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Laura Silva

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

A UTOPIAN APPROACH TO SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION: THE ROLE OF URBAN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS' FRAGMENTATION IN BARCELONA.

Laura Silva

Sciences Po and CREST

ABSTRACT: Urban social movements (USMs), here broadly defined as to include established protest organisations, neighbourhoods movements and new solidarity initiatives, have become increasingly hybrid and fragmented over time. However, the consequences of fragmentation have been debated, with some arguing that it has weakened the anti-capitalistic meaning of USMs, and others claiming that it has positively changed the meaning of urban struggles. In this work, I systematically analyse the literature about USMs in Barcelona and engage with new theoretical lenses to assess their historical evolution since the 1960s. USMs fragmentation emerges as crucial, as it allows the development of new logics of action, a decrease in the risk of institutional co-optation, and favours the rise of new spaces of alternativeness. Implications about the potential for social transformation in an anti-capitalistic perspectives are discussed.

KEYWORDS: Erik Olin Wright, fragmentation, logics of transformation, neighbourhoods, urban social movements, utopias

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR: laura.silva1@sciencespo.fr

1. Introduction

Today's societal urban development poses a number of questions around justice, inequality, environmental degradation and social cohesion, all concepts that are core to the human development within the urban landscape. Around the factors triggering these issues, many have started challenging capitalism itself, whereby with capitalism is meant the logic that uses profit to promote and justify selfishness and greed, at the expenses of the public good and the pursuit of more ethic behaviours (Snowdon, 2014). Within the urban space,

opposition to this system has sparked in recent year and a new wave of activism has unleashed in order to promote the achievement of a new vision of social empowerment. Since the age of “municipal socialism” (Harvey, 2012), urban social movements (USMs) have always played a crucial role in the perspective of disrupting the social order.

Sociologists (Mayer 2009; Marcuse 2009; Hamel 2014) have focused on describing the waves of mobilisation characterising USMs from the 1960s in Western Europe. Historical sociological analysis have devoted much attention to the structure of the political context, to movements’ discourse around the “right to the city” or to the role of broader phenomena such as immigration, economic recovery and globalisation. Existing analyses have also outlined that USMs have become increasingly heterogeneous and fragmented, with regard to their logical constituency and the repertoire of actions they adopt. However, conflicting ideas have characterised the debate on USMs’ increasing heterogeneity and fragmentation. On the one hand, fragmentation is seen as responsible for undermining USMs’ cohesion and strength and, eventually, leading to movement co-optation (Blokland et al., 2015). On the other hand, it supports the development of new and hybrid initiatives that often combine logics of direct action and solidarity, and by doing so are thus able to reconfigure the meaning of urban struggles (Mayer, 2015).

In this work, I critically engage with the above mentioned stream of literature in order to investigate the historical evolution of USMs in Barcelona. The objective of this work is thus twofold. First, it questions the evolution of USMs in Barcelona, giving particular attention to the combination of strategies of action used at each point of time and the complexity and transformative potential characterising each phase. Second, it aims to contribute to the debate on USMs’ fragmentation, responding to the call made by Blokland et al. (2015), who argue that further attention needs to be given to “inquiring into such dynamics of fragmented claims that, in their own complex and often not universalizing ways, do the work of the city” (p. 664).

To carry out the analysis, I leverage a conceptual model that provides new lenses through which to look at the evolution of USMs and assess the role played by increasing movements’ heterogeneity and fragmentation. The chosen framework is considered to be particularly suitable to the task for a number of reasons, one of the main ones being that it intrinsically embodies the emancipatory and anti-capitalistic meaning of USMs that many authors have emphasised (Lefebvre, 1968; Harvey, 2009; Purcell, 2008). In fact, this analysis is the first to leverage the theoretical framework on social transformation proposed by Erik Olin Wright (2013). The framework identifies three logics (ruptural, interstitial and symbiotic) of transformation that, when combined, would allow to replace the existing capitalistic system with a new vision of social justice. First, logics can be ruptural, aiming at the destruction of the existing system and its substitution with a new one. Interstitial logics aim instead at the development of alternative realities, based on the concept of solidarity and reciprocity and to be pursued outside of the existing capitalistic social order. Finally, symbiotic logics enhance the role of political coalitions to promote a new vision in a way that it also temporarily benefits the dominant classes.

In line with more recent works on the nature of USMs, I find that these movements, and the logics they adopt, have greatly evolved from the 1960s to nowadays in Barcelona. Radical movements have left the space for new forms of organisations that act according to mixed logics, often fostering a virtuous cycle between interstitial and ruptural actions. Furthermore, from 2015 onwards, the election of the progressive and movement-based party Barcelona en Comú (BeC) has opened new ways for symbiotic types of logics. Movements’ fragmentation over time seems to have contributed to the creation of new and more hybrid organisations operating in the interstitial space. The broader number of interstitial-type of initiatives than those existing in the 1980s, and a number of other key distinctions between now and the past, leave hope for a different destiny of USMs than in the 1980s, when the tight collaboration between USMs and institutions

resulted in movements' weakening and co-optation. The current historical phase indeed seems to also be characterised by a unique combination of interstitial and symbiotic logics, which, according to Erik Olin Wright (2010), represent the necessary conditions for a full rupture to take place and social transformation to happen.

The paper is structured as follows. The next chapter briefly reviews the debate on USMs' evolution and hybridization over time as well as details Wright's framework on social transformation. Chapter 3 describes the methodology. Chapter 4 focuses on the historical evolution of USMs in Barcelona and Chapter 5 discusses the different phases, the role of fragmentation and relevant implications on the potential for anti-capitalistic social transformation. Finally, I present limitations and avenues for future research.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 The hybridization of urban social movements over time

Urban social movements (USMs) started emerging at the end of the 1960s, as a form of collective action within the well-defined spatial dimension of booming cities. Manuel Castells (1977) was among the first to define the new phenomenon, describing the role of movements operating in the urban space in challenging and altering existing urban regimes and society. USMs produced resistance against hegemonic ideas and projects, and acted to change the urban meaning, the definition of city and of its beneficiaries (Castells, 1983). For example, USMs throughout history have acted to obtain right to housing, access to basic facilities such as hospitals or schools, have protested against redevelopment plans, and supported improvements in urban planning and local governance.

A number of scholars have focused on the evolution of USMs over time. Among these, Margit Mayer has been particularly influential, working on the identification of a number of phases, or waves, that involve USMs being active in a variety of different forms. As stressed by Novy and Colomb (2013), the evolution of USMs has taken a different shape, pace and trajectory in different national and local contexts, influenced by local opportunity structures and local government predispositions. Authors agree that, in a first moment, USMs were born as highly politicized and markedly anti-state in their orientation (Clarke and Mayer, 1986; Mayer, 2009; Hamel, 2014). Nonetheless, over time such movements have become more hybrid and fragmented, when it comes to their objectives as well as repertoires of mobilisation (Tilly, 1995).

The concept of *fragmentation* was developed in relation to the process by which movements have become increasingly diverse and heterogeneous in response to changes in the political and socio-economic context, thus taking on different routes to challenge the predominant system (Mayer, 2009). Mayer (2015) notes how forms of action and initiatives responding to a relatively new logic of solidarity and alternativeness have emerged within the social movements field. Della Porta and Steinhilper (2021) similarly introduces the concept of movement *hybridization*, in the context of the migrant crisis, stressing how the line between contentious and non-contentious forms of action, as well as between the roles and activities of civil society and established social movements, have become increasingly blurred. Part of the explanation lies in the fact that, for the first time, new individuals, often young and belonging to the middle class, have gathered together to organise in collective action and participate in protests, which allowed for the hybridisation of the movements (Lopez, 2016), contributing to truly redefine the meaning of political action (Mayer, 2015). In recent years, new grass-root initiatives, united under the claim for new political and citizens' rights, have resulted in newly developed

interactions and relationships across individuals with different visions and priorities, but often under the same movement umbrella. In light of increasing heterogeneity and fragmentation, the most moderate sectors of USMs might embrace more formal routes and become increasingly institutionalised, while others most rebellious movement strands stick to extra-conventional tactics (Portos, 2019), radicalising their repertoires of action and shifting from predominantly non-violent tactics to predominantly violent ones (Alimi et al. 2015; Uitermark and Nicholls, 2014). Other authors have argued that in new USMs it is possible to witness, at the same time, logics of confrontation with regard to the government and logics of cooperation, while, crucially, USMs' own subversive identity is retained. Asara (2019) and Uitermark (2004) find this mix at work respectively in Barcelona and in Amsterdam squats, "*this means that it is likely that we will observe in other cities too some hybrid form of co-optation, in which both the government and the movement retain their identity, yet in which the goals of the two parties become compatible*" (Uitermark, 2004, p. 689). Similarly, Aguilera (2017) analyses squatter networks in Paris, finding support for the coexistence of autonomous and more institutionalised wings within the same movement. Overall, USMs may not operate based on one type of social action and seem not necessarily committed to the same radical claims (Hamel et al., 2000).

The consequences in terms of societal change and the impact of the increasing hybridisation and fragmentation of social movements are debated. On the one hand, authors such as Harvey (2012) stress that USMs are nowadays more varied in nature and lack overall political coherence, so they have also taken the role of other actors traditionally responsible for challenging capitalistic institutions, such as political parties, labour unions or well-defined social movements. Aguilera (2017) argues for a positive role of fragmentation. Based on his ethnographic account in Paris, it is exactly the movements' heterogeneity that allows them to perpetuate their activities and reinforce their effects on policies. The different wings, more or less autonomous, radical or institutionalised, take advantage of each other's strengths as well as carefully watch over one another's. This allows them to keep on existing and to positively shape political outcomes (Aguilera, 2017). On the other hand, movements' fragmentation has been called out as a mechanism leading to the weakening of USMs and also to their increasing institutionalisation (Mayer, 2009). Fragmentation implies that activists begin to have different views with regard to the nature, identity and objective of the movement itself, its autonomy and the type of relationship with governmental institutions. Under this view, it strongly affects USMs' power and transformation capacity. First, it highlights new challenges related to the capacity of individuals engaged within the movement to come to an agreement and to create some shared understanding about the organisation and its purpose. Second, it may lead to increasing competition among groups over rights and resources (Blokland et al., 2015), rather than the development of mutual support and solidarities. Finally, it drives increasing specialisation and it restricts the focus on distinct and narrow issues (Kling, 1993; Harvey, 1996). As a consequence, it becomes harder to build significant coalitions and define a common understanding of urban problems in broader terms of class contradictions (Fainstein and Hirst, 1995; Hamel, 2014), which may result in an increasing and, above all, passive and routinised involvement with the existing institutions. Under this perspective, although actively participating in institutional innovations, many movements might end up doing so without really challenging traditional local politics, thus becoming just an instrument in the hands of local administrations to outsource the satisfaction of public services and increase justification (Pruijt, 2003). Nonetheless, it must be acknowledge that not all institutionalisation processes happen in the same way and, more importantly, may lead to the same outcome. Pruijt (2003), for example, identifies and distinguishes different forms of institutionalisation. These range from co-optation, based on which movements' leaders are increasingly integrated into the city's leadership, to a form of flexible institutionalisation, which involves the combination of different tactics, more or less disruptive, operating in simultaneous, to the so-called terminal

institutionalisation, based on which USMs lose their identity completely and thus reach their terminal stage of life.

2.2 Urban social movements fragmentation and social change

Modifying existing governance and power dynamics and producing transforming effects on the social relationships between social classes at urban level, both politically and ideologically (Finquelievich, 1981) has always been intrinsic objective of USMs. Harvey (2012) in particular expands on this claim, by arguing that practices of accumulation by dispossession lie at the heart of many of the discontents that attach to the qualities of daily life for the mass of the population. Since urban social movements typically mobilize around such questions, they always have a class content even when they are primarily articulated in terms of rights, citizenship, and the travails of social reproduction. Existing capitalist urbanisation is in itself a class phenomenon, thus claiming the right to the city is about replacing and overthrowing “*the whole capitalist system of perpetual accumulation, along with its associated structures of exploitative class and state power*” (p. 152). The initial, markedly anti-state and ant-systemic nature of first-born USMs clearly embodied such class struggles, with protests and strikes moving from factories to housing estates (Domaradska, 2018) and core issues being conflict on rent prices, public services and living conditions. However, it still remains a question the extent to which such scope and nature of USMs may have changed in light of the increasing fragmentation process.

Within the field of social movements, collective activity and related political outcomes have often been assessed by adopting the lenses of cycles of contention (Tarrow, 1989, 1998). Under this view, the opening up of political opportunity structures incentivise and shape the extent and how, i.e. through which repertoires of actions, movements engage with politics and radical claims. Relatedly, Tilly (1995) focuses on the so-called repertoires of contention stressing how they “*emerge from struggle*” (p.42) and they are significantly embedded in the context, as different political configurations are likely to lead citizens and activists to develop different reactions and methods to challenge the status quo. In this paper, I argue for the adoption of a new framework to analyse the process of fragmentation of USMs and its relative impact in terms of social change, which is Erik Olin Wright’s framework on social transformation. Such a theoretical perspective has never been used in the context of urban social movements’ studies and it can thus contribute to complement insights deriving from the application of more traditional approaches to the study of social movements, related to protest cycles and changes in repertoires of mobilisation.

First, although the newness of this framework’s application to this question, Wright’s theory builds on the same epistemological background shared by critical urban scholars who investigated the meaning and evolution of USMs before. Wright belongs to the Marxist school, as do many other central figures in the debate on USMs such as David Harvey or Peter Marcuse. What all these authors have in common is the idea that movements are disruptive entities, whose objective is to challenge the capitalistic social order. Most of critical urban theory builds upon the seminal work of the Marxist sociologist and philosopher Henri Lefebvre. With his 1968 seminal book “*Le Droit à la ville*”, he coins the term “right to the city”, defining a new vision for radical democracy and pointing to citizens, and organised group of citizens, as the agents responsible for changing the existing hegemony of power, by loudly claiming their “right to the city”, the right in participating in the urban both spatial and social life. Lefebvre stresses the relationship between socio-economic inequalities and urban spatial dynamics, arguing that: “*(Social) space is a (social) product ... the space thus produced also serves as a tool of thought and of action ... in addition to being a means of production it is also a means of*

control, and hence of domination, of power” (1991, p. 26). Lefebvre (1968) is the first to emphasise the element of class struggle that necessarily characterise USMs struggles, distancing them from other type of social movements such the peace movement or the gay rights movement (Pickvance, 2003). Nonetheless, other authors have more recently worked on the relationship between precarious class and space, outlining how the spatial dimension, and the “spatial opportunity structure”, lie at the core of the meaning and significance of urban struggles (Caciagli, 2021).

Second, Wright points out that three different so-called *logics of transformation* exist, through which the new vision of a socially empowered, just and fairer society can be built. The first one is defined as *ruptural*. According to this logic, existing institutions “*are destroyed and new ones built in a fairly rapid way*” (2010, p. 303). Agents adopting this approach are typically revolutionary socialists, or individuals organised in collective action whose main target is the State and whose main objective is to destroy it. The second one, the *interstitial* logic, is about the creation of alternatives at the margin of capitalism and the State. Wrights considers social movements the typical proponents of this approach, as the ones with enough collective power to create alternatives to the existing system. Finally, the third one is defined as *symbiotic*. This logic sees political coalitions to play a greater role in building social empowerment, by using the State to promote the new vision in a way that it also temporarily benefit the dominant classes (2010, p. 303–305).

The focus on logics, or strategies, of action, in contrast with the classic category of “modes of action” or “tactical repertoires of contention” assumes here an important meaning. On the one hand, these traditional definitions are highly historicized and routinized concepts, which fail to recognize the ideological and symbolic meaning behind the use of certain tactics instead of others (Snow et al., 2022). The need to recognise that tactics are always expressive of identity claims and, thus, to consider more deeply the motives and confrontational nature of movements’ actions, is a critical point made by identity politics and widely debated in USM theory (Soja, 1994; Jasper, 1997). In addition to that, logics or strategies denote a longer-term thinking which connects action to overall goals. In contrast, tactics or repertoires tend to represent the particular means chosen to advance them (Rucht, 1990; Snow et al., 2022). Hence, I talk about logics as the processes through which not only USMs concretely operate, but also through which they understand and define their own world in relation to the changing capitalistic nature of contemporary societies.

A related point that warrants some attention is that Wright’s framework focuses not only on the existence of single and isolated logics, but on their *combination* as the root of social transformation. Such a unifying perspective is often overlooked in existing analyses. In the cycle of mobilization approach (Tarrow, 1993), new forms of contention can emerge and evolve over time. However, the focus is on the times of crisis, so-called “moments of madness”, which do represent the pivotal movement for shifting modes of action. The emphasis of such approach is thus on historical discontinuities, rather than on connections and fluidity across time. In contrast, according to Wright, “*none of these strategies is simple and unproblematic....In different times and places, one or another of these modes of transformation may be the most effective, but often all of them are relevant. . . . A long-term political project of emancipatory transformation...must grapple with the messy problem of combining different elements of these strategies*” (2010, p. 307). Such a view allows to fully acknowledge the complexity of social movements’ evolution and their fragmented nature.

Finally, Wright’s framework aims to go beyond just the analysis of the relationship between the socio-political contexts and USMs development and evolution over time, moving between the current status quo and an inspirational status quo. The theoretical framework around social transformation was proposed by Erik Olin Wright in his seminal 2010 book *Envisioning Real Utopias*. Differently from previous streams of literature focusing on social movements, Wright (2010) aims here not only at theorising about the current status, but

even more at introducing a new, utopian, vision of social empowerment, that needs to be desirable, viable and achievable. An important distinction with the “contentious politics” model (McAdam et al., 2001; Tilly and Tarrow, 2007) is indeed that such model considers the State as central interlocutor of movements’ and protests’ activity. Wright’s theoretical vision grants, instead, a much greater space for alternativeness. He proposes a comprehensive theory of social transformation that challenges the role of different societal actors: from political parties, to social movements, to individual anarchists or revolutionists. In his own words, “*to be a radical critic of existing institutions and social structures is to identify harms that are generated by existing arrangements, to formulate alternatives which mitigate those harms, and to propose transformative strategies for realising those alternatives*” (2010, p. 26).

According to Wright, logics could be combined as a way to effectively counteract capitalism-induced harms. Despite his radical background, Wright is quite sceptical around the opportunity to just “destroy the system and build a new one”. In other words, he dismisses the idea that revolutionary acts are what is needed to promote alternative views to capitalism. In one of his later works, he states “*Give up the fantasy of smashing capitalism. Capitalism is not smashable, at least if you really want to construct an emancipatory future*” (2017, p. 122). Instead, Wright identifies in the combination of interstitial and symbiotic strategies the route towards the development of a new reality. Since a full rupture with the existing system is unlikely, he proposes that rupture needs to happen gradually, first in terms of certain institutions and later expanding within the system. Interstitial activities that have the potential to challenge capitalism are crucial for this scope, for example worker and consumer co-ops, community-based social economy services, community-controlled land trusts, cross-border equal-exchange trade organizations and even open-source software and technology projects (Wright, 2017). Leveraging these initiatives and promoting the logic behind them means not only demonstrating that alternatives to capitalism are possible but also, crucially, slowly eroding capitalism by gradually introducing them in the prevailing ecosystem of capitalism, nurturing their development by protecting their niches while figuring out ways of expanding their habitats (2017). At the core of this, there is Wright’s idea that alternative realities have the potential, in the long run, of expanding to the point where capitalism is displaced from its dominant role. The existence of interstitial initiatives alone, though, is not enough to guarantee that a transformative, anti-capitalist process takes place. Agents moving forward interstitial initiatives need to be politically engaged, since without engagement, interstitial logics lose their emancipatory potential. That’s how symbiotic strategies come into the picture. They can open up greater spaces for interstitial strategies to work, by promoting vision of alternatives in a way that it is in line, although temporarily, with the interests of capitalists. Symbiotic strategies are about taming capitalism which means, reducing its harmful effect through the development of well-crafted state policies (Wright, 2017). Interstitial initiatives moving forward the transformation would become increasingly legitimated. This would thus make more solid the small breaches in the system from which the full transformation is expected to develop. However, symbiotic strategies alone are also useless in the achievement of social transformation and have proven, in the past, to be not strong enough to promote the needed change. They face a greater risk of reverting towards capitalism, as in the case of deep institutionalisation or co-optation. According to Wright’s theory (2010), the key for achieving real social transformation is, thus, to combine these two approaches, symbiotic and interstitial, so that they reinforce each other, their emancipatory potential is preserved, and they are jointly able to generate a ruptural and genuine transformation. As argued by Wright, “*we need a way of linking the bottom-up, society-centered strategic vision of anarchism with the top-down, state-centered strategic logic of social democracy. We need to tame capitalism in ways that make it more erodible, and erode capitalism in ways that make it more tamable*” (2017, p. 140). Interstitial and symbiotic strategies should aim at obtaining or ensuring state power, since this is what is needed to initiate phases of rupture with capitalism.

3. Methodology

This work takes as unit of analysis USMs in Barcelona and focuses on analysing their evolution and fragmentation processes over time. Barcelona represents a paradigmatic and optimal setting for several reasons. First, USMs in the city have a longstanding tradition and have been much more active than in other urban locations. Barcelona has always been a city of intense class conflicts, characterised by many episodes of revolt, towards the clergy first and urban elites later on. Second, the city has an interesting history around governance models. Barcelona became famous worldwide for the “Barcelona Model” for urban transformation, which rules the definition and implementation of urban regeneration initiatives and the inclusion of citizens within processes of decision-making. As a consequences of these two reasons, Barcelona has been analysed intensively by researchers in different fields, from urban geography to sociology to political science, which provides me with a vast number of sources to look at and upon which to build my historical reconstruction of the evolution of USMs.

To identify pathways in the evolution of USMs and in their logics of action, this study performs a historical analysis based upon a systematic review of the existing literature on USMs in Barcelona. Different steps have been followed to ensure comprehensiveness with regard to relevant publications.

First, to identify the relevant literature, a search through keywords has been pursued on Web of Science. Considering the limitedness of the geography of interest and the scope of the analysis, the following keywords (topics) have been included: urban* OR cit* AND social movement* OR movement* OR activis* OR right to the city OR neighbourhood association* OR squatt* AND Barcelona. Publications in both English and Spanish have been considered, whereas those in Catalan have been discarded due to language difficulties. Such analysis provided an initial sample of 529 articles. Titles and abstract of all papers have been analysed. Based on that, publications including relevant keywords but that related to different fields, for example environmental planning, were discarded. Second, to mitigate the risk of dismissing relevant publications, these results have been complemented by tracing backward/forward citations. Both the literature review part and the bibliography of relevant articles selected through the initial screening have been carefully analysed. This allowed for the identification of relevant publications, significantly and systematically cited and that, therefore, were likely to represent seminal contributions. Finally, the bibliography of authors who appeared more than once in the sample (Parés, García, Pradel-Miquel, Blanco, Subirats and Eizaguirre) and who, thus, were found as key contributors to the debate around urban social movements and urban governance in Barcelona has been thoroughly analysed. A Skype interview with one of these key authors allowed to validate the retrieved publication and adding other relevant sources, both in English and Spanish.

The final sample my historical analysis has built upon includes 40 papers. Details on the papers included are provided in the Appendix. All the papers were carefully read and coded according to the contribution they made to understanding the evolution of USMs and changes in the logics operated by USMs. For example, each paper was catalogued according to its structure and the journal or book in which it appeared. Furthermore, for each paper, information around the period of analysis, movements discussed, the type of initiatives and activities discussed and the geographical scale at which the analysis takes place have been collected. I rely on the assumption that specific initiatives can typically be related to the logics justifying them, and specifically to their confrontational content, as demonstrated by De Weerdt and Garcia (2016) or Garcia-Lamarca (2017). In the following analysis, information on the logics pursued by USMs is thus derived by presence/discussion of the following keywords or topics:

- Ruptural logics – conflictual and confrontational strategies and initiatives, radicalism.
- Interstitial logics – definition of alternative realities, reciprocity ties, cooperatives and mutual support, solving “mundane” problems, providing community support, social innovation.
- Symbiotic logics – extent of collaboration with political parties, institutionalism.

4. The evolution of USMs in Barcelona

The systematic review of the existing literature highlighted a number of phases in which the logics adopted by USMs have changed. Each phase is discussed in a paragraph below. Leveraging upon different sources, I draw a historical picture of how logics have developed over time through the lenses of the framework on social transformation.

4.1 From the 1960s to 1976: from the rise of confrontational USMs to their legitimisation

The evolution of USMs in Barcelona seems to align with the general trend described by previous authors taking into account movements operating in Western cities (Clarke and Mayer, 1986; Mayer, 2009; Hamel, 2014). According to these authors, USMs in their rising phase were very radical and confrontational, characteristics well-aligned with the *ruptural* logic envisioned by Wright. The decade starting from the 1960s, which marks the emergence of USMs, signed for Barcelona also a period of strong demographic growth and urban development (Calavita and Ferrer, 2000). Such growth happened in a rather uncontrolled way, fostering the development of so-called “shantytowns” (Wynn, 1979), urban areas characterised by poor architectural design and construction quality. This process, also defined as “densification” went on from 1957 to 1973 and was driven also by the politics of the mayor of Barcelona at that time, Josep Maria de Porcioles i Colomer (De Balanzó and Rodríguez-Planas, 2018). During the 1960s, thus, USMs emerged as a very unified movement, often alongside the labour movement which was also spreading worldwide. Problems connected to the poor quality of the urban environment indeed cumulated with other issues often faced by the poor such as bad working conditions and low wages. According to Calavita and Ferrer (2000), USMs were highly conflictual and confrontational, acting according to direct action and protest tactics. For example, among the strategies of action that were used, authors list occupation of public spaces, human barriers, sequestering buses, and rent strikes collection of signatures, assemblies, expositions, gatherings around sport or music events, symbolic inaugurations, and so forth (Huertas and Andreu, 1996). Their objective was the one of fundamentally destroying the existing Franchist and anti-constitutional system. Some of them even acted as clandestine associations until half of the 1970s.

The more urban segregation increased, the more USMs became relevant actors in opposing to the existing regime. According to Calavita and Ferrer (2000), the administration often ignored their requests, which led to harder forms of struggles and protests and to make the government the concrete and highly visible target of their opposition. Operating in difficult conditions, and not being fully legitimised in the realm of urban politics, increased USMs’ radicalism over time and transformed fights for neighbourhood and local issues into a broader protest movement at city level. The relevance and visibility gained by USMs was such that finally Porciol resigned as a Mayor. Porciol’s resignation signed a first peak in the life of USMs, reinforcing their rebellious identity and emphasised by a series of successes. For example, the main urban development plan developed

by the administration, the 1974 GMP plan, was highly contested and movements won over the government on many of the plan's features, such as elimination of new roads that would have cut through their neighbourhoods (Monclus, 2003).

Moreover, according to Martí (2012), neighbourhood associations (“asociaciones de vecinos”) emerged as a grassroots response to this planning failure. Thus, beyond confrontation they were also focused mainly on solving everyday problems specific to each neighbourhood and focusing on tackling issues around collective consumption, such as service provision. The idea of reciprocity seemed to be highly ingrained in the development of these associations, in line with *interstitial* logics.

4.2 1976 to 1982: USMs integration within the city political arena

The great success experienced by USMs made them increasingly relevant in the urban arena. The approval of the reformed GMP plan marked the beginning of a new and tighter relationship between USMs and other type of urban actors. Years from 1979 to the half of the 1980s were a period of strong public leadership (Piñeira Mantiñán et al., 2019), characterised by a sincere attempt from political leaders to turn the protests of the urban social networks and community-led organizations into effective technical proposals such as the Social Plans, an alternative proposal to the government-led GMP (Blanco, 2009). To develop the Social Plans, USMs collaborated with a vast number of people including architects, sociologists, journalists, and, in general, more elitarian parts of society. In particular, according to Martí (2012), neighbourhood associations were increasingly recognised as relevant interlocutors to deal with within the urban space, and leaders of the most active neighbourhood associations started being integrated, even formally, in the city's governing coalition. The integration process reinforced when in 1976 municipal elections took place and that gave birth to a socialist administration. Members who were previously sceptical of the administration started being actively involved in it and this proved to be crucial for the inclusion of neighbourhood concerns in urban politics and plans (Monclus, 2003). This provided the basis for an increasing collaboration between USMs and institutions, in a symbiotic fashion, where USMs claims were move forward as part of the traditional political agenda. For example, many resources were devoted to the development of public spaces (more than 200 plazas were built), to enhancing social cohesion and social policies, and to develop connection between peripheric and marginalised neighbourhoods to the centre of the city. An enhanced ‘Barcelona of the neighbourhoods’ emerged, with citizens associating themselves strongly with particular neighbourhood identities and in which key actors of civil society were engaged in the city's urban regeneration (Blakeley, 2005). Neighbourhoods, and the USMs operating within it, started also experiencing different trajectories. While indeed USMs in poorer and working-class were concerned with social justice, USMs operating in middle-class and elite neighbourhoods, started to act as to enhance cultural democracy (Islar and Irgil, 2018; Parés, 2019).

4.3 1982 to 2000: USM's institutionalisation and a new wave of activism

The increasing representativeness of USMs in the government, through the presence of neighbourhood association, had proved to bring some benefits to the city and its inhabitants. However, the establishment of stricter ties with the government progressively weakened the contentious nature of urban movements. According to Calavita and Ferrer (2000), at that time USMs indeed lost their momentum and power. The president of the Federació d'Asociacions de Vecinos Barcelona (FAVB), Carles Prieto, told a reporter in 1982 that “the political parties of the governing coalition” - composed to a large extent of former members or

sympathizers of the Asociaciones de Vecinos – “have abandoned the Asociaciones de Vecinos” (Huertas and Andreu, 1996). On one hand, movements’ weakening was due to the completion to many urban development project that had been core to USMs’ struggles. Neighbourhood-specific concerns were increasingly given a higher priority, helped by a process of decentralisation of technical decision-making that took place over the period 1985–95 and a general tendency from the city council as to meet many of neighbourhood associations’ demands (Blanco and Leon, 2016). On the other hand, the government was acting more friendly and less confrontational, thus USMs had not anymore a specific target to fight. The first democratic elections had led new-born political parties to be seen as the primary channel of representation of citizens’ needs, thus strengthening traditional politics and weakening USMs (Martí, 2012). Although important, citizens and USM’s participation in the local government thus became mostly instrumental to legitimise and justify the decisions of the elected social government and to collaborate with them as “de facto” local services providers (Blanco and Leon, 2016).

The increasing subordination, or rather disappearance of USMs, in urban politics was particularly noticeable from the mid-1980s, when the government of Barcelona started pursuing an intensive growth strategy aimed through in particular public–private partnership first (1986–92) and economic competition and efficient management later (1992–97) (Piñeira Mantiñán et al., 2019). The objective was to transform Barcelona in a famous touristic destination and attract increasing private investment (Hughes, 2018; Bruttomesso, 2018). Crucially, the city was nominated to host the 1992 Olympic games. The nomination triggered a number of initiatives from a urban development perspective and changes to the urban fabric. To make that happen the government followed a rigid, inflexible, and top-down decision making. The participative role of citizens increasingly diminished, as did the capacity of neighbourhood associations and other social groups to negotiate new demands with the city council. However, changes in the urban governance and management were widely accepted since they were framed, at least initially, in the context of the relevance and urgency of building the necessary infrastructure for the games. Thus, although participation mechanisms formally existed, they had mostly lost their decision-making and representativeness logic in favour of efficiency. Over time, the government strengthened the “entrepreneurial approach” and its commitment to transform the city in a touristic attraction and knowledge and cultural based economy (Degen and García, 2012). While social cohesion was still emphasised in the politics of the city, it was shifting from being focused on the neighbourhood to the municipal level. As Degen and García (2012) explain, social diversity replaced social and spatial segregation, urban identity was built around “Barcelonity”. At the same time, ties between the government and the business and construction industry became stronger and this guaranteed space for land speculation and winning of lots by big developers whose objective were directed toward profit rather than community building.

The shift towards neo-liberalism, however, was not universally and quietly accepted. In fact, throughout the 1990s an intense squatting activity also developed in the city, in contrast to the prevalent trend of collaboration (Magrinyà and De Balanzó, 2015). A Squatters’ Social Centers (*Centros Sociales Okupas*) movement was born, that offered alternative infrastructure and services in the occupied spaces (Lopez, 2013). USMs born during this period were more radical than previous ones such as feminist or ecologist movement (Costa and Martí, 2008). They established strong links with the no-global movement and others that dealt with international solidarity, anti-war and anti-racism (Flesher Fominaya 2015). They operated both through very confrontational and direct action and worked as self-managed networks, although they changed in strength and strategy over time. Activists belonging to these movements moved several critiques to the government. Neo-liberal policies were strongly condemned, as was the failure in process of participative democracy envisioned

during the 1960s, that could have been move forward through engagement with the government during the 1970s and 1980s but in the end actually had not been fulfilled.

Furthermore, as a response to the increasing managerialism and neo-liberal attitude taken by the government and reduction of the focus on neighbourhood issues, local USMs also became again central to urban daily life. They were providing assistance to people whose houses had been demolished and in developing accessible spaces, especially in neighbourhoods which were poorer or more affected by the interventions such as Nou Barris, Horta or Raval (Parés et al., 2018).

4.4 2000 to 2008: USM looking for alternative realities

The early 2000s marked a very active moment with regard to the development of urban regeneration and promotion policies by the government. The Universal Forum of World Cultures in 2004 announced in 1996 (Paolo Russo & Scarnato, 2018) as well as the 22@ project and Diagonal Mar development were tangible proof of the ruling neo-liberalism. According to Charnock et al. (2014), these indeed were conceived with competitiveness in mind and in the perspective to pursue, both for governments and private investors, rental profit-maximizing opportunities through the mobilization of land as a financial asset. These projects saw a major intervention of private investors, but involved mostly no civic participation. As a result, the early ages of 2000 saw a new surge in protests and campaigns (Salvini, 2018) and a resurgence of conflictual and contentious strategies, in a *ruptural* fashion. For example, plans about the 22@ project generated huge conflict for the proposed development of high rises near to the historical center of the neighbourhood and demolition of the factory complex Can Ricart. According to Marrero-Guillamón (2013), this triggered the largest demonstrations in decades, generated new activist groups, and produced splits within Neighbours Associations, whose leaders were still often part of the administration but had become increasingly co-opted, “*abandoning their loyalties to their grass-roots*” (Eizaguirre et al., 2017). Citizens started to organise themselves in newly born movements and associations, more representative of the actual population that had significantly changed from the 1970s due to the high rate of migration (Blanco, 2015), and back to using contentious actions against the local administration. Debate indeed had also sparked in the press about the deterioration of the social cohesion model that had been lost in urban politics.

To respond to these concerns, the administration started to give more consideration to policies with a closer connection to the neighbourhoods (Piñeira Mantiñán et al., 2019) and neighbourhoods once again began to become involved in their own urban regeneration and redevelopment. Significantly, in 2004 the Neighbourhood Law was passed, including the definition of a scheme for participation aimed at re-involving newly constituted and representative neighbourhood associations. However, relationships between movements and the government were still very weak and developed as complex web of top-down channels of participation designed by the City Council itself. This did not really allow for the effective inclusion of neighbourhood claims within the political agenda, as the *symbiotic* logic would require.

The lack of a genuine interest of the government in acting on behalf of citizens and neighbourhoods’ interest marked the beginning of a new period of activities for USMs, with many of them focusing on devising new ways of living and alternatives to State support. Although overall levels of public contestation decreased in the country after 2003, “*a multi-layered network of activists with different trajectories and experiences forged spaces for dissent and encounter besides those of the mainstream channels*” (Portos, 2016, p. 192). Cooperatives, for example, increase in relevance and number, among which key references are

Laciutatinvisible or Coop57, a cooperative created by workers displaced by the closing of the Editorial Bruguera publishing house in Sants (Martí, 2012). Grass-roots organisations of various type, such as food banks or educational initiatives, arise, later defined under the umbrella of social innovation (Cruz et al., 2017; Moreno et al., 2019). Responsible for these initiatives were, often, those organisations and realities that had been excluded from the network of relationship with the government. For example, squatter groups or groups that had organized against a specific urban redevelopment project (for example, artists and local residents) (Costa and Martí, 2008), who kept on mobilising against the existing political system and acting in opposition to the government.

4.5 2008 to 2011: A reinforcing loop between alternative and radical claims

The financial crisis in 2008 brought to light even more clearly the inability of the State to support more disadvantaged segments of the population. As a consequence, USMs flourished in the perspective of representing an alternative to the existing political structure, in line with *interstitial* logics. The focus of these movements was to define and create a more democratic, inclusive, collaborative, and locally-embedded economic system, fulfilling human needs instead of capital accumulation (Sanchez-Hernandez & Glucker, 2019; Parés et al., 2018).

While some of these solidarity experiences were completely disengaged from the political sphere of action, the majority saw their operations as highly disruptive and as a tool to strengthen the contentious content of their political action (Asara, 2019). For example, Calvet-Mir & March (2017) discusses the emergence of community gardens during this period, arguing that it responds to two coexisting logics. On the one hand, the need for opposition to speculative urbanism. On the other hand, the willingness to recover vacant and idle lots to build a new vision of how urban development should happen. Furthermore, according to Blanco and Leon (2016), reciprocity dynamics between residents counteracted the effects of austerity and coexisted and reinforced acts of contentious politics such as demonstrations, the squatting of public facilities and other acts of civil disobedience. For example, the 500x20 movement developed in Nou Barris worked by solving neighbours' social needs but simultaneously reframing public discourse and pushing for comprehensive responses (Parés, 2019).

One of the movements that best incorporated this dualism between *ruptural* and *interstitial* power was the PAH, the Plataforma Afectados por la Hipoteca. Emerged from the previous movement V for Vivienda, the PAH had taken on the role of leading organisation dealing with the right for housing and assumed a crucial role in the management of evictions and other urban issues (Berglund, 2020; Parés et al., 2017). As stressed by Berglund (2020) the PAH inherited influences from both anarchism and Marxism, as well as from more reformist and liberal political traditions. Thus, it managed to create spaces in which taken-for-granted principles of capitalism were challenged (Alvarez et al., 2015), while maintaining a balance between more or less radical activities and its legitimacy. As a bottom up initiative, the PAH involved resistance to evictions, personal escraches at politicians' houses, and squatting in apartments that have become vacant through eviction to claim them as social housing, but also a daily construction of spaces of encounter, re-signifying debt, reconstructing social ties, and putting forward a citizen-led legislative change to redefine indebtedness and housing access (Alvarez et al., 2015; Parés et al., 2017). In this context, reformist demands were considered per se as revolutionary acts (Suarez, 2017). The movement connected to the PAH grew immensely in the country, leading to separations within the movement and the development of more or less radical branches of

activity. Within the movement, there was consensus on the ruptural nature of the association. Even less radical parts of the organisations claimed that the PAH had significant emancipatory potential, as a political act that disrupts the core dynamics of urban capital accumulation and enacts equality for evicted households faced with a mortgage debt for life (García-Lamarca, 2017). However, more debated was instead the level of collaboration with institutions and the relationships to be built with the local government. For example, members often failed to consistently agree on the extent to which the PAH should self-manage buildings recuperated from banking institutions or turn them over to the administration by forcing their reconversion into housing units.

4.6 2011 to 2015: The 15M and the following reintegration of USMs in the political sphere

The ongoing critical economic situation and the crisis of political power exacerbated the existing tensions, leading to the emergence of a new movement, turbulently settling in the panorama of the city and affecting also the emergence of other radical movements worldwide such as Occupy Wall Street (Castaneda, 2012). In 2011, the 15M movement, or Indignados movement, took shape and begun its protest journey by occupying Plaza Cataluña in Barcelona and other plazas in a number of Spanish cities, with the objective of triggering a significant *rupture* within the system. The Indignados movement emerged as a highly confrontational movement, in extreme opposition to both political and economic power. This experienced marked the beginning of a period of heightened conflict across the whole social system, of intense interactions between challengers and authorities, with multiple fronts of social confrontation open at the same time, and a wide array of actors involved who followed variable strategies and used multiple repertoires of action (Portos, 2019). The initial decision by the government to adopt a repressive approach, increased support for the Indignados amongst different social groups (Castaneda, 2012). The movement called for a rejection of the existing representative democracy, responsible for choosing capital over the people's needs. Rather, it proposed the development of a true radical democracy (Martí, 2012), based on equality and justice. It called for using the city as space for expressing protest at all levels, beyond neighbourhood specific or housing needs and in a broader and anti-capitalistic way. That's why, also, the 15M strengthened ties with movements transnationally, as well as with movements already operating in Barcelona such as the Squatters' Social Centers, the Cooperative movement, the Housing movement, the PAH and the left-wing pro- Catalan independence assembly-based political organization, CUP (Magrinyà and De Balanzó, 2017).

Moreover, the 15M triggered a renaissance of new grass-roots, *interstitial* initiatives. According to Portos (2019), by early 2012, more than 1000 new organisations, the 15M's offspring, were active at fighting austerity across the country in early 2012. Although citizen initiatives had started to develop intensively even before the Indignados movement, its momentum enabled them to be more visible and with space to voice their demands (Islar and Irgil, 2018). Furthermore, the 15m wave triggered the development of other initiatives which were, such as the network Xarxa Ciutat Viella, less technical than neighbourhood association and more heterogeneous and alternative in nature and with regard to their aims (Bruttomesso, 2018). The Indignados movement in itself, as well, had an element concerned with the envisionment of a new and alternative reality. The occupation in Plaza Catalunya worked as a small semi-autonomous town, in which different proposals were written carefully and formally, uploaded to the Internet, printed and distributed among the occupiers, who would later be asked to debate and vote them (Flesher Fominaya, 2015). The development of all these initiatives also reenergized neighbourhood networks by connecting old neighbourhood associations with social networks associated with specific environmental initiatives or urban and housing projects (Arbaci and Tapada-

Berteli, 2012). New synergies and conversational flows were developed, and communities strengthened significantly, reaching also a better position to negotiate with the city council and demand action, combining both formal and informal collaboration.

After the Indignados, the neoliberal coalition in office started opening back to discussion with USMs, thus a new period of *symbiotic* collaboration between government and USMs begins. It had started to accept demands from social centres and district assemblies, for example by enabling the Pla Buits (Subirats and García-Bernardos, 2015) in 2012 to open publicly owned plots to grassroots initiatives like community gardens. The new space of collaboration that was offered, whereby opinions and proposals made by exponents of the network of neighbourhood associations and major USMs such as the PAH, exacerbated existing tensions between radicalism and reformism within movements. An ideological clash, for example, was happening in the Indignados movement constituency (Hughes, 2001) as did in the PAH, as they had become increasingly conscious of the importance of having allies within the institutions at the local level: '*you have to be rooted in the territory, forge alliances with local actors and entities, residents and neighborhood assemblies and have at least a basic knowledge of the local institutional terrain*' (Romanos, 2014 citing Colau and Alemany, 2013, p. 68). Leaders of major USMs understood that the development of alternatives alone was necessary, but not sufficient, to enable the researched radical process of transformation. This resulted in the creation of a new party, Barcelona in Comu (BeC). BeC was launched in 2014 by Ada Colau, spokesperson from the PAH, claiming to be different from traditional parties and (Eizaguirre et al., 2017). The new party adopted practices from the Indignados movement and included some of their most prominent spokespersons, as well as activists going back into the social fights of the early 1970s, key figures of the city's political left as well as prestigious academics and promising researchers (Russo and Scarnato, 2018).

4.7 2015 to 2020: The election of BeC, a new movement-based party

BeC won the local elections of 2015, with Colau becoming Mayor of Barcelona and CUP entering Barcelona's local government with 7.4% of the votes. From the election, BeC strengthened its political program, providing support for a *symbiotic* logic characterising this period. According to Eizaguirre et al. (2017) the party's objective is to propose a full transformation of the policy processes. Although the ideological orientation of the party is fragmented, a progressive profile looking beyond formal party structures and bridging the social-democratic, Marxist, and anarchist traditions drives the elaboration of the political program (Russo and Scarnato, 2018). The new political party based its program on 'bring back the city to its inhabitants' promising greater transparency and opening decision-making processes to citizens. It proposed a new citizenship agenda, bolstering citizenship rights and involving civil society in decision-making (Eizaguirre et al., 2017). With regard to urban development, large urban interventions have been left aside in favour of neighbourhood interventions and to finish the existing large projects (Piñeira Mantiñán et al., 2019) and new policies for social housing are being developed.

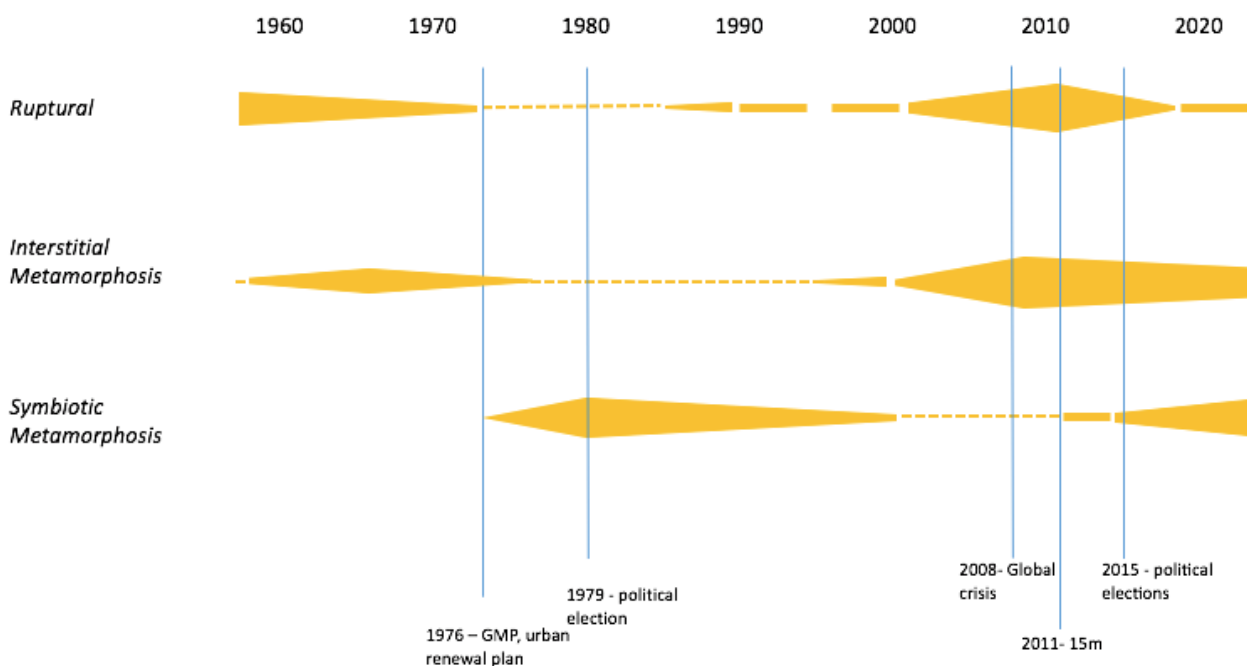
Moreover, with BeC coming into power, government's defensive reaction to bottom-up pressure has been progressively replaced by a carefully designed promotion of alternative initiatives under the umbrella of 'social, solidary, and cooperative economy', supported by the government. All those initiatives, begun as *interstitial* spaces of actions, started acquiring more relevance and develop within the system. The success of BeC has been highlighted by a number of authors, and empirically validated by the re-election of Colau as Mayor in 2019. For example, with regard to tourism, the new administration, though often from a position of

minority, is continuing to pursue a radical agenda, based on concepts of de-growth of tourism activity (especially in the historical area), of redistribution, and of rebalancing the presence of tourism in the city (Russo and Scarnato, 2018). Furthermore, according to Sanchez-Hernandez and Glucker (2019) politics put in place after the elections (2015) and the development of Alternative Economic Practices have been reinforcing each other. Similarly, Asara (2019) also stresses, in the context of the movement connected to Can Battló, that the relationship between the movement and the government is to offer solutions and alternatives to societal by pushing the government to do more and integrate those in its policies. Surinach (2017), poses that current [Social economy] can be understood as a space to test the maturity of transformative proposals ... as an alternative to free market and their capacity to generate jobs and activity on a large scale. However, limitations have also been acknowledged that can affect the transformative and emancipatory power of this movement, one of the main ones being poor and limited political support in the city council (Blanco, 2019), which highlights the difficulty of discerning whether serious transformation that have changed the model of the city has taken place in the latest years (Piñeira Mantiñán et al., 2019).

5. Framework development and discussion

From the information provided in each of the sections above, it is possible to draw the evolution of the logics of transformation that have been operating in Barcelona from the 1960s to nowadays.

Figure 1 – Historical evolution of USMs and corresponding logics of action



Source: based on author's elaboration

The horizontal axis is a timeline, whereas on the vertical axis are information around the three different logics of actions. Each logics is depicted over time, with the line's thickness representing the intensity according to which the logic is pursued. Such intensity depends on how often the keywords corresponding to the different logics are mentioned by different authors at different time points. First of all, it is striking how

logics appear to change in intensity over time. Second, it is noticeable that they seem to cyclically repeat themselves over time. For example, the contentious and radical nature of USMs during the 1960s has later been recognised in the strength and claims of the Indignados movement (Davis, 2011). Third, there appear to exist some key events that have played a significant role in triggering the passage from one logic to the other, and that should be further investigated. For example, political events, such as elections (that appear to be key both in 1979 and in 2015 to allow for the development of symbiotic strategies) or economic events, for example the financial crisis of 2008, representing a key driver for the development of interstitial initiatives.

From the historical analysis as well as the graphical representation about the evolution of logics of transformation operating in Barcelona from the 1960s, it is worth focusing on a number of key themes that emerge with regard to both fragmentation and logics' evolution. It is possible to derive a number of propositions. Such propositions hold for the case of Barcelona, but should be reconsidered in different urban settings, since local specificity is a core element of the analyses looking at USMs.

First, this analysis provides with new evidence with regard to movements' fragmentation and in particular I contend here that:

Proposition 1: Fragmentation and the increasing heterogeneity characterising USMs over time have been among the key factors to allow for the development of new logics of actions.

Fragmentation has complicated the traditional radicalisation-institutionalisation dualism that has dominated accounts on urban movements for a long time. On the contrary, fragmentation provides support to an idea of USMs growing as increasingly complex and hybrid in their nature. Several authors in the descriptions above have provided evidence about movements' fragmentation at different stages in Barcelona (Marrero-Guillamón, 2013; Portos, 2016; Romanos, 2014; etc.). For example, evidence pointed to the fact that the same individuals over time have entered the activist space within different movements and settings, as in the case of leading activists in the 1970s called upon in the constitution of BeC. Many have highlighted that, crucially, fragmentation has also resulted in the development of a number of new logics of actions, and in particular to the creation a myriad of grass-roots activities and initiatives (Portos, 2019). Furthermore, evidence is also overwhelming about how relatively recent movements like the PAH or the Indignados can embody different logics and at different stages (Parés et al., 2017; Suarez, 2017; De Weerd & García, 2015). In fact, as argued by Marrero-Guillamón (2013), the nature of recent movements poses serious challenges to most established analytical categories within the social movements literature. In light of all that, looking at inter-relationships among movements, and leaders of these movements, across time and across space appears key to understand the trajectory of USMs at aggregate level in the city.

Second, the current spread of interstitial logics, caused at least in part by processes of fragmentation throughout the 1990s and 2000s is something that seems unique. Although logics may repeat over time, such trend was not recognisable in any previous phase and seems to play a crucial role from the perspective of USMs' ability to transform society. In particular, I argue that:

Proposition 2: Fragmentation can contribute to reduce the risk of movement co-optation.

Movement co-optation is something that intensively characterised the period of the 1980s, when USMs' leaders became increasingly integrated in the government. This process casted doubts over the long-term impact or endurance of the urban social movements, since these were seen not to fulfil their supposed role as agents of social change or heralders of a new era (Calavita and Ferrer, 2000). According to Ceccarelli (1982,

p.264) “*urban social movements and the conflicts which accompanied them, far from predicting a new era, were the expression of the last and most conflictive stage of a process of change and readjustment to it*”. Authors have compared the current situation with the period of the 1980s when looking at the strength of USMs (i.e. Magrinyà and De Balanzó, 2015). Current years from the election of BeC indeed, as the 1908s, have also been characterised by the progressive integration of USMs’ claims into the political agenda and transformation of USMs leaders into members of the political elites. In both cases, USMs have become “part of the leading elite”, and before that there has been a period of opening towards USMs from the existing governing coalitions. Neighbourhoods associations between 1976 and 1979, similarly to members of the PAH and Indignados after 2010, increased the level of collaboration with exponents of the civil society such as scholars, architects and others as well as members of the elites.

However, beyond similarities, there are some key differences between these two periodical intervals that could account for a different destiny of movement claims. One of them is fragmentation. The continuous development of new initiatives with a different level of confrontational content driven by fragmentation seems to be of help indeed as a tool that undermines movements’ co-optation and could represent a good reason as for why the path of institutionalisation and co-optation that characterised the 1980s would not repeat at this stage. For example, Hughes (2001) discusses how members of BeC are involved at the same time in various and different protests and forms of direct action, besides their role within the administration. This is beneficial since having heterogenous people composing the party, and actively participating in different struggles, can reinforce contentiousness and the mobilisation strength within the government and, thus, more difficulty lead to weaken existing movements also outside the administration. In the 1980s, on the contrary, a reduced number of heterogeneous initiatives were existing. This could be explained, for example, also by the fact that being at the beginning of democracy for Barcelona, citizens considered new politically-elected individuals as those responsible for bringing forward their claims. Trust in the new born institutions was higher than later on and, thus, the need to position as an alternative to the existing system was not significant.

Furthermore, a number of additional differences between the collaboration, or symbiosis, between government and USMs happening in the 1980s and the one happening nowadays might be interesting here to report. For example, while in 1979, movements’ leaders were *integrated* in an existing social democratic coalition. BeC, instead, is a *new* movement, created itself by movements’ leaders. Furthermore, according to Magrinyà and De Balanzó (2015), although USMs leaders were integrated in the political arena during the 1970s, politics continued to be strongly influenced by the same elite that dominated during Franchist regime. Furthermore, an additional element of contraposition is the content of the protests carried on by USMs. During the 1970s and 1980s, the main object of contention was “materialistic”, and dealt with the provision of collective facilities, public space and social services and support. Recent struggles, instead, lost much of the materialistic nature and become about the reconstruction of the meaning of democracy and the provision of citizens with broader rights over the urban space (Magrinyà and De Balanzó, 2015). The latter are, supposedly, also more difficult to be satisfied without a true and genuine change to the established political and economic institutions. The type of enemy constituting the target of institutions has changed. During the 1970s, it was the State itself, and particularly the unfair and couplable Franchist regime which was responsible for class differences and systemic socio-economic inequalities. Nowadays, responsible for inequalities is considered the economy in itself, and in particular the capitalistic and entrepreneurial mindset proper of private organisations and progressively adopted by the local administration. To address these challenges, structural policies around taxation and public expenses should be reorganised, which were not instead included in the picture during the 1970s (Pradel-Miquel, 2020). Finally, a crucial but exogenous element that allows also to draw distinction to current and previous phases of symbiotic activities is the development of technology and

social media. These have allowed the creation of new spaces and channels for communication between USMs, citizens and the local government. Furthermore, they also provided new way to push the government for increasing accountability and transformed the relationship and power implications of movements/government.

Finally, fragmentation not only can represent an obstacle to co-optation and reduction of USMs' strength. It can also directly contribute to the development of the necessary ruptural break that could allow social transformation to happen. In particular,

Proposition 3: Fragmentation leads to the development of new interstitial initiatives, which feed the institutional setting, overall generating the virtuous cycle between interstitial and symbiotic logics that is necessary for social transformation to happen.

According the theoretical model on social transformation by Wright (2017), the phase started in 2015 could represent a unique moment in history, since for the first time interstitial and symbiotic logics are pursued in combination, thus potentially allowing for a ruptural break with the existing system. New alternatives and solidarity-based visions of society that challenge capitalism could be enacted in interstitial and autonomous spaces such as the "autonomous city" developed during the Indignados occupation or, later on, integrated in neighbourhood-level actions (Portos, 2019). Furthermore, BeC could work to progressively introduce them in the prevailing ecosystem of capitalism, until the ruptural point is reached and social transformation is achieved. By looking at the graph, it is clear that the simultaneity of all possible logics of action is something new. Before the current period, either ruptural (1960s) or symbiotic (1980s-2000), or a mostly partial combination of them (2000-2010) was dominating.

Overall, from the three proposition above it is thus possible to contribute to the existing debate, by arguing that, in Barcelona, fragmentation has had a positive role with regard to the development and strengthening of USMs and to their ability to pursue their main objective, which is to foster social transformation and promote a new vision for social empowerment.

6. Limitations and future research

The historical analysis carried out in this paper allowed a number of insights and crucial key themes to emerge, with regard to the evolution of urban social movements in Barcelona and their fragmentation. However, a number of limitations must be acknowledged, that need to be taken into account in the evaluation of the contribution of this piece. First, in this work we date the starting period of USMs in Barcelona as in the 1960s to be consistent with the reference literature (i.e. Castells, 1973; Mayer, 2009). However, collective action at urban level might have been present well-before then, thus future analysis might consider taking previous waves of mobilisation into account to expand on this analysis. Second, literature on social movements often considers the separation between movements' leaders and followers, i.e. the role of elites within the movements vs. the grassroot nature of the organisation. In this work, this distinction is not clear, and thus should be investigated further to more deeply assess which logics guide which part of the movements', for example if leaders or citizens have different views or expectations, especially if in the context of specific processes or movements such as the PAH. Third, this work discusses the evolution of USMs in Barcelona, but considers for the historical analysis only a sample of academic articles. Future research should need to integrate different sources of information, going beyond just the academic side of things. The unit of analysis, indeed, the actions of USMs, is in contrast very pragmatic. Thus, it would be interesting to consider also notes from

city hall meetings as well as journalistic accounts of movements' protest. This would provide with much more information and overall allow to strengthen the analysis' validity. More in general, to develop further this analysis it could be interesting to eventually develop separately i) the more conceptual part of this paper, i.e. the integration of the framework by Erik Olin Wright in the field of critical urban theory and the literature on urban social movements' evolution, and ii) the more empirical part around USMs' evolution in Barcelona. For the empirical investigation, it would be interesting to complement documents and papers with interviews of relevant subjects and focus more deeply on the tipping points between one period and the other as well as on comparing more thoroughly different periods. This work, indeed, has just hinted to these themes.

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Author's Information:

Laura Silva is a PhD candidate in Sociology at the Centre for Research on Social Inequalities at Sciences Po, as well as affiliated researcher at CREST in Paris. Her research focuses on urban issues, neighbourhoods and spatial inequalities. Mail: laura.silva1@sciencespo.fr.