broader debates, because they're already decided;' there's a predominance of 'personal and personalist strategies, some people have a lot of weight in decision-making and end up deciding the pathway;' 'the Casa Invisible hasn't had protagonism or set the debate regarding urban issues;' 'movements lacked collective analyses of the conjuncture;' 'a difficulty understanding the micropolitical affects/effects that exist within city hall, people don't feel supported;' 'a need for a space like the MAC but at the local level' because 'at the MAC people come with a discourse that then doesn't apply in Málaga;' 'it's a problem that people speak of Malaga Ahora and the Casa Invisible in binary terms, that there hasn't been a space to share this;' 'a space to build shared strategy;' and to acknowledge 'shared vulnerability;' from the outside, 'the conflict within Málaga Ahora was a bit scary.' These quotes are taken from different participants at the internal workshop I organized on the micropolitics of municipalism at Málaga's Casa Invisible in 2018.

Let's now briefly look at the institutional and organizational attempts at establishing pathways of exchange with movements.

6.11.5. Organizational and institutional vessels to communicate with movements

To some extent, and differing degrees across places, the municipalist party platforms themselves are the main communicating vessels between movements and institutions. The ambition expressed in calling them 'platforms' rather than 'parties' points to a desire for them to be more than keepers of the party books and electoral campaign organs. Barcelona en Comú, for instance, is a complex organization with multiple layers in its 'D' phase (2016-onward), featuring a plenary, different commissions, territorial and thematic groups, a coordinating and executive group, and different intersections with the institutional space (Barcelona en Comú, undated). Its architecture is designed to bring together officials from city hall (councilors and their teams), party members and representatives (those elected to different bodies), and social movement actors. In order to trace the connections and (initially) entanglements with movements, it is useful to step back and look at its beginnings.

At the very beginning of the electoral campaign, Guanyem Barcelona was a platform of activists without any elected officials yet, unmarked by the categorizations and hierarchies of political institutions. The elaboration of the electoral program is a good example of how a core group of initiators kicked off an immense process of participation, or indeed collaboration, since vast amounts of new people took matters in their own hands (Zechner 2015; 2017). Events and assemblies were organized along local and thematic lines, in order to come up with proposals of measures for the program. This was an incredibly mobilizing and empowering process, unseen in this form anywhere in the world, whereby thousands of people were inspired to imagine and dream up the city they desired ('If we have the capacity to imagine another Barcelona, we have the power to transform it' was a key slogan of Guanyem Barcelona), coming up with visionary collective proposals. This meant a process of building, first, great organizational power, from collective inhabitation and composition, and through this, considerable representational power, first informal, and later with the elections also formal. As I have argued with Bue Hansen in an article that addresses the ways in which different forms of politics build power, there is great value in building transversal connections across the spheres of networking, inhabitation, organization and representation (Zechner & Hansen 2015). Municipalism springs from a novel and intelligent articulation of these dimensions towards a broader political project (see Zechner & Hansen 2015 for an early analysis of Barcelona en Comú along these lines).

The groups that drafted the program locally and thematically were formalized as 'axes' within the initial organigram of Barcelona en Comú ('phase C'), acting as organs of communication and mediation across the emergent divisions of labor and formal roles. There were thematic lines (healthcare, education, local government, work, urbanism, migrations, culture, gender, information society, city economy,

tourism, security, right to information –in abbreviated terms, see figure 3 of the appendix for full names) as well as territorial lines (neighborhood axes), which carried information from the bottom up by sourcing and articulating ideas, scanning and receiving grievances, suggestions and complaints in movements, as well as downward from the institution by communicating decisions and engaging political pedagogy.[58]

This organizational model, highly functional and efficient in the campaign phase, resembles the assembly-based libertarian municipalism of Bookchin, where groups can make their own decisions without depending on superior instances much. It however stopped being quite so functional as Bcomú entered the institutions. Confronted with institutional hierarchies and protocols (including their timeframes, vocabularies, formalizations of knowledge, etc.), the function of the ejes became unclear, as their assembly-based decisions and proposals were now no longer binding or even recognized, making them highly dependent on the officials in their fields. Some ejes managed to continue and reinvent themselves in this new landscape, particularly where assemblies were led by people with good knowledge of representational and institutional politics and where corresponding officials were more susceptible to working collectively and with social movements (for instance, the feminisms eje and the international commission). In many fields, however, this was not the case (on the one hand because not all areas of government went to Bcomú with its 11 councilors, on the other hand in Bcomú, too, there were people with different political cultures, particularly those coming from established parties like ICV_EUiA, Procés Constituent). Many ejes thus lost their power and with it their energies, and stopped functioning. In the diagram of the D phase, they are no longer mentioned.

An example of an eje that survived across and even beyond Bcomú's first term is that of Feminisms, a vibrant space with high participation and good exchange with elected officials. This was a space that has continuously served not just for feedback and ideas on policy, but also as a space for reflecting on the cultures of care ('or of non-care,' as Gala Pin remarked in our interview) that existed and emerged across the institution and the party. Feminism has been a key pillar for Bcomú from the start, and found its representation both in the institution, party and activist base. Within the party, a study on gender in the organization was commissioned (Diversitas 2018), and within city hall a telegram group of Bcomú women became a useful platform for mutual support (Pin 2019a).

[58] There are myriad examples of this kind of mediation. In the case of the undocumented street vendors in Barcelona, for instance, the migrations axis of BComú was actively debating the problem of criminalization and precarity, picking up on critiques from different migrant organizing and anti-racist groups and platforms, holding meetings with them, creating statements and communiqués to pass on to councilors and other working groups. This sometimes involves writing articles, organizing debates and meetings across movements and institutional actors, and filtering down rationales of decisions and suggestions for tactics to activist groups. All this can take many forms and pathways. Indeed, the migrations group is not exactly an example of success since they lost much of their power after the electoral campaign, surviving as more of a lose network after the first years of government.

Another important level of exchange is that between municipalist platforms (comprising their activist as well as organizational and to some extent also institutional base), facilitated via the Municilab encounters at the Spanish level (held in Barcelona 2017 and 2018, organized by Bcomú)[59] and the international Fearless cities summits (2017 in Barcelona, 2018 in New York, Warsaw, Brussels, Valparaíso).[60] These platforms allow for broader networking and exchange across municipalist strata as well as places, with local platforms largely setting the agenda.

From movements to institutions, municipalism implied a change of rhythm, tonality and modality of relation. It generally oriented actors across the spectrum towards the town hall and institutions. For activists in the street and neighborhoods, and above all for municipalists in institutions and parties, this meant grappling with the temporalities of policy, elections, media, often with a sense of becoming absorbed by those, losing the autonomous timeframes as well as conceptual and organizational production characteristic of the social movements from which municipalism emerged. In this section we will dedicate some time to look at the times, spaces and embodiments that came with municipalism's 'assault on the institutions' [asalto institucional]. We begin with analyzing everyday life in the institutions and then look at changes in social movements, coming to grasp how individualization works in institutional politics, leading us into a final section on broader matters of participation and policy.

6.12. Collective intelligence, affect, embodiment and subjectivation

> The rhythm of the electoral cycle is not the rhythm of life and its unforeseeable musicality, nor that of the city and its infinite noises. But since some years we have exceedingly adapted our rhythms to the monotonous electoral noise and its resonances in the media (España Naveira 2019; my translation from Spanish)

6.12.1. Socializing experience to make it meaningful

Another crucial aspect, always mentioned, is the way in which institutional architectures and temporalities separate its workers from the everyday rhythms of neighborhoods and movements. The sheer complexity, enormity and intensity of administration is something councilors across cities mention as a factor of alienation. Communication within the institution is a complicated matter, too. Gala Pin mentions the women's Telegram group in city hall as a rare (albeit modest) example of a continuous space of care and notes the overall lack of spaces of collective thinking once in office. Accelerated rhythms and a lack of spaces of socialization make it impossible for councilors to develop shared imaginaries. Pin comments how, despite seeing other members of the municipal team frequently, and working with great

[59] See the website of the Municilabs https://municilab.cat/, accessed 24/7/2020.
[60] See the website of the Fearless Cities Summits http://fearlesscities.com/en/summits, accessed 24/7/2020.

numbers of fantastic people, the modalities of institutional work do not allow for the development of common notions, neither at the subjective nor objective level. 'We're living very different realities, we don't have spaces for socializing what is happening to us, what we are finding, what we are seeing, from the subjective to the objective, and so our common senses, which had been very close, are distancing themselves instead of broadening together' (Pin 2019a). This leads to emotional and affective disagreements.

Alejandra Baciero, working for the municipal Medialab in Madrid, has a similar experience

> Indeed I feel a big difference regarding your team at work, for instance in Medialab I don't feel I have a team, I have people around me on whom I can rely at different moments, but I don't feel there is a common vision, no common vision that would make us consult or participate in all decisions has configured itself from the beginning (Baciero 2018).

In these accounts we hear resonances of the fragmentation and 'blending' that Gutiérrez speaks of in Latin America, of how collective thought comes to be limited and social desire consequently packaged into micro-doses.

The 15M movement and the municipalist electoral campaigns were moments of peak collective intelligence, and they had created networks and modes of thinking and action that were hard to bring into the institution. Amador Fernandéz-Sabater from Madrid speaks of a loss of empathy that came with the municipalist turn:

> The 15M created a *sensitive common* in which it was possible to feel others and with others, as fellow beings. This skin has peeled off or gone numb, weakened to a considerable degree by a 'verticalization' of attention and desire, deposited and delegated towards the electoral promise of the new politics during the 'institutional takeover.' Captivated by the stimuli that came from above (tv, leaders, parties), at the same time neglecting what happened around us, the skin cracked (Fernandéz-Sabater 2018; my translation from Spanish).

The skins that were most brutally affected by this dynamic were no doubt those of the new councilors and government teams, whose often invisible and repressed experiences we want to look at here, to properly understand municipalist micropolitics as a relational matter, wherein all actors are sentient, affected and responsible. This points us to a crucial problem, one that sits at the heart of this report: how do people and groups *learn* within and across different places and positions of municipalism, its 'insides,' 'in-betweens' and 'outsides'? How do they produce useful knowledge about their conditions, in ways that build *cultures of precedents*, that provide concepts, lessons and stories that future generations can orient themselves by? We follow the leads of feminism, feminization and care here in order to understand experiences and limitations of institutional political work.

6.12.2. Embodying vulnerability…

New councilors and their co-workers found themselves thrown into a new institutional and mediatic reality marked by caution and distrust, yet they could not quite share this experience –neither amongst themselves due to lack of spaces/times, nor with their previous collective contexts in social movements, for fear of being judged. Councilor Claudia Delso of A Coruña says

> We do speak much amongst ourselves, the only thing is that we don't socialize it. We don't socialize it because of a fear of the interpretation that will be made of this, in the context we're in…I think there's a whole surrounding that's thinking about this, that is helping us find ways out which are absolutely fundamental and vital, and the problem is that we're not socializing it... (Delso 2018).

Madrid councilor Celia Mayer says there was no dialogue between the institution and movements, 'we're trapped between private chats and the media,' the latter determining interpretations and debates (Traficantes de Sueños 2017). Apart from missing mechanisms and spaces, the media and opposition's political slander clearly also play a role in the lack of evaluation and self-criticism, making it impossible for politicians to express vulnerability and doubt.

This tendency has been challenged many times by Ada Colau, who let herself cry and admit to struggling in different occasions (Pau Faus' film 'Alcaldessa' dwells on this). This is also what the feminization of politics can mean: to remain attuned to vulnerability despite (or through) mediatic exposure and rigid institutional hierarchies that make it difficult to show sensitivity and emotional interdependence. In a context where politicians are supposed to project the strong and sovereign individual -the context of politics in most places and ages, as profoundly patriarchal culture- a mayor who cries with calm and dignity, as a normal way of letting emotion happen, rather than in the exceptional modality of breakdown only, is a powerful example of another kind of embodiment of politics. To allow oneself to feel, be affected and resonate with things that happen is a powerful act, in city hall as much as in party spaces and indeed activist cultures: the projection of sovereign, cool individuality is a problem that movements and organizations of all kinds face, too.

6.12.3…as a way of changing political culture

In a very micropolitical endeavor of research and debate, Barcelona en Comú's feminist diagnosis of gender dynamics in the organization looks at this also, featuring a schema of 'masculinity and new forms of political interaction,' which charts out traditional political habitus against open and pluralist political practice as seen in the movements of 2011 and onwards (Institut Diversitas 2017; see appendix section 4, chart on 'Masculinitat I noves formes'). The chart contrasts a) ' "winning the political debate" based on the imposition of positions' with 'recognition of diverse postures,' b) 'using absolute opinions (locking down positions)' with 'valorizing elements of contrary postures that can be shared,' c) 'always showing assurance and authority'

with ‘relativizing one’s own assumptions,’ d) ‘difficulty in sharing political discrepancies’ with ‘facilitating shared spaces of work,’ e) ‘speed in the taking of decisions’ with ‘allowing for time of deliberation,’ and finally, f) ‘exclusive, restricted and informal spaces of decision making’ with ‘inclusive and transparent spaces of decision making’ (Barcelona en Comú/Institut Diversitas, 2018). This schema provides a very good overview of some of the shifts in activist culture that the movements of 2011 (the movements of ‘the squares’) brought about and that the new municipalist organizations are adamant to translate into the sphere of institutional politics. This is easier to realize within the party, which is autonomous in the sense of giving itself its own forms and laws, than within the city administration. The memory of movements and the 15M are still alive in those who went to take on official roles, but it is being worn down by institutional protocol.

6.12.4. Fear and the individualization of responsibility

Many councilors admit to an acute sense of missing the collective sense of political experimentation and the trust that characterize social movements:

> There are elements of listening and communication and of processes of construction let’s say, of trial and error that happen in movements but that we find very hard to make happen with the institutional. …For me there’s something we bring from the movements but that we’re not able to place at the center and to dare, and that’s where fear comes in…(Delso 2018; my translation from Spanish).

Whilst in social movements, experimentation rarely triggers fear (repression does), in the institution, this seems to be the inverse. Fear is an affect that was mentioned oftentimes in my interviews, occurring in relation to experiences and processes at all levels, from personal to macropolitical, from a fear that right-wing electoral wins to fear of personal failure. The presence of this affect has to do with the strong sense of individual responsibility that comes with being a public representative or indeed servant. ‘Responsibility’ is another word that came up in several councilors’ accounts of unpleasant dynamics in my interviews.

The micropolitical problems facing people and groups at different levels of municipalism are far from being matters of personal choice or virtue mainly, nor of *limited* responsibility –municipalism was engaged as a broad movement and vision by many, and while everyone needs to deal with where they ended up five years after (in grey town hall offices, in pirate radios decrying political manoeuvres, at home with kids…) it is clear that there is still a shared responsibility for what happened and will happen. Some splits and disenchantments have fractured the big ‘we’ that stood at the beginning of municipalism, yet a sense of interest, empathy and dialogue is still palpable across movements and institutions in 2020, at least in Barcelona. The vibrating skin of the 15M might have cracked and become rough, but in the vulnerability and suffering of its cracks there are a myriad of reflections and attempts at moving on, together, even if this takes on very different meanings. The problem is

rather about the configuration of institutional work and decision-making, where responsibility is individualized, rather than merely limited. Whilst the fact of not being able to take sweeping, broad decisions hardly bothers or surprises anyone in the institution (but the most despotic characters perhaps), the fact of having to take and stand for decisions more or less alone does.

And again, it appears that those most acutely fragmented are the ones at the top of the institution, cut off from the *collective* intelligence, responsibility and care that had accompanied them in social movements. Some find this easier to deal with than others, and unsurprisingly this difference often articulates itself along gender lines. Alejandra Baciero, in the position of someone working for a municipal institution and active in a municipalist platform, is bothered by the loss of closeness with collective agency in movements:

> In fact I rather feel a bit distant [from movements] and that worries me a lot, because before I felt closeness and now it's like I'm in an intermediate space which is a bit of a no-mans-land, and it's hard to know how to deal with it, because in fact the idea was to translate the lessons from all this more movement -and militancy-based phase into… well, to take those lessons and bring them into municipalist dispositifs that can then translate into real politics, into public policy (Baciero 2018; my translation from Spanish).

This account of being in a no-man's-land makes me think of the term equidistance, a terrifying notion for municipalists who seek to keep taking sides, avoiding the liberal notion that there can be a neutral place. Being equidistant, as being at a distance from both movements and institutional habitus, is to be lost, to be nowhere. This was never the idea. How to collectively position oneself, to find a collective compass in a context that strongly individualizes? This is the role of fractions and municipalist sub-platforms, as spaces of collective deliberation and positioning. Baciero is part of Madrid 192, a municipalist space of affinity that allows for collective reflection and care, she says. The various organs, assemblies and social spaces of municipalist parties also serve similar functions of collectivity, allowing for different levels of agonism and antagonism within and beyond municipalist projects. While they act upon the institution as collective forces, they fail to undo the individualization of public function in itself. This individualization is inscribed in politics as a focus on the person and its agency, on individual political subjects.

The institutional -as public- political subject is not just individual or personal however, it is also -unsurprisingly since it is a subject on paper first and foremost- disembodied. Being disembodied here means more than being disconnected from bodily feelings, needs and desires: it means being disconnected from material, bodily interdependency, the very basis of our life, in favor of a myth of autonomy. This is a critique of politics we heard feminists make in a myriad ways (see for instance Perez Orozco 2014, Galindo 2019, Federici 2014). We shall dwell on some (dis)embodying and individualizing aspects of institutional politics, in order to understand what we are

up against when we speak about 'changing political culture' and 'taking over institutions' and, indeed, to get an idea of what kinds of embodiments and political subjects institutions of the commons would need to be based on.

6.12.5.Institutions without bodies?

In city hall, a heavy workload and workdays of 12-15 hours together with representational function make for schizophrenic experiences. As Gala Pin says, whilst outside the institution you might go through 3-4 moods in a day, in the institution it is more like 10-15.[61] In official roles, responsibility is individualized, and thus fear, mistrust, guilt and defensiveness come to mark a myriad of relationships and processes. Decision-making is often individualized in institutions, and moreover individual bodies are supposed to decide in conditions of extreme pressure and stress – 'In order to take the right decisions… decisions are also taken with the body, and the institution makes you negate the body' (Pin 2019a).[63] This individualization of responsibility and decision is precisely what the movements for a new politics were up against. Not having means to effectively counter it is a grave fact.

Moreover, the negation of the body in the institution is a problem not for individuals, but also for politics as large, rendering a deep-reaching 'feminization of politics' impossible. As Maria Galindo points out, speaking of the inquiry she did on gender in the Bolivian parliament (during the mandate of Evo Morales):

> We're in democracy without bodies. The body is expelled from political matters. The parliamentarians themselves told me that they had never addressed

[61] 'In a day when I'm not in the institution, I go through 3-4 moods (at the micro level many more, of course), however in a day in the institution you get up happy because they give you news that some building works you've been waiting for 3 months get the go-ahead, then you read an email that says you're lacking money for something and you get pissed off, then you meet up with people who explain a program of work placement to you that's super important to them, they've been preparing for this meeting for months, you have to empathize and figure out if this projects fits into the categories of the institution, whether you find it interesting and it's in the public interest, and how you can fit it in; then you run to a historical remembrance event, you walk there and prepare for it and when you arrive you get emotional, because these things always move you, from there you run to the managing board of the Licaeu theatre, there's the man from the state, the man from the Generalitat, the man from the Diputació, the gentlemen from the Liceu, and you have to read between lines there and understand what they're saying about the budget because there's really some political moves there that you don't quite grasp, but you have to also remember that you have to be very nice with that man there and give him a wink so that he helps you out with the Raval Nord health center, whilst at the same time a lover writes you and says they can't meet tonight so you feel down, then later you go for lunch with someone you have to talk some work things over with but they tell you that their father was sent to hospital, you have to be empathic, etc...' (Pin 2019a; my translation from Spanish).

[63] Pin still considers change in the institution is possible, but under certain conditions only:

> I think it can be done, but I don't know if with a government of 11 [councilors], with this kind of macropolitical intensity… it sounds banal but if we'd been 20, without each of us having to be in charge of 3 things at the same time, without a 155 [enforcing of central Spanish rule onto the Catalan political bodies], without a declaration of independence [in Catalunya], etc. … We did indeed generate some spaces of reflection, but got together twice in four years as the entire government in order to think about policies, and that was only because some of us forced it a lot… I understood that, because I also couldn't, there wasn't space in my calendar either (Pin 2019a; my translation from Spanish).

> the issue of the body, it isn't considered important. Thus, when they debate abortion, there are no established bases for political discussion, and those of us who did indeed build them [the bases] are expelled from the right to debate (Galindo 2019; my translation from Spanish).

The problem of changing political culture is not a matter of replacing male with female bodies simply –'The feminist imaginary stands for political proposals for the transformation of society. It's not an ideology of rights for women within a neoliberal patriarchal system' (Galindo 2019). To properly and profoundly transform this culture, in the sense of a becoming-feminist of politics, means to grapple with the body not just as an object (upon which policies impact) but, firstly, as the basis for politics as practice itself, in order to enable other kinds of deliberation, decision-making and, thus, policy. In Barcelona en Comú, this is addressed mostly in terms of debates around reconciling work and life and to some extent also diversity (see, for instance, BComú Ejecutiva 2019).

But, as Celtia Traviesas Mendez, ex-secretary of Political Strategy and Communication of Podemos Galicia, points out (her words resonating with those of Gala Pin), there is invisible knowledge and analysis about ways of embodying power, which grows and circulates in conversations between women within and across institutions. The account of ex-councilor Claudia Delso, responding to Traviesas Mendez, reflects this:

> During my four years on the front lines, I have felt physically blocked in my diaphragm –the wide muscle located between the chest and abdomen, which rhythmically contracts and relaxes to help us breathe air into and out of our lungs. I had bronchitis four times and pneumonia once and even had to begin using a night guard to sleep. But the strain placed on my body didn't just come from the daily management of a councilorship that we built up from nothing, tackling the million and one exciting challenges it presented –challenges which were often rife with problems caused by the datedness of the institution itself. What strained my body the most was observing, enduring and participating in the traditional exertion of power and, in turn, one of its more unpleasant outcomes: power struggles. I resigned myself to thinking that politics could only be approached with a mindset that polarises, excludes and rejects otherness (Delso & Traviesas Mendez 2019).

Delso says she needed to find her way back to 'fragility, fears, vulnerability, grief and everything that does not fit into the world of politics' after her first four years as a councilor: 'I keep asking myself why we have not been able to change our approach in a way that is much more tangible than just a weaving a narrative. Or at least why we haven't made a more heartfelt attempt to do so' (Delso & Traviesas Mendez 2019). Traviesas Mendez thinks this is due to their male peers' resistance to changing political semantics: 'Most of our male colleagues are not ready to surrender those concepts. Doing so requires a deep personal reckoning' (Delso & Traviesas Mendes

2019.) Here we find another internal faultline within municipalism, running along lines of gender, that has rarely found public expression beyond the positive discourses of feminizing politics and care.

6.12.6. Finding new positionalities

What is the role of movements in looking at the conditions of alienation in the institution? Should they care about the debacle of their (ex-)comrades in the halls of power? Do movements not risk immobility and impasse if they get too absorbed in the spectacle of institutional struggle? Certainly, they do, and in many cities it took them a while to find back -or find anew- their place, voice, strength and mission. With all eyes and minds focused on municipalism, on this new field of learning and practice within, across and beyond institutions, it took a while for movements to catch their breath and focus back on their own place and roles, particularly since these roles partially changed with a dialoguing administration. It is dangerous for movements to empathize with new politicians and thus accept the latter's political failings, out of a sense of loyalty or friendship. This process can easily lead to the subsumption of movements, without anyone in the institutions necessarily ever desiring such a dynamic. The relation between movements and institutions is just that -a dynamic relation- and as such depends on both parts playing a role. It is not a relation dictated by those in the institution, nor is it fixed.

Disentangling the emotional and relational interdependencies across these two fronts took some years in the base of Barcelona. Like after any change in relational roles and positions, it is confusing for people to navigate the new separations this brings and to understand what distance feels right, and when feelings of betrayal, abandonment and anger are legitimate. The affective dilemmas municipalism brought with it –as broad dilemmas of social relationality, not just as interpersonal problems– were not known to many people beforehand. And if they were known, it was mostly as knowledge of processes *elsewhere* (Latin America) rather than as embodied knowledge. Hence, it was hard to speak of the social and political recomposition that municipalism implied in situ, in embodied terms.

Should and could movements address their ex-comrades in institutions in the same terms as before, with the trust that they're on the same side? Should and could councilors try to explain their institutional ordeals to movements? If councilors relay their challenges, they might not expect the listeners to take over their responsibility (Pin 2019a), but in a scenario marked by trust, won't people realistically feel caught up or immobilized by these stories? Where is the line between soliciting empathy and manipulating people's political outlook? How to navigate this complexity without leading into either blind apologism or blind condemnation? Where and when to draw the line(s) as movements, and adopt an antagonistic stance towards municipalism? In a context where collective debate is possible on an ongoing level, those matters can be thought through and resolved of course: in the absence of such platforms, social

movement actors as well as municipalists are left to make private interpretations and decisions.

Overall, beyond some pockets of encounter and debate, and beyond private friendship circles, no collective intelligence was engaged to address this matter, few lessons learned at a collective level. After a few years of paralysis and silence, social movement actors either adopted a pragmatic attitude to municipalism or disengaged, as individuals mostly. A small number became cynical of municipalism. At a collective level, the matter remained too complex to address without exploding assemblies. It could fragment already fragile spaces of mobilization. While at a political level this is understandable -it would make little sense for movements to endlessly debate what the correct line is, indeed, it is much more interesting that people are diverse and flexible on this subject- at a social level this led to a lot of awkwardness.

Raquel Gutiérrez and Rosa Lugano, reflecting on an impressive conversation between Bolivian activist Maria Galindo and then vice-president Alberto García Linera (Galindo & García-Linera 2014), take to narrating the process lived on the movement side with strong words, allowing for no apology of politicians' missed opportunities:

> …there is a continuity and causality between social mobilization and the occupying of the state by the so-called progressive governments, but once these settled [in the institution] that force was made minority, its protagonists converted into students and spectators. Everything is thus inscribed in a new turn of the screw –and of language– of plunder, which is the intimate key to capital's power (Gutiérrez 2014 & Lugano; my translation from Spanish).

Certainly, many people became unhappy spectators of Spain's new municipalism too, feeling concerned by the complexity and difficulties of government, but also feeling patronized by the electoralist language of 'governing for all' that municipalists often adopted. The 'we' of the 2014/15 municipalist surge had disappeared in real life, but it persisted and was generalized in discourse. Increasingly, the municipalists' attempts at engaging political pedagogy (seen particularly in 2017, as noted above) failed, in the sense that they provoked either an empty, demobilizing empathy or pity, but no broad debate or collective movement. Individualization, we may add to the quote above, is indeed the intimate key to neoliberalism's power. In the case of municipalism, it comes with a lack of collective strategy that manifests itself in the personalization of issues and tactics (as noted in relation to Málaga above), and with erratic and short-term moves by people or fractions. Emmanuel Rodriguez blames this 'tacticism' for breaking the potential of real change in the given conjuncture:

> Tactics are engaged in concrete practices, avoid obstacles, save movements, seek immediate efficacy. Tactics don't require complex questioning, don't need to think about ends. That's why, and particularly in institutional politics, tacticism tends to boil down to the question of 'how much power'…a concrete action produces. And that's why political tacticism is congruent with the 'elitist'

> logics of the concentration of power in small groups, in charismatic leadership. In other words, the 'governism' [gobernismo] and the 'autonomy of the political' that reduce politics to these games of institutional and minority action. …In the worst case, -our case– tacticism tends to confuse a minorities' position of power with the opportunities for change that a conjuncture offers (Rodriguez 2016: 190; my translation from Spanish).

The hypervisibility of individual leadership –as is common from Pablo Iglesias to Ada Colau, Manuela Carmena, Kichi, Iñigo Errejón, etc.– is also a consequence of failed collective becoming and representation. In the context of repeated elections, parties repeatedly resorted to their key figureheads for propaganda and protagonism, leading to the wearing down of collective subjectivation not just across institutions and movements, but also within municipalist circles. Electoral lists are the epitome of this reduction of politics to small numbers of persons.

We are thus compelled to conclude that the articulation between movements and institutions has largely failed, in different ways and degrees, to sustain a radical municipalist collective subject, one that is lively, situated and diverse. With this dynamic, the tendentially empty signifiers of municipalist populism (cf. Kioupkolis & Katsambekis 2019: 5) also became empty of enunciators, leading from a radical visionary politics to more pragmatic approaches focusing on making policy and political alliances. Repeat electoral campaigns strongly limited municipalism's capacities to be open and vulnerable, to be creative, lively and magnetic (as a social movement) rather than pluralist, friendly and inclusive (as a political organization). In the words of councilor Clauda Delso we find a self-critique relating to the unifying narrative of municipalism:

> Without a doubt, one thing that we did very well was creating and communicating a story: we dismantled the political status quo so that we, as leaders, could return the institutions to the 99%. We have collectively created a narrative that is epic, compelling, and richly woven but which is in my view also incredibly self-indulgent, considering that we have focused our political communication efforts on feeding this narrative rather than addressing the underlying institutional dysfunction and focusing on other realities and discourses (Delso & Traviesas Mendez 2019).

The main effect Delso and Traviesas Mendez point out is that of failing to change political culture, offering a counter-populist movement in commons-based institutional politics:

> Engaging in commons-oriented politics does not mean talking about the commons; more than anything, it means being part of a community and fulfilling the collective requirements and needs of the community. If this happens, the rest will fall into place. But if the foundation is unstable, every policy that is introduced will fail (Delso & Traviesas Mendez 2019).

This is more than a hunch, since another one of the effects of being focused on a grand narrative relates to transversality and participation. Without a lively collective subject that empowers and carries municipalism (and indeed also its sibling electoral ventures, like Podemos), organizational power as well as voter support are bound to decrease (see Zechner & Hansen 2015, as well as Zechner 2016b). Yet participation, at the organizational as well as voter level, have often been hailed as the crux of the commons-based municipalisms. In the section that follows, we will try to stake out some ways of thinking about and beyond this notion.

In this section, we will briefly look at the question of participation, from the perspective of social movements and mobilization. Following troubles and aporias of participation as formulated by municipalists, we question the relation of the participation paradigm to the autonomist as well as feminist ethos. We shall be distinguishing between a more liberal paradigm of participation -and its neoliberal expression in policy proposals such as those of the Big Society in the UK- and between new politics and frameworks of public-commons cooperation that go beyond those paradigms. In the latter, the terms of governance are set in such a way to encourage and enable self-organization and self-governance, in a way that brings the public closer to the commons and vice versa. In this context, we will come to see interdependence as the key underlying principle of doing politics, in a way that doesn't negate the autonomy of movements but that builds chains of co-responsibility and cooperation across the public and commons.

6.13. Beyond participation: public-commons partnerships and collective ownership

I participate
you participate
we participate…
they profit
(Atelier Populaire de l'Ex-École de des Beaux-Arts, 1968)

6.13.1. The problem of participation

What do we call participation? What function and use does it have in municipalist politics? And what is the relation between micropolitics and participation? The anti-capitalist politics of the commons that are at the base of this case study (cf. De Angelis, Federici, Linebaugh etc.) set out from the notion that change has to come first in society, then in politics. They are interested in the transformation of subjectivity as a means to change society and politics, in the sense of the

micropolitical viewpoint laid out initially in this text. Micropolitics is, in this view of transformation, not coincidental but the basis upon which any change is built.

Participation sets out from a similar premise, with the difference that micropolitics is a bottom-up concept elaborated and made theirs by social movements (in Latin-speaking countries initially, but also in a myriad of other social movement geographies), whilst participation has moved from movements to being a centerpiece notion of neoliberal governance (Leal 2007).

> Reduced to a series of methodological packages and techniques, participation would slowly lose its philosophical and ideological meaning. In order to make the approach and methodology serve counter-hegemonic processes of grassroots resistance and transformation, these meanings desperately need to be recovered (Leal 2007: 539).

Barcelona en Comú, and municipalism overall, certainly represent such an attempt to recover or reconfigure participation as radical, grassroots decision making, inevitably with a strong collective dimension. Such participation -concerning necessarily both the party and city level- would need to go beyond the right of individualized citizens to vote on matters, to fill out forms in one-directional public consultations, to vote in rare party congresses, or to dialogue with political leaders and policymakers from time to time. Bcomú engaged all these things as crucial part of its participation strategy: Ada Colau and her councilors descending regularly to squares in order to listen to and dialogue with people in neighborhoods or institutions; online voting and ongoing consultation on party decisions on the 'Participa' platform, as well as citizen and government proposals on the 'Decidim platform; longer-term participatory processes and consultations at the local level, facilitated by movement-linked research cooperatives such as the Hidra or Raons Publiques, to name two that have been very relevant to the neighborhoods of Sants and its Can Battló, and Poble Sec and its grupos de crianza, amongst many other things.

In the account of Santi Fernandez Patón, ex-councilor of Málaga Ahora, participation takes on an ambivalent, if not problematic, role. In a book he published four months after exiting office, he reflects on how the notion of participation can lead into a twisted logic that fools both politicians and citizens into thinking there is collective agency. He cites the disappointment with 'low participation' that was expressed by Málaga's municipalists at different points, and particularly towards the rather demobilized end of the legislature:

> Under these conditions [of demobilization], participation resembled a mere division of labor and a systematic holding of open forums, where –with some exceptions…- the participants were pretty much the same as in any other meeting (Fernandez Patón 2019: 41-42).

Under conditions of low mobilization, participation resembles thus, indeed, a series of methodological packages and techniques without much bearing on reality, empty

formulas that can serve to legitimize a lack of de facto engagement. Paton disenchantedly refers to participation as a meme of sorts -a replicable form, image or message, that works across a myriad of contexts with possible slight adjustments. Participation as such is not necessarily reflected in numbers, either -you can have the same relatively high number of people come to assemblies, without anyone new participating. Does participation require increasing outreach?

Patón asks (himself) what, if not participation, can be a good way of gauging the liveliness of a citizen candidature. 'Our reach in (social) networks? Neither' (Paton 2019: 41). He notes that in the absence of any echo in mainstream media, social networks were key sites for raising and politicizing issues, but online participation does not translate into (electoral or policy) success. 'Moreover, [online] networks can in a way turn into the exact opposite of participation. They can confuse the role of the spectator, sometimes interactive, with that of the participant.' Do high numbers of retweets mean high participation?

> Maybe what we sometimes mean by 'participation' is 'horizontality:' but is it rigorous to speak of horizontality when there is scarcely any participation? Does an overflow of participation turn out to be operative or does it necessarily provoke more verticality?…Can we speak of participation when there is no intervention [in political decisions]? (Paton 2019: 41).

Those questions require further elaboration and discussion to be broken down to a set of problems. Without going into more detail, we content ourselves with noting that they point to doubts about whether it is methodology, quantity, growth or effect that (should) matter for a municipalist candidature, and to the need for combining all those into evaluating participation and the danger of focusing just on one dimension.

6.13.2. Self-managed neighborhood spaces as public-commons partnerships

While across municipalist cities the registers of participation and consultation were used creatively and meaningfully, there has also been the elaboration of a different model of participation, more based in commoning. It consists of more radical, ongoing and collective modalities of participation -as modalities of cooperation and partnership, and indeed these terms are more appropriate for our descriptions- between movements and institutions. This particularly concerns, in Barcelona where it has been most successful, the local collective governance of spaces like Can Battló,[64] Ateneu9Barris,[65] or Calabria 66,[66] spaces of building community and commoning politics, where decision-making is but one collective moment in many.

The key to this approach is enabling a self-governance and use of spaces that operates by its own logic and laws, those of autonomous or neighborhood movements, but cooperates with the city administration on accountability (in the framework of

[64] Website Can Battló https://www.canbatllo.org/, accessed 24/7/2020.
[65] Website Ateneu 9Barris https://www.ateneu9b.net/, accessed 24/7/2020.
[66] Website Calabria 66: https://calabria66.net/, accessed 24/7/2020.

Patrimoni Ciutada, as pointed out above), health and safety, accessibility and similar matters. Thus, these are 'public socio-cultural centers that operate on the basis of the model of community management' (Ateneu 9 Barris), publicly funded but 'an infrastructure [equipamiento] of citizen management that is not run by an intermediary administration or company, but administered via neighborhood debate and decisions' (Calàbria 66), a 'neighborhood self-managed space' (Can Battló). In these spaces, though insistent upon self-management and independence from parties and governments, the principle of heteronomy is engaged in relation to the public: projects of neighborhood and movement commoning as interdependent with the public. This reaching out towards one another is mutual across movements and institutions, or commons and the public, and possible only thanks to great sensitivities and openness of the Barcelona en Comú-led administration. Some refer to its products as public-commons partnerships (Milburn & Russel 2019).

Public-commons partnerships, contrary to the public-private partnerships of the neoliberal era, which can essentially be understood as enclosures of the public by the private, should open onto new circuits of collective ownership that extend and ground the commons by articulating them with the public system. Grassroots activists as well as municipalists at different levels recognize that the public as well as the commons need to be defended, strengthened and articulated (see the previous chapter on childcare commons for more examples); that they must not be pitted against one another in competition; that great political strength and power comes from articulating these two dimensions. It is clear that this strand of policy and the imaginary of public-commons partnerships point the way in terms of radical participation, opening a new horizon for relations between movements and institutions. We shall now look at a few cases and their history in some more detail, before proceeding to move towards conclusions.

6.13.3. Can Battló: urban commons and citizen patrimony

The most famed and acclaimed case of commons policy of Barcelona en Comú is probably Can Battló, an old factory reclaimed and turned into a social space by people in the Sants neighborhood. It was occupied in 2011 to reclaim it for the locals and city, and at a crucial point in 2014, when Bcomú entered government, ready for the kind of dialogue and invention the new government sought. With the research support of the Hidra cooperative -through some years of workshops, mediation, meetings and research- BComú engaged the category of 'citizen heritage' as a legal and policy category based on Can Battló. An official city hall power point presentation entitled 'Common goods. Towards the community use and management of public [resources],' which features a factory resembling Can Battló on its cover, states that

> Starting from the idea that 'the public' can become 'the common,' the city administration of Barcelona wants to promote new forms of interaction between public municipal institutions and community-based citizen initiatives, based in the recognition of the right to the community management and use of public

heritage by citizens (Ayuntamiento de Barcelona 2019b; my translation from Spanish).

This presentation is authored by the Participation department of Barcelona city, and its Pdf metadata shows it was signed by Laia Forné Aguirre, both member of the participation department and the Hidra cooperative. People like her play a key role in enabling the dialogue that is necessary to make such a process possible. Indeed, we can visualize the chain of feedback between the institution and movements quite concretely as follows: from Laia's office in town hall to the offices of the Hidra cooperative in Sants, and from the Hidra a few blocks down to Can Battló. Proximity matters in several ways, for such processes, because local knowledge, trust and investment matter.

By 2009, the large empty premises of Can Battló, previously a textile-related factory, had already seen 30 years of neighborhood campaigning for it to be rendered useful. That year, activists made an ultimatum to the (then conservative) city administration: if by June 2011 works haven't started in the complex, people would go in and take it over. In 2010, they launched the tic-toc campaign to pressure further. 2011 happened to be a moment of extremely high mobilization across the Spanish state and, thanks to popular pressure, the city voluntarily handed one of the factory halls (Bloc 11) to activists. From there, it was an uphill race towards reclaiming more spaces, with a foot in the door and a strong movement in the back[67] (see also Eroles 2011). Little by little, the massive halls were coming to be inhabited and transformed into different kinds of spaces.

After Barcelona en Comú came to power in 2015, there were rife conversations on granting this space a special status, indeed using it to develop another legal municipal formula of public infrastructure, also in relation to the pioneer housing cooperative La Borda that's part of Can Battló. By 2019, the over 13.000 square meter complex was declared citizen heritage and handed to the Can Battló Platform for a period of 30 years, extendable by another two decades (Ayuntamiento de Barcelona 2019b; 2019c). Every year, Can Battló's assembly has to go through self-evaluation, based on criteria elaborated jointly with city officials, to assure the project is functioning and open to the public. This accountability procedure is based on an evaluation protocol of the network of social and solidarity economy initiatives.

The city administration's key argument for such management is its efficiency and low cost, calculating that in order to run Can Battló as a municipal infrastructure, it would cost 1.430.810€ a year, whilst the total public money that went into it between 2011 and 2018 (both years included) is 1.103.000€ (Ayuntamiento de Barcelona 2019a). A strong economic argument in the face of neoliberal consensus. If it were not to come alongside increased social spending and a defense of public services, as it did in Bcomú's first term, it would risk resembling the UK Conservative's 2010 'Big Society' proposals for shrinking public services in face of cultures of free labor and

[67] On their website, Can Battló activists chronicle their collective process. See Can Battló undated.

precarious volunteering, one not of self-governance but rather of being determined by the market (see Dowling & Harvie 2014). These crucial differences between a politics of the commons and one of neoliberal communitarianism have variously been pointed out as crucial (see also Hoedemækers, Loacker & Pedersen 2012, Caffentzis 2009).

These formulas for participation, as cooperation that encourages self-government, work since they empower self-organized communities to do their legitimate work, granting them legality and some material support for their cause. Can Battló is not just thriving with activity by activist groups and civic associations, it is also a lively place of cultural production and display (concert halls, etc.), of handiwork and infrastructure-building (workshops), of sociality (the bar), cooperativism (the Coopolis support center), movement memory (the library-archive), and so forth.

La Borda

La Borda is a housing cooperative that emerges from Can Battló, which managed to negotiate a 75-year lease (as 'cesión de uso,' granting use, also known as peppercorn rent) of land adjacent to the factory complex to an association of future tenants.

> The model of grant of use is widespread in countries such as Denmark and Uruguay…Both experiences develop the model of cooperative housing ruled by grant of use, where the property will always be collective, while use is personal. Residents have the status of cooperative partners and can live there for life. The General Assembly is the main sovereign institution where the decisions are made. This model eliminates property speculation and profiteering on a fundamental right like housing. Members cannot sell or rent the flat. It is an alternative model of housing access to the traditional ownership and rent, with a strong commitment with the use value above exchange value (La Borda, date unknown).

A perfect example for commoning housing, La Borda was the first in a series of similar projects granted land for use by the city (Ayuntamiento de Barcelona 2018b, Cabré and Andrés 2017), which refers to this model as one of 'collective ownership' (Ayuntamiento de Barcelona 2017a). In 'the Housing Plan 2016-2025' the idea is to reach the figure of 500 homes in collective ownership in Barcelona' (Ayuntamiento de Barcelona 2017). By 2018 there were 6 more co-housing projects of the same kind underway (Ayuntamiento de Barcelona 2018b), and by the time of writing, a new round of seven projects is about to be selected.

6.13.4. Municipalities facilitating commoning

There are many other notable aspects of participation worth mentioning in relation to Barcelona en Comú, beyond the online platforms, local meetings with the mayor and councilors, and participatory policy processes: the neighborhood assemblies, for instance, are key platforms for participation, as are the regular events and get-togethers of Barcelona en Comú at the party level, including the free childcare space

La Canalla en Comú. All those are worthy of chapters in themselves, a task probably being done by researchers somewhere right now.

The above examples attest to the vital importance of social movements in enabling, accompanying and inhabiting commons-based formulas of public policies. Can Battló and La Borda would never have been possible without strong movements at the city and neighborhood level. And, indeed, La Borda would never have been possible without Can Battló. The chains of connection and interdependence that mark the conditions of possibility of these commons-making processes run along historical-genealogical lines, from Can Battló to La Borda, as well as social-organizational lines, from Can Battló to La Hidra cooperative to the city's participation department. Indeed, I propose to see these lines of interdependence as crucial in making not just policy but also any project of the commons.

In the case of commons policy, where those chains involve institutional and party actors, this entails a crucial shift in perspective. Institutions and dependence on them not as something that corrupts, and intermediaries between movements and institutions not simply as traitors, as much autonomist thought would have it, but a recognition of interdependence as fundamental to commoning across the collective and public dimensions. Such commoning needs translators, intermediaries and mediators sometimes, as it is a social labor that runs beyond a single group or field. Recognizing this interdependence and taking it as the basis for respectful -and nonetheless principled and firm- negotiations is what enabled the success of the Barcelona commons policy models described above. Thanks to the feminist legacy of Barcelona en Comú, this interdependence can be affirmed and accepted, as something that links the different interests (the commons and the public). The interests of the commons and those of the public do not overlap in all ways, indeed, often they seem to scarcely overlap, as we have seen in the childcare report.

6.14. Conclusions

We started out on this journey with questions about the micropolitics of municipalism, asking *how the people involved with municipalism at different levels negotiate their positionality, the tensions between ideology and subjectivity, between social movement ways and institutional ways. We set out to identify differences along the movements-institutions spectrum in terms of habits, expression, relations, embodiment, horizons, orientations, and to understand how these different modalities of politics make us think, feel and respond (per se and in relation to one another)*. Our guiding lines came from the Spinozist question of *the capacities to act that these modalities and spaces of politics confer upon us,* and following Guattari and Deleuze, *how subjectivity is produced and articulated within these spheres of politics, as well as across them.*

Beyond the confirmation of the simple intuition that the relation between movements and institutions is not a simple matter of good and bad, one side or another, nor reducible to a set of principles or hypotheses, we have traced how people involved

with a political movement such as municipalism -be it at its core or margins- learn, lean into complexity and struggle. We have seen how people confront uncertainty, discomfort and alienation through feminist, embodied, reflexive, vulnerable, critical, dissociative, autonomist and other strategies. Learning and listening have emerged as important forces in the formation of political subjectivities through municipalism, and we have seen different forces -both external and internal ones- limit and hinder this development to different degrees: personal insecurities; a climate of electoralism; a male culture of politics unable to face vulnerability; a lack of time and spaces to collectively narrate, think and imagine; and so forth.

We set out to *look at the ways in which municipalism has altered the relation between movements and institutions, as well as affected relationality and subjectivities within institutions, parties and movements. When and how did municipalists change standard ways of doing politics, beyond a pure antagonism between movements and institutions?* We confirmed that the answer to this question can be neither simple nor unequivocal. On the one hand, we traced experiences and fields of powerful and profound transformation of political cultures in relation to a politics of care and a feminization of politics, as some would call it, as well as in relation to ways of negotiating autonomy-heteronomy across different social and institutional spheres, in organizational culture as well as policy. Those processes are not all-encompassing or complete, but they reached significant levels of spreading and maturity, as seeds that stand on firm ground to grow in institutions, social movements and society.

On the other hand, we have found faltering processes and failing ambitions, relating to the radical changes in modes of inhabiting traditional political institutions that were needed to change institutions from within in a deep and sustainable way, and in relation to the capacity for learning and relating of the institutional sphere. We heard how the individualization of responsibility as well as professionalization affect municipalists in institutions and parties, and how participation can be as meaningless as a formula and as rich as an experiment in public-commons governance. In this as in any case, recognizing limits in one aspect does not mean failing to see openings in another, as we hear in this quote of Claudia Delso:

> These projects [of co-designing policy and spaces] helped us to listen. They contributed to the learning process of the institution, a machine designed to prevent change. After all, the institution can also learn, and we have learned to allow the institutions (and ourselves) to experiment, to change how things are done and also to make mistakes. Nobody can expect to know or control everything (Delso & Traviesas Mendez 2019).

In this sense -eminently micropolitical- municipalism can be traced, as I have attempted to do, as a process of confronting the ghosts of individualism, paternalism, competition, supremacy, racism, sexism, and other -isms that we all have internalized. To realize that no one can expect to know and control everything, said from an embodied and situated place, implies a radical recognition of limits (Kallis 2019,

Perez Orozco 2014) and vulnerability (del Olmo 2013, Gil 2011). Two facts that we as humans and societies have to urgently live up to, in the face of rampant capitalism and neoliberalist exploitation, and its twin climate and ecological breakdown.

There is no doubt that there is a lot to learn from municipalism. As a vast collective project of experimentation and learning, it has engaged the lives and labors of hundreds of people from social movements. They, together with hundreds more, who are critically complicit in their surroundings, work towards an uncertain, open-ended, needed and promising transformation. The assessment of the urgency of seizing the moment to propose an electoral political struggle over resources, shared by those who started the grassroots candidatures in 2014, largely appears as confirmed. With all its difficulties, the moment was ripe and right for attempting to combine the force of struggles with 'the force of manoeuvres' (Gutiérrez & Lugano 2014) in the political domain. In the places where this failed, it constitutes a rich although troubling pool of knowledge and experience to learn from. In the places where it sustains political force (Barcelona foremost), it enables progressive policies that make a positive impact on people's lives and solidarity.

We have seen that the relation between movements and institutions is not a peripheral or anecdotal matter to political projects like those of municipalism. Rather, it lies at the very core of their possibility of existence. This relation matters not because of a moral imperative or tactical electoral calculus primarily (though every 4 years it does come down to that, too), but because it is in this relation that the capacity of an antagonistic, anticapitalist politics resides, and thus of a radical democratization along lines of class, race, gender, and so on. It matters not just that institutions listen to movements but also that they do not coopt or paralyze them. It also matters that movements know how to confront institutions and make demands not just so that they achieve wins, but also so that they can affirm their autonomy. At the same time, it matters that institutions and movements -as agents of the public and the commons- can see and inhabit their interdependence with one another, and invent new political horizons from there, direly needed after the destruction of the welfare state and the subsequent rise of neoliberal individualism and nationalist racism. Any new 'social contract' today must build on both commons and the public, and on both autonomy and heteronomy as principles.

The tension between heteronomy and autonomy is not one I have sought to resolve in the chapters above. Rather, I have sought to show the interplay of forces that lead to more or less promising articulations of those two principles. Indeed, these should be key terms when thinking about the commons. Too much time has been spent trying to show their tragedy and immunity respectively, with little attention given to the ways in which commons always necessarily involve both tendencies of interdependence and independence.

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Postface

In this study we have found and explored a historical moment where the meaning and nature of the political has shifted in quite profound ways. Beginning in 2015 roughly, we have traced the shift from anti-austerity and pro-democracy politics towards new nuances of political participation and subjecthood. Within these changes, *the commons* and *commoning* have been a key operative concept, spurring the association, development and becoming-infrastructure of a myriad of practices. We have seen how this political shift is driven by a politics of care, a reaffirmation of the neighborly and urban local, and a sensibilization to ecological dynamics. All of these hinge on an increased embracing of interdependence and vulnerability as principles for organization and relation. With municipalism, this new politics has reached deep into institutions. It brought not just new actors (women, activists, precarious workers, to a minor degree, migrants, disabled people) into places of power and representation, but it also brought a deep change in political logic to institutions and social movements alike. From this resulted a myriad of learning processes at micropolitical as well as macropolitical levels, some of which I have tried to map out here.

I conclude this account and analysis at the very moment when this political sensitivity, which has its roots spread across many places and continents, seems to have made another substantive jump. From challenging new authoritarian and fascist state approaches -counterposing their morbid abstractions and alienation with an affirmation of embodied and situated self-organization and management- the new politics has led into an affirmation of life and lives. Life as survival on planet earth, firstly, as linked to a necessity of degrowth and care. The good life as in indigenous cosmologies and politics, struggling for modes of economy and politics that put life at their center, as feminists have affirmed. As I write, this affirmation of life and lives reaches yet another phase, into the darkest corners of the morbidly failing system of proto-colonial capitalist patriarchy. Black-lives-matter. Another affirmation of life is resonant across our screens and the walls of our cities, radically resisting the chokehold that the failing political-economic system applies to people of color. It's June 2020 and profound political transformations seem to continue, to intensify. I believe that many of the stories told in these pages prefigure this need for uprising and change, long overdue.

The stories that matter in this context, in this account, are the ones where small gestures and practices lead to a valorization and visibilization of how we relate, care and depend on one another. Ada Colau, mayor of Barcelona during the period of my writing, makes such gestures with great intelligence and beauty. She and her fellow municipalists know extremely well how to nourish mutual care and interdependence in expression and practice. While it has been mostly women, and of course LGBTQI people, excelling at this art of subverting politics through different modes of embodiment, tonality and positioning, this time has also seen new masculinities emerge in some places. Barcelona en Comú has brought the words 'care' and 'tenderness' into urban political discourse, cultivating a politics of listening and

giving space, paying attention to the limits and failings of their politics and policies. The feminist politics it draws from, based in care and alternative economies as well as in a solid politics of social reproduction, has breathed life into cities and neighborhoods. During the time of my writing, cooperatives have surged in Barcelona, feminist networks have built care and protection systems in every neighborhood, locals have struggled to reclaim urban space for life and play rather than consumption and cars, and neighborhood as well as renters unions have grown strong in defending people from eviction and displacement.

Children, unsurprisingly, play a key role in this new politics of interdependence, care and reproduction. They, too, shift from the status of objects to subjects, in line with the de-centering of political subjectivity away from white, middle class males. It's a slow process, which comes in waves and resurgences. What commons and commoning have brought to this movement is a steadying awareness of grassroots practice, syndication and self-management. Steadying in the sense of grounding, giving solidity and a shared base, as both relentless and dedicated commoning practices as well as concepts, debates and theories of the commons do. Theory and practice are not definitely separable in this context. In these pages, we have seen how the most fruitful concepts and analyses emerge from collective political experimentation and engagement, rather than a place of abstraction or dissociation. And we have seen how the most powerful and lasting practices emerge from long-standing dialogic and agonistic relations across social movements, and in some cases also institutions. Here, too, the classical division between being on one side or the other has become blurred, not in the sense that we now confuse politicians for activists, but that the period in question has shown many legitimate ways of acting from within institutions. The current political shift entails, it seems, a long and multi-layered process of learning about allyship -one that can transform our subjectivities and reshape subject and social positions.

Acknowledgements

It's not just a manner of speech for me to say that this research project would not have been possible without a lot of support from different sides. I have been researching and writing *alongside* processes in space and time, in complicity and from a sometimes shorter, sometimes longer distance, sometimes from within. To a great extent, I am expressing collective knowledge in these pages, squeezing words out from shared modes and processes of debating and knowing. This is the role of militant research, to render collective movements and processes tangible, alive in contradiction, and memorable for coming cycles and generations. I have written these pages on my own, in an academic context, yet with a decent level of resonance and feedback from those I wrote about, particularly in the case of my childcare case study. To my fellow mothers in Poble Sec, I have written a sort of love letter after the 8th March demonstration of 2020, weeks before the Coronavirus hit and separated us (the text was published in MACBA'S *Cuaderno Educativo*). The complicity, debate and support of these wonderful and strong women has given me an irreplaceable

grounding that allowed me not just to think anew after giving birth but also to brave the everyday in community. Care commoning. Lucia, Panagiota, Núria, Sesi, Manu, Georgina… and the little Luna, Leonidas, Nina and so forth… tribú canalla forever in my heart. And Claudia in Rome, Marta in Madrid, Nelly in Bcn: thanks for contributing to the childcare commons colloquium and letting me think along with you, then and now. However, it's not quite true that I have written these pages alone: Alexandros, as principal investigator of this project, has commented and revised them meticulously with me, greatly to their improvement, with a very generous and patient eye. I am very thankful to him for the openness with which he received me in this project, let me work on my interests and supported me in my endeavor. The collaborative spirit of our project has been sweet and light, and it's been a great pleasure to learn and drift with Antonio, Aimilia and Giorgos along dark Naples streets in search of Canoli, along Greek coastlines in search of the perfect lunch, through social centers and streets in Poble Sec, Turin and Naples. Commons imply a relaxed attitude, laughter and pleasures, at least in Southern Europe, the spirit of which I came to cherish even more through those years. This leads me to thank another great agent of calm and the good life in common, my dear partner Bue, who helped me out variously in this project, with my methodology deliverable when baby Mila was still very small, with the ups and downs of Greek bureaucracy and of childcare, looking after Mila at many stages and during many team meetings, and not least with ongoing exchange and debate, as we like to think together. Attached to Bue was the biggest sunshine of my life, little Mila, who sang and toddled along these years and made them enormously joyful. Finally, I'm very grateful for the trust and time that my interviewees have granted me, particularly the good people from Barcelona en Comú who hadn't seen me in a while, but still shared their thoughts with me openly; but also the many activists, carers and mothers of Poble Sec, who did see me around. If it matters how we tell stories, and what affects we bring to our processes, then I can say that I crafted these pages overwhelmingly with love, respect and admiration. It's been a pleasure to learn with you all, I'm very grateful.

Appendix A

Childcare commons colloquium

Childcare and Commons. Does it take a Poble Sec to raise a child?

The neighborhood dimension in childrearing. Tensions and inventions between the commons, public and private.

Public Colloquium, 5-7 October, Barcelona/Poble Sec

1. Colloquium text, program and flyer (in Spanish)

Crianza y Comunes: Hace falta un Poble-sec para criar? La dimensión barrio y la crianza. Tensiones y invenciones entre común, público y privado.

5-7 octubre 2018 Poble Sec, Barcelona

Hace falta un pueblo para criar. Pero qué coño es un pueblo, en nuestros mundos individualizados, dispersos y urbanizados? En la última década han (re-)surgido muchos experimentos y revindicaciones para responder a esa pregunta. Desde la península iberica y sus nuevos feminismos se han lanzando muchas madres y aliadas a la busqueda de formas de tribú, y de infraestructuras comunes de crianza, más allá de los modelos privatizadores y heteropatriarcales. Planteamos un encuentro para formular, escuchar y pensar juntas nuestras necesidades de una crianza más compartida, mirando hacia espacios comúnes y prácticas no exclusivas para cuidar a pequeñxs. Queremos debatir las tensiones y invenciones que se dan entre lo público, lo privado y lo común en la crianza. Os esperamos a todas, con o sin criaturas.

En este encuentro contamos con un espacio infantil con acompañante.

<u>Viernes 5 Octubre</u>

17-19.30h @ Centro Cívico Sortidor (Sala de Actos)
La crianza, entre lo público, (lo privado) y lo común: mesa de debate

Cómo definimos lo común en relación a la crianza, con qué criterios (continuidad, acesibilidad, autogestión, …)? Común = comunitario? Cuales son las tensiones y ambivalencias entre privado, público y común en la crianza? Cómo pensar lo común en relación a la gestión y presupuestos municipales – cesiones, subvenciones, datos oficiales, definición de equipamientos, etc? Es una contradicción hablar de politicas públicas por el común? Cuales son las posibilidades y retos para imaginar la crianza a través de dispositivos comunes? Como podemos plantear la crianza en común desde la economía feminista?

Presentan: Manuela Zechner (proyecto Heteropolitics); Lucia Zandigiacomi (Raons Públiques); Javier Rodrigo (Red PEPI per la crianza); Núria Verges (Universidad de Barcelona, Base)

Fila 0: Christel Keller Garganté (Cátedra UNESCO Dones, Desenvolupament i Cultures de la Universidad de Vic), Rosa Ortíz (Universidad de Barcelona), Carolina Lopez (Barcelona en Comú)

Enlaces de interés: Cómo coño se sostiene esto? Cuidados, Ciudad y Infraestructuras de lo Común (podcasts); Ciutat Jugable (dossier de mesura de gobierno); Grupos de Crianza compartida: una alternativa comunitaria en la organización del cuidado en la primera infancia (tesis); Los espacios de Crianza se reivindican: grupos de crianza del Poble Sec (artículo)

Sábado 6 Octubre

11-13.30h @ Plaza Navas
Qué podemos aprender de la plaza Navas? Taller de escucha y juego para adultos y criaturas

¿Cómo habitamos la plaza Navas, en el barrio de Poble Sec? Qué escuchamos, sentimos, vemos, hacemos, tocamos, decimos, en esta plaza? ¿Qué nos atraviesa, cómo atravesamos la plaza, las relaciones, los afectos, las tensiones, sus zonas? A partir de los movimientos y senderos naturales de lxs peques generaremos una observación experimental para hacer una cartografía de esta plaza compleja, rebelde, ruidosa… En la segunda parte del taller iremos al Centro Cívico El Sortidor para compartir y apuntar nuestras experiencias y percepciones. Finalmente terminaremos con una dinámica corporal del teatro del oprimido que nos ayude a poner en común nuestras experiencias y los usos de la plaza.
Dinamizan: Nelly Alfandari (LSBU y Radical Education Forum Londres) y Javier Rodrigo (Transductores)

13.30h-15.30h @ La Raposa // a casa Comida y Descanso

15-17.30h @ Centro Cívico Sortidor (Sala Balandra)
Como tejemos y sostenemos los vinculos en la crianza, al nivel de barrio?

Cómo tejemos vinculos en la crianza? Cómo sostenemos los vínculos en la crianza? Qué continuidades podemos dar a las experiencias colectivas en las distintas etapas de la crianza? Esta sesión parte de la propuesta de mapear cómo se generan los vinculos, grupos y redes en el barrio, y de pensar como se pueden sostener. A partir de nuestras experiencias, encuentros y soledades vamos a trazar un cronograma mixto de experiencias de crianza en el barrio, pensar la calidad y forma de los vinculos que se dan, asi que la transmisión de saberes entre distintas generaciones en el barrio.

Dinamizan: Francesca Bayre (Rimaieta, Base) y Manuela Zechner (Proyecto Heteropolitics, Nanopolitics Group), Irene Cardona (Etnogràfica)

Domingo 7 Octubre

11-13.30h @ Centro Cívico Sortidor (Sala Balandra)
La crianza compartida en el barrio global: experimentos desde las márgenes y periférias

Como podemos repensar la educación y pedagogía desde los márgenes, las periférias, las migraciones y precariedades? Tomando en serio la diversidad de sujetos en nuestros barrios, más allá de los relatos autoctonos de barri, y de nociones de crianza de clase media blanca, cómo plantear una pólitica radicalmente transversal de crianza a nivel de barrio? Pensando los barrios desde su diversidad, sus migraciones y generaciones, cómo podemos apostar por experimentos (aunque sean pequeñisimos) de crianza realmente inclusivos y abiertos? Qué implica esta problematica de la transversalidad (no solamente cómo inclusón en lo que ya existe, sino como crianza realmente compartida entre personas diversas) visto desde lo común, y qué implica desde lo público? Como considerar, integrar y hablar a diversas necesidades y retos, imaginando juntas nuevos modelos de crianza en común y para todxs? Cómo se puede relacionar la cuestión de crianza inclusiva y diversa a dinamicas cómo la gentrificación o la xenofóbia?

Presentan: Marta Malo (Otros Vinculos, Madrid); Claudia Bernardi (Tana dei Cuccioli, Roma)

Fila 0: Natalia Caicedo (Espacio del inmigrante, Barcelona); Raquel García (Escuela Poble Sec); Nelly Alfandari (LSBU, Radical Education Forum London)
Dinamizan: Panagiota Kotsila (ICTA, Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona) y Manuela Zechner (Proyecto Heteropolitics)

Enlaces de interés: Otros Vínculos (blog); Retaguardias y vanguardias (podcast); Mama! No tengo tiempo para estudiar porque estoy aprendiendo (entrevista); ; Siempre se Cuida en Colectivo (entrevista); La Tana dei Cuccioli Roma Pigneto (fb); Espacio del Inmigrante Barlcelona (web)

14-15h @ Centro Cívico Sortidor
Sesión de cierre con vermút y pica-pica

Todos los días: espacio infantil con acompañantes (salvo sábado mañana)

Flyer designed by Elena Fraj

Audio recordings of discussion sessions:

La crianza, entre lo público, (lo privado) y lo común, 5 Oct 2018 https://archive.org/details/CrianzaComunes1

La crianza compartida en el barrio global: experimentos desde las márgenes y periférias. 7 Oct 2018 https://archive.org/details/CrianzaComunes2

Colloquium report (Manuela Zechner, October 2018)

Summary: organization, methodology, contents and participation

Based on the fieldwork of the 'Childcare Commons' case study in Barcelona (Manuela Zechner), this three day colloquium was instigated and elaborated in accordance with local actors –notably a group of seven parents who are also researchers and activists– and ultimately involved parents, childcare projects, the PEPI network of childcare projects in the neighborhood, the urban planning cooperative 'Raons Públiques,' members of the social center 'La Base' as well as parents from the 'Poble Sec' Public school, a local councilor and kindergarden as well as primary and secondary school teachers (many of them also researchers and/or activists). In a properly situated and feminist application of ethnographic methodology and the principles of co-research, this colloquium departed from the series of interviews previously (2017-18) held by Manuela Zechner for Heteropolitics and brought together the concerns and debates raised therein into a collective and public forum, taking into account ongoing processes, needs and sensitive issues in the neighborhood.

A set of collectively elaborated questions were at the basis of the registration form for the meeting, which was used to further prepare contents of debates and gain more in-depth insight of key issues. These were: *What new needs did you discover since you have or relate to children? How do you experience/inhabit the neighborhood dimension since you live in the neighborhood (did you discover new spaces, persons, groups..)? How has your way of seeing and inhabiting the public, the common/communitarian and the private changed since you have or relate to children?* The answers provided are taken into account in the conclusions below.

Some 40 adults and 18 children participated in the colloquium at different stages (not all of them filled in the attendance form, since people with children in tow tend to come and go).

The colloquium featured two public debates in a roundtable format, and two immersive workshops. The debates focused on the relation between public and commons-based or communitarian approaches in early childcare (Friday), as well as of early schooling (Sunday), presenting examples of self-organized childcare and its relation to the neighborhood (with local examples on Friday, and local as well as related experiences in Rome and Madrid on Sunday). The Friday session centered more on public policy (also involving a local councilor as a respondent) and the

political debates around childcare, including the demands for recognition of self-organized nurseries. On Sunday, we departed from engaged mothers' accounts of the way they inhabit public space and public institutions (nurseries and schools) and about the role of the neighborhood in progressive public education.

The workshops focused on the lived dimension of childcare in the neighborhood, departing from an arts-based methodology of sensing and mapping. The first one revolved around the space of the stigmatized Plaza Navas in Poble Sec, asking what we may learn from its chaoticness and diversity, in terms of prejudices, limitations, possibilities and existing invisible relations that shape childcare as well as the use of public urban space. The second workshop set out to map the different places and phases of self-organized childcare in the neighborhood of Poble Sec, involving people from childcare projects past and present, as well as the legendary local midwife who instigated much of this self-organization.

See the program above, in Spanish and Catalan, for details on the sessions and speakers.

The colloquium was held in Spanish and Catalan, in order to ensure maximum accessibility and relevance to the local context, however part of the results will be translated to English.

Conclusions

The colloquium was a great success both because of the very high quality of the debates –not only in theoretical terms, but also in terms of local knowledge and expertise– and also because it very successfully involved the actual local actors concerned by the question of childcare commons. Thanks to the expertise and careful proceeding of the local group that co-organized the sessions, and the real implication and embeddedness of the main organizer and researcher, who is also a mother and knows the problems of the neighborhood first hand, it was possible to articulate a program and line of questioning that truly brought together the broader debates on commons in childcare with the concrete lived experiences in the neighborhood, and the concrete existing policy challenges at the municipal level. This is in large part of course also possible because of the remarkably strong social and activist fabric in Poble Sec, which is rife with self-organization, associations and local struggles, and very adamant on claiming the neighborhood dimension as one of politics and social change.[68]

Preliminary key outcomes and consensus of debates include:

- That it is not productive to pit the common/communitarian and public models against one another, but rather important to defend and articulate both into

[68] See for example this article on the self-organization of childcare groups in Poble Sec. Helena Lopez (2017) Los Espacios de Crianza se reivindican, *El Diario*, 12/11/2017, https://www.elperiodico.com/es/barcelona/20171112/grupos-de-crianza-del-poble-sec-6414488, accessed 1/9/2018.

new visions of practice and policy

- That the public nurseries and schools have innovated in recent years largely thanks to the experiments and practices of self-organized projects, who have developed new approaches to pedagogy, space, routine and organization of early education projects.
- That, reversely, self-organized daycare projects need to address the questions of inclusivity and diversity by engaging with the public system, struggling for funding to be able to offer lower fees and be more sustainable economically. The cessation of spaces (ground-level shopfronts with patios in particular, where most self-organized projects are based) is a key element in this.
- That self-organized projects are very well articulated with neighborhood life and very actively engage in local festivities, protests and debates, thanks to the engaged nature of parents and educators in these projects, which in turn vastly contributes to public space, to collective and revindicative ways of inhabiting it.
- That with children in the streets, neighborhoods become not just more lively, but also much stronger in terms of their social fabric, since children 'connect' people and can help lift them out of isolation and loneliness.
- That children need to be recognized as actors with an important contribution in the city, particularly in relation to public space (in line with the 'children's city' approach of Francesco Tonucci and the 'playable city' policy of the Barcelona municipality).
- That public space is a major concern for families, and that people's use of it increases dramatically when they have children. That having children drives most people to recognize themselves as actors and subjects of the public in new ways, constituting a new perspective of citizenship in the sense of active engagement and belonging to shared urban space. (registration forms)
- That Poble Sec is a pioneering neighborhood when it comes to experimentation and debate about early childhood care and education, due to its active social fabric as well as the disproportionately large number of children in the neighborhood (very high birthrates) and the low number of accessible public places (only 20.3% of children can access the public nurseries).
- That more articulation between the dimensions of early childcare (crianza) and education is necessary, to overcome the separation between early childhood information/debates focusing entirely on the private and bodily care and vulnerability without preparing parents for the collective-pubic and political dimension of the decisions coming at them, relating to public vs. communitarian and private systems of childcare, medicine, etc. A more lucid

political discourse, obviously sensitive to the particular needs and vulnerabilities of young children and new parents, and networks between early and primary childcare and education are welcomed.

Finally, a very positive outcome of the colloquium is that participants were eager to continue the discussions and find new platforms for relating and organizing. The documentation of the colloquium will be put at their disposal in order to encourage the deepening and socialization of the debates and knowledges in question.

And furthermore, last but not least, the colloquium featured an open childcare space accompanied by two professional educators, since almost all participants (speakers and attendees) had one or more children. This vastly improved the accessibility of the colloquium, as this space was made very good use of (about 7-10 children there at any time). The timings of sessions and overall planning of spaces, snacks, lunches and movements of participants between spaces attempted to take children into account, and as such this colloquium set a rather successful example of child-friendly spaces of debate, something blatantly absent from most academic and also many activist spaces and planning.

All in all, the situated methodology of organization and the principle of 'nothing about us without us' is what allowed for this encounter to be as rich and positive.

Outcomes and documentation

We have organized for the meeting to be professionally documented, via photography and audio recordings. The audio recordings of public debates will be professionally edited and uploaded to the internet (soundcloud or archive.org) in open content format, and the audio recordings of the workshops will be used for research purposes (however not publicly shared). Photographs will be shared on the Heteropolitics website and used for documentation and analysis. The maps and diagrams produced in workshops will equally be shared on the web as well as used by researchers and participants for further reference.

Transcriptions of the two public debates will be professionally translated from Catalan and Spanish to English, in order to be able to upload them as Pdfs onto the Heteropolitics website and circulate them widely across the education and research communities. Participants have variously demanded to receive and further use these materials for their work, and the Creative Commons licensing of these materials will be very useful for this dissemination of knowledge.

Dissemination

The call for participation and program of the meeting were circulated very widely on social networks in Barcelona, Catalunya and even Spain (an invite from the political party Podemos even reached us a week before the event), and posters were put up in the neighborhood. Researchers, activists and policy makers from Barcelona and

Madrid have contacted the organizational group asking to receive documentation and conclusions.

The dissemination of outcomes will proceed via a public, internet-based approach as well as a local peer-to-peer approach proceeding via the participants and their various projects and platforms. An early report was published on the website of Raons Publiques urban planners' cooperative.[69]

[69] http://raonspubliques.org/

Appendix B

Municipalism

Municipalist electoral results 2015 and 2019, in big cities

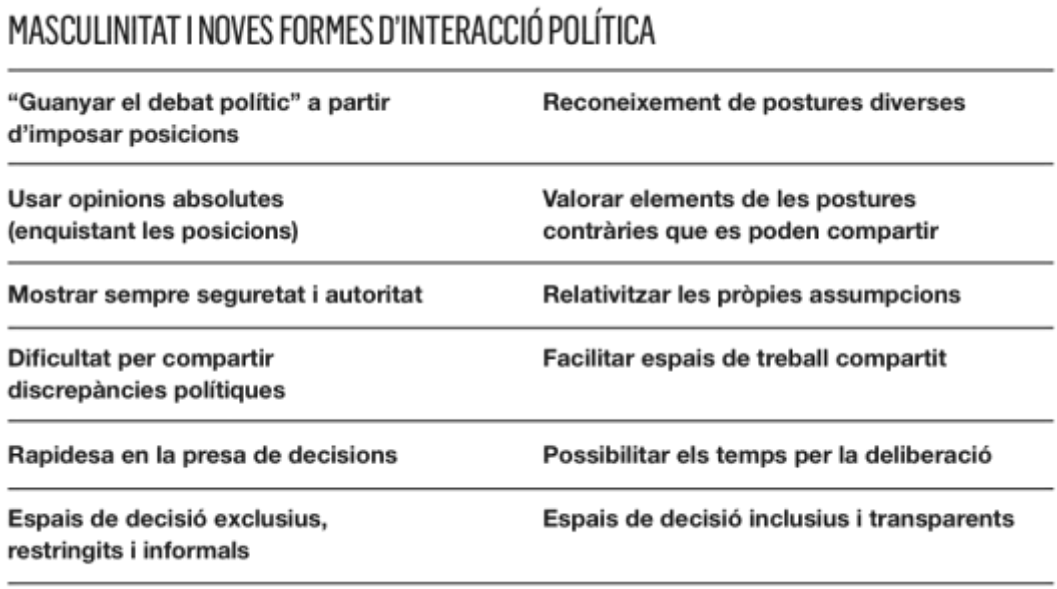
The following list of municipalities is based on the largest Spanish cities as well as on the 'Atlas del Cambio' map http://ciudadesdelcambio.org/: there cannot be precise equivalents between 2015 and 2019 in most cases since many candidatures split, and often ran for office in different constellations and with different names in 2019. They all represent different variants of municipalism. The table below is thus to be seen as approximative and incomplete, meant to give an idea of overall figures rather than a precise depiction of alliances and votes. One clear tendency to be noted throughout Spain is the breaking away of Podemos from the 2015 municipalist alliances, often leaving the latter weak or without representation. The following table is derived from https://resultados.elpais.com/elecciones/2019/municipales/01/41/91.html

City	**Candidature**	**Seats 2015**	**Seats 2019**
Córdoba	Ganemos Córdoba	4	Podemos 2 IU 3
Cádiz	Cádiz Si se Puede Cádiz en Común	Cádiz Si se Puede 8 Cádiz en Común 2	Adelante Cádiz 13
Jérez	Ganemos Jérez	5	Adelante 3
Santomera	Alternativa Santomera	4 (IU+Verdes+MOS+EQUO)	2
Carcaboso	Extremeños Carcaboso	4	4
Plasencia	Plasencia en Común	1	2 (Podemos etc)
Hervás	Qué Hervás Quieres	4	2
Talaveruela	Reaccióna Talaveruela	2	0
Tres Cantos (Madrid)	Ganemos 3 Cantos	7	3
Ávila	Trato Ciudadano	3	0
Castelló	Castelló en Moviment	4	2 (Podemos etc)

Badalona	Guanyem Badalona En Comú	5	2 (BComú-EPG)
Vilafranca	Vilafranca en Comú	2	0
Terrassa	Terrassa en Comú	6	0
Lleida	Comú de Lleida	2	2
Valladolid	Valladolid Toma la Palabra	4	3
Palencia	Ganemos Palencia	4	1
Burgos	Imagina Burgos	6	No candidature
	Podemos		2
Logroño	Cambia Logroño	4	0
	Unidas Podemos (IU, Podem, EQUO)		2
Iruña/Pamplona	Aranzadi Iruñea	3	0
Santander	Ganemos Santander Sí puede	2	
	Unidas por Santander (Podemos, IU, EQUO)		1
Xixóna	Xíxona sí Puede	3	No candidature/name change
	Més Xíxona (IU, ERC, ..)		1
Áviles	Somos Áviles	5	0
	Podemos-IU-Áviles	Part of Sómos Áviles	5
Ferrol	Ferrol en Común	6	3
Compostela	Compostela Abierta	10	5

Ourense	Ourense en Común	3	0
A Coruña	Marea Atlántica	10	6
Zaragoza	Zaragoza en Común	9	3
	Podemos-Equo Zaragoza	part of Zagaroza en Común	2
Alicante	Alicante en Común/Ganemos Alicante	6	No candidature/name change
	Podemos-EUPV Alicante	Part of Alicante en Común	2
Oviedo	Somos Oviedo	6	3
Málaga	Málaga Ahora	6	0
	Málaga Adelante (Podemos&IU)	Part of Málaga Ahora	3
Bilbao	Bilbao en Común	2	No candidature/name change
	Podemos-I.U-EQUO	part of Bilbao en Común	3
	Ganemos Bilbao	2	0
Sevilla	Adelante Sevilla	3	4
Valencia	Valencia en Común	3	No candidature/name change
Barcelona	Barcelona en Comú	11	10
Madrid	Ahora Madrid	20	No candidature/name change
	Más Madrid	Part of Ahora Madrid	19

Chart of ‘Masculinitat I noves formes politiques’ of the BComú Gender Study, by Institut Diversitas



MASCULINITAT I NOVES FORMES D'INTERACCIÓ POLÍTICA

“Guanyar el debat polític” a partir d’imposar posicions	Reconeixement de postures diverses
Usar opinions absolutes (enquistant les posicions)	Valorar elements de les postures contràries que es poden compartir
Mostrar sempre seguretat i autoritat	Relativitzar les pròpies assumpcions
Dificultat per compartir discrepàncies polítiques	Facilitar espais de treball compartit
Rapidesa en la presa de decisions	Possibilitar els temps per la deliberació
Espais de decisió exclusius, restringits i informals	Espais de decisió inclusius i transparents