

From Movement to Party: Analysis of the tensions between horizontality and oligarchy in Spanish municipalist platforms (2015–2023)

Juan Mérida Conde  & Ramón A. Feenstra 
Universitat Jaume I de Castelló (Spain)

Abstract

In 2014 and 2015, dozens of ‘municipalist’ candidates gained huge success in the Spanish local elections. These movement parties, intrinsically linked to the intense mobilisations of the previous electoral cycle, adopted a horizontal organisational model in direct contrast to the traditional oligarchic structure. In the wake of the 2015–2023 electoral cycles, however, there has been little analysis of these experiences and the processes they adopted. This study examines four such experiences in Zaragoza, Valladolid, A Coruña and Castellón through 72 interviews and documentary analysis. The study contributes to the debate on internal democracy in political parties in three ways, demonstrating: 1) a certain inevitable distancing between movement and party with power concentrated in the latter; 2) imposition of the institutional pace and the difficulty of combining it with the logic of direct democracy; and 3) demystification of certain forms of direct democracy and the need to combine vertical and professional logics with horizontal and participatory ones.

Keywords

Political parties, movement parties, municipalism, democracy, horizontality, social movements

This is the Author’s Original Manuscript (AOM), also known as a preprint, and has not undergone peer review.

The article was uploaded to the university repository on September 9th and submitted to an academic journal for review.

INTRODUCTION

In 2011, the squares of Spain's largest cities were the scene of mass demonstrations under the slogan "They don't represent us". Four years later, in May 2015, dozens of new parties comprising a diverse range of people from social movements and leftist parties (Ibarra et al., 2018; Lobera & Parejo, 2019) stood in the local elections. Inspired by the experimental phase during the protests, these new parties sought "another way of doing politics" based on both institutional and organisational democratisation (Feenstra & Tormey, 2023). In the 2015 municipal elections, the new parties won seats in 46 of the 47 provincial capitals, governed in 15 of them – the so-called "cities of change" – and in many smaller localities, and were present in the institutions of hundreds of other municipalities (20 per cent of the population was under the control of municipalist authorities at the time). However, in the 2019 elections only six of the provincial capitals returned municipalist parties and in 2023, they lost power everywhere except in Girona. Looking beyond the ephemeral electoral success, what conclusions can we draw about the organisational model implemented during this period? To what extent did it represent an advance in the forms of internal political party democracy?

The classic literature on political parties has expressed some scepticism over whether horizontal processes can be advanced in party structures marked by the typical competitive dynamics of electoral representation (Michels, 1979 [1911]; Weil, 2014 [1942]; Duverger 2012 [1957]; Panebianco 1995 [1982]). These approaches share the notion that as a political organisation becomes institutionalised, power tends to concentrate at the top and its initial democratic essence is lost. Over the years, some theories and political proposals based on horizontality as an organisational principle have suggested ways of preventing this drift, for example during the 1960s and the resulting autonomist movement (Breines, 1980) and the anti-globalisation movements that emerged at the end of the last century (Maeckelberg, 2009; Sutherland, Land & Böhm, 2014). These positions held that internal democracy could be sustained in political organisations by building horizontal movements based on decentralised decision making and reducing the centrality of structures and leaderships (Laamanen, 2022). As Breines puts it, referring to the US student movement of the 1970s: "The distance between leaders and participants was solved by eliminating leaders" (1980: 423).

In turn, other positions question whether such horizontal organisational models are actually more democratic. In her renowned paper "The Tyranny of Structurelessness" (1972) on the North American feminist movement, Jo Freeman notes how some organisations that advocate reducing organisational structures as a means of avoiding bureaucratisation are unable to prevent "masked" power, which is even less democratic than the centralised structures they challenge. She argues that when organisational structures are not recognised, it becomes more difficult to impose control and accountability (Freeman, 1972). Similarly, leading theorist of libertarian municipalism Murray Bookchin states: "where you have a minimum amount of structure, you have a maximum amount of arbitrariness" (Biehl & Bookchin, 1998:183).

According to the anthropologist David Graeber, "For much of the last century, the great revolutionary question has thus been: how does one affect fundamental change in society without setting in train a process that will end with the creation of some new, violent bureaucracy?" (2015:995-96). The dilemma between means (organisation) and ends (political objectives) once again became relevant in the municipalist cycles in Spain between 2015 and 2023. The movement's slogan, "another way of doing politics", summarised a political project that, unlike previous experiences, considered the means as ends in themselves (Goma et al., 2018); or, in the words of Hard and Negri, "a moral and political mandate to

match means and ends” (2017, 275). The only way of achieving a greater democracy, these authors argue, is by starting with the democratisation of the organisation, in this case municipalism in the form of movement parties, which Kitschelt defined as “coalitions of political activists who emanate from social movements and try to apply the organizational and strategic practices of social movements in the arena of party competition” (Kitschelt, 2006 280). These theses are associated with debates on horizontality as more a democratic organisational model (Tormey, 2015; Della Porta, 2021; Nunes, 2021).

Movement parties and municipalism in the academic literature

The literature on movement parties can be traced back to several historically relevant projects. Some notable examples in Europe in the 1980s include the Greens in Germany (Parkin, 2016; Rüdig & Sajuria, 2018), the municipalist project in London (Joubert, 2023; Stromquist, 2023) or more recently, in French cities (Béal et al., 2023; Van Outryve, 2023), Naples (Pinto et al., 2023), Zagreb and Belgrade (Milan, 2023) as well as outside Europe in Rosario, Santiago de Chile (Minuchin & Maino, 2023) or Bolivia (Anria, 2018). Previous research on the organisational dynamics of such platforms in Spain spans the period from the first democratic town councils after the 1939–1975 dictatorship (Villasante, 1976) to a more contemporary analysis of small towns in Catalonia (Ubasart, 2012) and the Basque Country (Ureta, 2022). The novelty of the recent wave of Spanish municipalism lies in its territorial scope, as it attained representation in all regions of mainland Spain.

The Spanish context has attracted wide research attention in the literature on political organisations due to the high level of mobilisation and democratic experimentation witnessed since the 15M movement that emerged in 2011 (Flesher Fominaya, 2014; Postill, 2014). Citizen mobilisation, first in street politics (especially 2011–2014) and later in institutions and political parties, marked this period and setting as an outstanding test bed of democratic innovation (Feenstra et al, 2017; Flesher Fominaya, 2020).

This landscape has been the subject of several studies on Podemos, regarded as a case study of movement parties on a national scale (Della Porta et al 2017; Prentoulis and Thomassen, 2019; Flesher Fominaya, 2020; Della Porta, 2021; Vittori, 2022). However, some researchers have raised serious doubts about the democratic nature of the organisation, in terms of both participation and horizontality (Della Porta et al., 2017), while others directly point to its oligarchic evolution (Gerbaudo, 2021; Vittori, 2020; Cancela & Rey-Araujo, 2023; Fernández & Rodríguez, 2024). In the case of municipalist candidacies, some theorists consider that because of their local character they are more likely to exercise democracy and develop prefigurative forms of political action (Subirats, 2016; Cooper, 2017; Russell, 2019; Roth, Russell & Thompson, 2023).

Studies on municipalism in Spain have focused on the cases of Ahora Madrid (Nez & Ganuza, 2020; Mota & Janoschka, 2022; García-Espín, 2023), Barcelona en Comú (Blanco Salazar & Bianchi, 2019; Bianchi, 2022, 2024; Pera & Bussu, 2024) or both (Fernández-Martínez et al., 2023; Feenstra & Tormey, 2023). However, only a few authors have analysed other experiences, such as Marea Atlántica (A Coruña) and Compostela Oberta (Bua & Davies, 2023), or Zaragoza en Común, Valladolid Toma La Palabra, Marea Atlántica and Aranzadi (Pamplona) (Mérida & Tellería, 2021; Mérida, 2024), all of them during the period 2015–2019. Furthermore, with the exception of more normative analysis (Calvo & de Diego, 2017; Villasante, 2018) or research examining the early stages of such projects (Minguijón & Pac, 2019), no research has examined the organisational dimension of the platforms during the 2015–2023 political cycles. The present paper aims to fill this gap in the literature on Spanish municipalism by analysing the experiences of Zaragoza en Común, Valladolid Toma la Palabra, Marea Atlántica (Coruña) and Castelló en Moviment.

The municipalist context and the new way of doing politics

In 2015, dozens of new political formations stood in the Spanish municipal elections. They aligned with a municipal movement party rationale comprising independent citizens and left-wing parties, and ran under labels such as *En Común (In Common)*, *Ahora (Now)*, *Ganemos (We will win)*, *Marea (Tide)* and *Para la Gente (For the People)*.¹ Because each formation had its own constitutional process, their legal and organisational forms were wide-ranging and diverse, although they shared the following common elements:

Convergence: as local formations with their roots in the area, they were able to bring together individuals and political parties. In the early stages at least, the role of individuals took precedence over that of the parties, which remained in the background, as evidenced in the founding organisational documents of the groups studied (see Art.1, ZeC Regulations, 2015; VTLP Organisational Document 2015; MA Manifiesto 2014; or CsM Manifiesto 2014).

Assembly as the main participatory mechanism: organic regulations were approved and modified, working parties were constituted, the position of elected officials was revoked and consequential issues were decided through assemblies. Some of the greatest experimentation and democratic innovation took place in the assemblies, many of which were carried over from the previous cycle of protests.

Participatory programme: electoral programmes were drawn up through participatory processes that combined virtual and in-person forms of participation (Electoral Programmes, see Appendix 1).

Open primaries: electoral lists were decided through open, participatory processes (see sources in Appendix 1).

Codes of ethics: mechanisms of control were developed to ensure elected officials complied with collective decisions (public positions were revoked), and to prevent the professionalisation of the organisation (rotation of mandates and limits on salaries) and potential corruption (no revolving doors or donations) (see references to the codes of ethics in Appendix 1).

Inclusivity: participatory bodies and forms of deliberation took into account gender parity (Art.1 ZeC Regulations; Art. 2 VTLP Regulations, Block b, point 7; MA Form of Governance). Measures included setting up specialised teams to promote a gender perspective or work-life balance mechanisms, such as providing childcare facilities during assemblies.²

METHODOLOGY

This research is based on a qualitative case study that analyses four municipalist platforms and combines interviews with documentary review. To this end, we address the organisational dynamics of the emerging municipalist platforms in different localities, although they are not directly compared. Because municipalism achieved representation in a significant number of local councils, we selected cases according to the following criteria:

¹See Pablo Rivas 'El mapa estatal del asalto municipalista', Diagonal (in Spanish). Available at: <https://www.diagonalperiodico.net/global/25880-mapa-estatal-del-asalto-municipalista.html>

² On this issue, the minutes of the ZeC plenary meeting of 5 October 2016 state that a company would be contracted to provide childcare during the assemblies.

1. Platforms that underwent processes of democratic innovation and experimentation in their internal organisational process.
2. Cases that had a significant role in the formation of local governments between 2015 and 2023: sole governing party (ZeC and MA, 2015–2019); governing in coalition (VTLP, 2015–2023); and support to form a government while remaining in opposition (CsM, 2015–2019).
3. Notable examples that differ from the better known, well researched cases of Madrid and Barcelona.
4. Intermediary cities: despite their differences in population size (Zaragoza 681,430, Valladolid 297,370, A Coruña 245,541 and Castelló de la Plana 172,637; figures for 2021), all the cities were provincial capitals and officially classified as intermediary cities.³

For this study we recorded interviews with 72 people over a total of 72.4 hours. The average length of the interviews was 61.18 minutes, the shortest lasting 25.30 minutes and the longest, 97.35 minutes. The interviews were carried out individually, with the exception of one that was conducted simultaneously with three people from the Federation of Neighbourhood Associations of Valladolid, two of whom were in Zaragoza and the third in Valladolid. The interviews took place in 2023, starting on 9 May in Castellón and ending in Valladolid on 17 September.

Confidentiality was assured as no data were gathered that could identify the participants interviewed. The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of Universitat Jaume I on 21 April, 2023 (reference CEISH/79/2023).

Purposive sampling was used to select the interviewees according to key criteria that would provide a diverse and meaningful perspective on the internal dynamics of municipalist platforms. The criteria were:

1. They had played a relevant role in the local council (either in political or advisory positions) or as activists (Table 1).
2. They were affiliated to political parties or independents (Table 2).
3. Gender: man/woman.
4. Age: +50 /-50.

³ United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) classifies cities with populations between 50,000 and 1 million as intermediary cities.

Table 1. Number of participants by municipalist platform

Municipalist platform	Institution	Movement
ZeC	6	10
VTLP	5	15
MA	10	10
CsM	8	7
Total	29	42

Table 2. Number of participants by affiliation with political parties or independent

Municipalist platform	Party	Independent
Zaragoza	4 (2 Podemos, 1 Izquierda Unida, 1 Anticapitalistas)	12
Valladolid	9 (6 Izquierda Unida, 1 Equo, 1 Podemos, 1 Izquierda Castellana)	11
Coruña	7 (3 Ezquierda Unida, 1 BNG, 1 ANOVA, 1 Podemos, 1 Equo)	13
Castellón	5 (4 Podemos, 1 Izquierda Unida)	10
Total	26	46

Our own backgrounds were relevant in identifying potential individuals to take part in the study as we had both participated directly in two of the platforms (researcher 1 in ZeC and researcher 2 in CsM). In addition, our academic research focuses on the study of municipalism and social movements in Spain. This inside knowledge of the platforms was useful in selecting the most relevant people in each platform, and in accessing internal documents that were not available on the platforms' websites.

The selected participants were then contacted and interviews scheduled. If the first person selected was not available for interview, recommendations were sought from other key participants. This led to a certain imbalance in the number of participants per city (with a higher participation of subjects from A Coruña and Valladolid – 20 in both cities – compared to Castellón and Zaragoza, 15 and 17, respectively) and by gender (28 of the 72 were women. See Appendix 2).

Table 3. General socio-demographic characteristics (gender and age) of the participants

Municipalist platform	Gender		Age	
	Women	Men	- 50 years	+ 50 years
ZeC	8	9	8	9
VTLP	7	13	7	13
MA	8	12	13	7
CsM	5	10	8	7
Subtotal	28	44	34	39
Total	72		72	

The structured interviews were based on a script; on the topic of internal democracy, the following questions were asked:

1. What is your analysis of the organisational experience of the municipalist platform?
2. Do you think structures should remain completely horizontal, or should they be combined with more vertical, hierarchical structures?
3. Do you think the platform was able to modify the internal forms of organisation that usually define political parties? In what way? What difficulties did you encounter in doing so?
4. How did the leadership affect the platform?
5. How would you describe the relationships with the political parties inside the platform?

All the material was transcribed and analysed using ATLAS.ti software. Eight labels were initially identified, a number that grew as the process of deductive analysis progressed. In this investigation we looked for discursive consensus in the qualitative corpus. The analysis of the 72 interviews yielded 1,773 statements. The theme with the highest number of statements was internal democracy (623), the subject of this article.

The statements were coded to ensure interviewee anonymity while identifying the main characteristics: city, political position/activist, gender, age, affiliated to a political party or not. Quotes from the testimonies are followed by the city and the interview reference number (e.g. ZeC_1).⁴

The study also included an extensive analysis of documentation and communications produced by the platforms and municipal governments in the four cities (platforms' websites, press releases, political

⁴ The interviewees' profiles can be consulted in Appendix 3.

communications, social networks, election results as well as internal documents such as regulations, ethical codes or assembly minutes) (See Appendixes 1 and 4).

RESULTS

The results are presented below in three blocks: 1) general trends in the municipalist platforms, 2) reasons for distancing between movement and party, and 3) main lessons learned from the organisational process.

General trends in the municipalist platforms

Gradual shift away from initial horizontal dynamics

Broadly speaking, in most of the interviews we identified a gradual departure from the organisational dynamics that initially defined the municipalist platforms. On this point, there is a clear differentiation between the phase of platform building prior to the 2015 elections and the subsequent entry into local institutions.

In the pre-institutional phase, several of the interviewees spoke positively about the participatory experience in both the assemblies (ZeC_7; VTLP_17) and the working parties (ZeC_3; ZeC_4); practically all the interviewees remembered this stage as a crucial part of their political development (ZeC_7; ZeC_8; ZeC_13; ZeC_1; VTLP_6; VTLP_13; MA_3; MA_4; CsM_7; CsM_2).

However, participants in the platforms noted a gradual deterioration in this process of virtuous participation. Diversity, which had initially been seen as positive, came to be regarded as a threat to the internal cohesion of the organisation. The following points were noted:

The plenary [assembly] gradually turned into a kind of theatrical performance, a stage where strengths were pitted against each other (ZeC_6).

Dissent was constantly crushed. So in the end, people kept quiet [...] they stopped participating (MA_2).

People started to fade away and they stopped attending (CsM_5).

In general, a decline was noted in the innovation and experimentation that had defined the early participatory processes. For example, several interviewees report how the work initially carried out to promote and satisfy care needs was abandoned in favour of meeting the demands of the municipal institution (MA_2; ZeC_13).

Decline in participation

Several interviewees reported that the above changes led to smaller assemblies, which were attended by older, longstanding activists while younger people began to fall away:

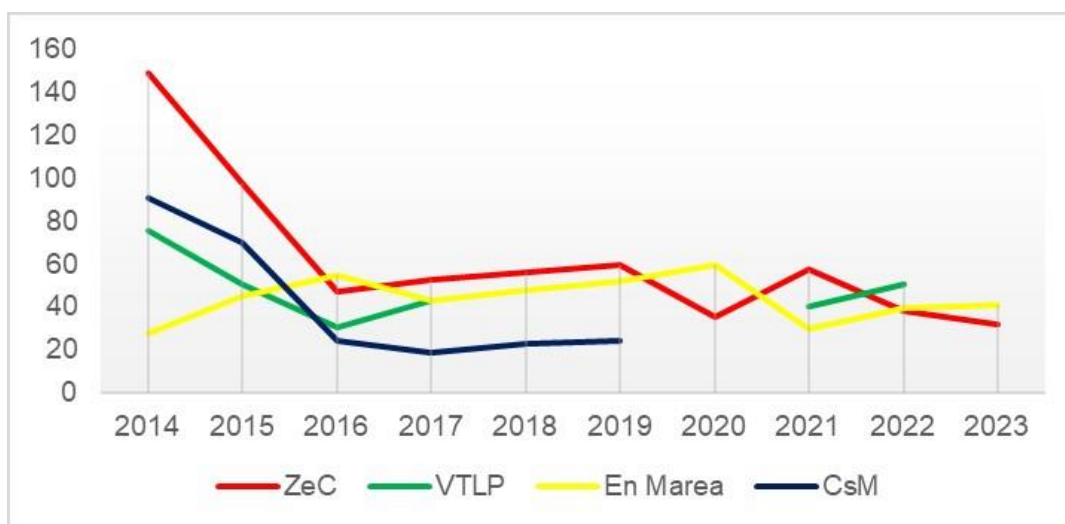
A lot of people dropped out, young people, women [...]. The grassroots base became much, much older (MA_20).

You know who stayed around the longest? The oldest activists [...]. It wasn't a question of putting up with it; they were happy there (MA_12).

The older people took over the spaces that weren't so attractive to participate in (VTLP_9).

This trend can also be seen in the attendance figures. Figure 1 (average attendance per assembly per year for each platform) shows a drop in participation, which was especially marked in the cases of ZeC and CsM. Despite the inclusive principles and practices, male participants (Table 4) predominated in all cases, except in the last years of MA when women had a greater presence. Likewise, available data for the number of annual assemblies reported in Figure 2 (there is no data for VTLP, nor a concrete number of annual meetings in Zaragoza between 2014-2016) show a general decrease in the number of assemblies held.

Figure 1: Average attendance per assembly per year for each platform, 2015–2023



Based on minutes of the assemblies.

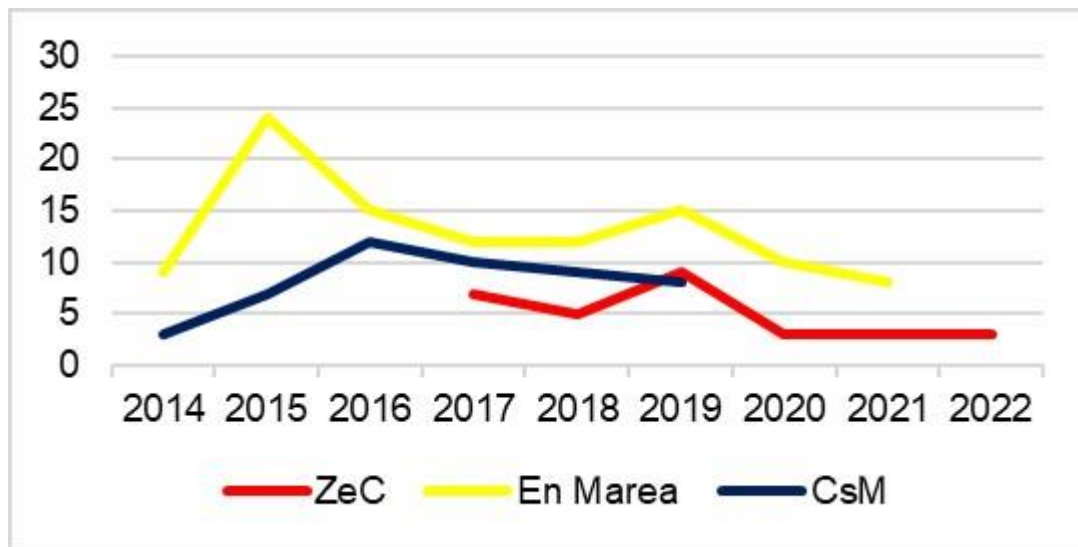
Table 4: Average attendance by gender in the municipalist platform assemblies, 2015–2019

	ZeC		VTLP		MA		CsM	
	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M
2014	32	88			11	17		
2015	32	65			18	28		
2016			10	20	19	32		
2017					14	25		
2018					21	24	12	15
2019	24	31			26	26	13	13
2020	16	15			21	34		

2021	30	36			17	15		
2022					21	18		
2023					22	18		

Based on minutes of the assemblies.

Figure 2: Number of assemblies held by the municipalist platforms, 2015–2022



Based on minutes of the assemblies.

The same tendency is also observed in the working parties, in which the initial momentum and strength was not easy to maintain as several participants reported:

One of the big problems we also had was keeping up mobilisation in the working parties (ZeC_2).

The working parties were set up mainly to prepare the electoral programme and the truth is they disappeared after that (VTLP_10).

The fall in participation is evident in other aspects, such as the election of candidates (primaries), which had been considered a key procedure in democratic openness in the construction of the new movement parties (see Table 5).

Table 5: Number of participants in the primaries

	ZeC	VTLP	MA	CsM
2015	3731	1200	707	937
2019	2733	837	247	783
2023	1112	814	96	*The platform was dissolved after the 2019 elections

Based on information from municipalist platforms' websites

Separation between movement and institution and institutional co-optation

The interviews also revealed a growing distance between the platforms' grassroots and those inside the municipal institution, whether as representatives or advisers. This in turn led to the organisation's increasing dependence on institutional dynamics and the consequent reduction of the movement's autonomy in the organisation. The following comments illustrate this shift:

There was a huge difference between those involved, the people who worked full time there [...], and if these six people are pulled into the internal dynamics of the City Council, it also means that in the end the assembly ends up being dragged along (CsM_13)

Everything revolved around municipal work, municipal problems, so the platform, apart from the councillors, practically disappears [...], and nothing is left but a few assemblies where the councillors explain their work and little else [...]. Municipal work absorbs everything (VTLP_12).

The institution disrupted us. We stopped sharing; we stopped involving the organisation itself (MA_5).

We eventually turned into a party and we left the movement to one side (MA_14).

Increased political party protagonism

In the initial stages the formations were defined through direct citizen participation whereas the political parties took a back seat. This was evidenced in the legal constitution of the platforms,⁵ the composition of the organisations' coordinating bodies and the head of the list of candidates in 2015. Even in the case of VTLP, where Izquierda Unida⁶ had a notable presence from the outset, many people with no links to the party structures were involved in the process of constituting the movement party.

However, the situation began to change as the platforms took over management of the institutions. As an example, from 2019 onwards both ZeC and CsM ran for election as a 'coalition' and in both platforms (in

⁵ Organic Law 5/1985 establishes three ways of standing for election: 1) party and federations, 2) coalition, and 3) grouping of voters.

⁶Izquierda Unida (United Left, IU) is a federation of left-wing parties founded in 1986 with a large Communist Party representation.

2023 in the case of ZeC) the head of the list became a political party representative. Political party presence in the organisational structure also grew, as in the case of ZeC when IU was included as a separate actor after 2019. In the case of CsM, the coalition formula did not last long. Following a build-up of tensions with the parties in the platform, the assembly agreed to dissolve in 2019, as explained in the following communiqué:

We remain convinced that in order to achieve greater democratic control of institutions by citizens, organisations must put this democratic radicalism into practise in their operations. Given that the current coalition is increasingly distanced from this premise and, therefore, is doomed to a continuous internal dispute far removed from cooperation, the assembly believes that the best course of action at this time is to take the difficult decision to dissolve Castelló en Moviment.⁷

The only platform that retained its character as a citizen-based organisation in its legal identity, head of list and composition of its coordinating body was Marea Atlántica (see Table 6)

Table 6. Political parties' role in the platforms

	ZeC	VTLP	MA	CsM
Legal identity	Party of convenience (coalition since 2019)	Coalition	Party of convenience	Grouping of voters (coalition since 2019)
Head of list	Independent (2023 IU)	Political party (IU)	Independent	Independent (2023 Podemos)
Composition of coordinating body	Independent (with parties since 2019)	With parties	Independent	Independent

Based on information from the municipalist platforms.

This drift towards increased political party weight is also reflected in the interviewees' perceptions:

There was a moment when the interests of the subgroups began to take precedence over those of the larger group, the opposite of what had happened previously. And that went on until the break-up in 2019 (ZeC_4).

Once the elections were won, the same old negotiations started [...]. That's what hurt me the most. A lot of us who weren't linked to any political party, who were the majority in the process [...], and once they got to the City Council, all these power groups sprang up (ZeC_8).

Over time, the dynamics of power concentration began to emerge, which I think is almost inevitable [...]. There are differences that have to do with the simple competition for representation and power, [...] they stop seeing the municipalist umbrella as a home for everyone and the

⁷ See <https://castelloenmoviment.org/comunicat-public-de-dissolucio/> (in Valencian).

dynamics become more instrumental, more about domination and submission, which very soon end up exploding (MA_4).

This more open process in the platforms began to deteriorate when the parties started to have a more predominant role (CsM_14).

Leaders as an exception

The democratisation processes undertaken to select municipal leaders gave them legitimacy in the movements. Likewise, the control mechanisms established in the organisational regulations (regular assemblies, working parties, code of ethics) helped to prevent any oligarchic tendencies. However, this did not detract from the fact that leadership remained a crucial element of the organisation, perceived as essential for internal cohesion and representing the project, and thus demonstrating that horizontal leadership can be constructed. This is reflected in the testimonies of MA and VTLP, respectively:

The leadership of Xulio Ferreiro [Mayor of A Coruña 2015–2019] was important in holding the project together (MA_16).

In the end, those at the top took over all leadership and direction of this project (VTLP_9).

Moreover, where strong leadership was lacking (ZeC and CsM), there was a greater tendency towards fragmentation and dispute between factions, as can be seen from the following extract:

There was no clear leadership. So it ended up as a bit of a free for all with each councillor's department working separately, [...] there was no clear priority about what direction we were going in; it was very disjointed, each person working on their own, but there was no coordination (ZeC_4).

At the same time, the importance of leadership as a mechanism of internal cohesion within the organisation caused certain problems when the time came to pass the baton. As the case of MA illustrates, the vacuum left by the absence of leaders after the 2019 elections brought about power struggles between the various factions in the organisation:

The leader, at least the person who everyone assumed was the leader, well, he took a step back and then something new happened, which is, well, power struggles started to emerge (MA_10).

In the case of Valladolid, the great difficulty in finding a replacement leader led to the decision in 2023 to modify the organisation's code of ethics, allowing this person's mandate to extend beyond two legislatures.⁸ As this testimony shows, despite the platform leaders' insistence on leaving the political front line, there was no capacity to create new replacement leaders, which became one of the main concerns of the organisation in recent years:

The complexity of renewing the team. Actually, this has been the big issue in recent years. The councillors are constantly saying and reminding us that we have to devise a process [of renewal] for a smooth changeover, in optimum conditions, but we were incapable of building new leaders (VTLP_11)

⁸ On the change to the Code of Ethics, see <https://valladolidtomalpalabra.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Codigo-Etico-2023.pdf> (in Spanish)

Causes of organisational decline

Although the general tendencies are mentioned by most of the interviewees, they give varying interpretations of the possible causes of the gradual distancing between movement and party.

Imposition of administrative pace

Participants broadly understood that the pace set by the municipal institution conditioned the entire organisational process, including both the structure and the more horizontal ways of operating that had marked the platforms' early stages. The following statements bear this out:

The institution began to dominate the discussion spaces [...] In the end, the agenda was determined by the institution and not by the platform. Political and bureaucratic schedules began to impinge on time for deliberation (ZeC_16).

The dynamics of the institution take over everything. It takes over the ways things are done, and it takes over the content. A super-institutionalised, super-hierarchical, temporally established way of working, and the objectives, are also imposed. The institution makes everything vertical. The organisation became a lackey of the institution (MA_15).

Time is dictatorial, of course, but this dictatorship gets faster and faster [...]. Because the more you speed things up, the more vertical things are, the more power there is in just a few hands (MA_12).

The institution could also be inert, I mean we were closely "controlled" by protocol, and that was time that was lost for other tasks (ZeC_1).

Difficulty of combining political activism and personal lives

The interviews showed that the pace required by the administration combined with the difficulties of meeting the high demands implicit in the horizontal model of the movement party caused participation to decline and spurred a shift towards professionalisation, as reported in the following comments:

Then your energy runs out; you're proud of having reached a goal and you're confident that the representatives will perform positively [...]. It's impossible to be a full-time gladiator for a very long time (CsM_15).

But many people realise that the day only has 24 hours and that this commitment is very demanding [...] I never had time off. I lasted five years [...] from the point of view of personal enrichment, it was invaluable. [...] But be warned, you leave your life behind, it wipes you out, it destroys you (MA_12).

We knew that we couldn't go on like this for the sake of our health, mental and physical (MA_5).

The institution destroys personal lives (MA_1).

It's impossible for an assembly-based movement to keep up with the institutional dynamics. It's exhausting for people and for their bodies (VTLP_15).

There were a lot of people, me included, who at that time drifted away because we couldn't see ourselves working at that pace. If you weren't in there on a professional level, really it was very difficult to combine the two [work and personal life] (ZeC_13).

Lack of organisational resilience

The participants also mentioned another series of pertinent causes. These included criticism of the way the municipalist organisations had been designed to meet one goal, "storming the institution", but that no thought had been given to how to organise once they were inside the institutions, much less in government. Some of the interviewees reflected this sentiment as follows:

The way the organisation was created was [...] as a machine to storm the institution or seize the elections, and in that it was very successful, brilliant [...]. But of course, what worked for that purpose had to be transformed into something else for governing, which is very different from other relations (MA_14).

We always saw ourselves as preparing to stand [for election], but we didn't think about ourselves inside. And once that happened, it took us by surprise (ZeC_13).

The structures of Zaragoza en Común, which were initially designed to achieve an overwhelming level of participation, started to become useless or out of step with reality (ZeC_3).

In a similar way, other voices pointed to the lack of a more clearly defined internal structure, which hampered the generation of efficient control mechanisms. According to some interviewees:

If there isn't at least a minimum representative democracy in the internal dynamics [...] the assembly-based nature of the organisations eventually withers [...]. I think the temptation to be organisations based on direct democracy has often served as an excuse for not equipping ourselves with more complex, more sophisticated internal mechanisms, and has often ended up imposing power and governance from non-organic spaces, and there's nothing more anti-democratic than a system where everything is based on cliques and cronyism (CsM_5).

There's a need for coordinating bodies that are always elected and recognised, I mean democratically elected and that everyone knows who they are, because otherwise, sometimes what emerges are informal leadership groups (C_MM-S).

Some participants also linked this lack of definition to a certain vagueness surrounding the roles of the platform's participatory bodies, that is, whether they should be providing institutional support, or whether they should be more autonomous and linked to the dynamics of street politics. On this point, it is interesting to note these two responses, one from within the institution and the other from outside:

In all likelihood, those of us inside the City Council also didn't know how to foster a more active organisation, so to speak, rather than being an appendage of the municipal government (MA_10).

I think the problem is that those of us who were active at the grassroots level didn't have a clear idea of what the tides were for, nor did we have a strategy, nor did we exercise power (MA_14).

Imposition of the corporate over the common

Despite the obvious differences among the platforms in the study, all of them experienced a growing inter-group tension to achieve greater levels of power. Some of the participants point out that this factor is precisely what led to greater organisational weakness: when partisan logics begin to impose on collective logics. The following comments reflect this line of thinking:

There were all of us who were not affiliated to political parties, [...] and to the extent that there were more of us and we had more capacity, more strength to impose our conditions on the political parties we participated with in that space, there were elements of internal democracy [...] and as soon as we lost strength, and there's evidence for this, the political parties began to take over the space (ZeC_9).

The formations were possible because the traditional parties in the arena were extremely weak at that time. As soon as they got over that weakness and reassembled, they broke away and went back to business as usual (MA_12).

It is very difficult to reconcile these horizontal practices with parties present within them. [...] It's a permanent war between an organised army that has a command system that it obeys, and a group of people who organise themselves as best they can, and who certainly don't have that feeling of blind loyalty that their opponents do (ZeC_13).

Some things are very difficult to avoid. As soon as there's a power struggle and someone decides that you don't exist as an organisation, it's very difficult to avoid conflict. If the traditional parties can't overpower you, they destroy you. The logic isn't one of cooperation, but of takeover (MA_7).

Likewise, many were critical of the specific role played in the platforms by certain parties such as Podemos and/or Izquierda Unida.

Other causes

Other less frequently mentioned causes included then lack of a culture of activism among younger people (MA_12; VTLP_2; ZeC_8), a lack of self-criticism about the pressure from the local authorities (MA_16), personality clashes among participants (ZeC_7; MA_6), or the inability to accept poor results in the second elections in which they stood (2019 onwards) (MA_3). Finally, and specifically in the case of A Coruña, the exhaustion generated by the platform's participation in electoral processes beyond the municipal ambit was also considered a determining cause (MA_12; MA_2).

Lessons

Municipalism as a political school

For a significant number of participants, the municipalist cycle was their first experience in the field of institutional politics, and it is therefore not surprising that the interviewees also reflected on the lessons learned from the process. Several participants identified how this "other way of doing politics" was made visible:

For me, no master's degree, no school, no university comes anywhere near my participation in Marea Atlántica. Put another way, the person I am today is nothing like the person I was when I started (MA_11).

We predicted many conflicts, precisely because of the participants' different backgrounds and because of our cultural and possible ideological diversity. But the result was just the opposite. I mean, through calm, quiet and very polite debate, it became clear that there weren't so many differences [...]. It showed that these methods could broaden opinions (VTLP_9).

Even eight years after the beginning of the process, the principles on which these candidacies were built are still defended:

I learned so much [...]. I think my idea of democracy has become much more sophisticated (ZeC_12).

One of the things that of course I clarified and strengthened is the idea of moving towards a deliberative democracy beyond a participatory democracy (VTLP_11).

It is worth noting that for some participants, what they learned through the experience has given them a much more sceptical, questioning view of politics, as reflected in the following activists' comments:

I got very disillusioned with politics in general because we tried to create a different process that ended up being the just same as the others (ZeC_8).

This has made us worse people, much more sceptical. We have less faith. But especially we have less faith in people (MA_12).

The demystification of forms of direct democracy

Although, as noted above, the assembly was the main mechanism for participation and decision making, considered to be the best way of guaranteeing horizontality within the organisation, interviewees also noted that asymmetrical and hierarchical dynamics were reproduced in these spaces:

The whole issue of mediation and facilitation groups in the candidacies were fundamental, but at the same time these tools became tools of manipulation, because facilitation and mediation were used to take the assemblies to a place where certain people wanted to take them [...] (MA_2).

We had an assembly where everything the elected representatives said was taken on board, without any kind of criticism from the assembly [...]. We never had real counter-power in the assembly [...]. The assemblies were spaces that were totally devoid of criticism, of deliberation (CsM_5).

Decisions are taken in the assembly, but these decisions have been taken previously, let's say, behind the scenes (MA_2).

This "demystification" also affects the mechanism of electing candidates through primaries, initially defined as one of the most innovative democratic elements of the organisational process. According to some interviewees, far from being a mechanism that guaranteed the platforms' plurality and horizontality, it became a process that reinforced a politics of blocs and power struggles:

Primaries [...] exemplify the worst evils of politics, egos, practically sects or sectors of power, the quest for recognition (MA_6).

For me, that's when the blocs come in, and each one will go its own way, to see who to put forward... To see who'll impose the structure of primaries that benefits them most (CsM_3).

The inevitability of professionalisation

One of the most interesting aspects noted is the difficulty of maintaining some of the principles of this new way of doing politics. In this sense, the high level of involvement and demand for participation leads some of the interviewees to suggest that professionalisation of the organisation is inevitable:

Maybe make the organisation more professional, with paid full-time workers. I think that to strengthen the project and avoid relying on the enthusiasm of 10, 12, 15 people, I think the project should have been professionalised (VTLP_2).

Some of the interviewees' comments revealed a paradox: the desire to avoid professionalisation in the organisation (in VTLP the position of political advisers was rejected) did not solve the problem of hierarchy but, as evidenced in this testimony, ended up exacerbating it, since it meant greater concentration of power in the salaried positions of the organisation:

We decided, in the name of non-institutionalisation and non-corporatisation, not to have any paid political staff. It sounds like a great idea, but in practice, in the end the institution had an even greater ripple effect. [...] and it is very difficult for the organisation to stick to its own pace and line of work (MA_3).

The need to come up with new forms of organisation

In short, the participants conclude that there is a need to know how to combine positive aspects of the horizontal and vertical logics. This is expressed by one activist in the following comment:

[...] The "outside" of the institution and the "inside" of the institution; assembly or hierarchy; above or below. Maybe we have to be more hybrid or think that maybe it's not inside and outside [...]; maybe there are moments for the assembly and we have to be hierarchical during those two months and we delegate it to these people and two months later we'll talk about it again. [...] Maybe the reflection or the conclusion on this whole process we've been through is that we have to imagine new ways of organising ourselves (CsM_4).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Despite the exceptional experimentation and democratic innovation that took place during the initial phase of the municipalist movement parties, their rapid institutionalisation led to a decline in participation and an increasing concentration of decision making at the top of the party.

The theses put forward by German thinker Robert Michels over a century ago therefore still seem pertinent today. Michels argued that society faces an irresolvable dilemma: great institutions cannot exist unless effective power is surrendered to their highest echelons (Michels, 1979 [1911]:13). Likewise, the activists interviewed were unable to devote sufficient time to the organisation because of the demands of daily life (work, family, leisure), with the result that delegating and relying on a bureaucratic structure were the only practical options. This observation is borne out by Linz in his foreword to Michels' book, in which he argues that strong leadership is needed because the masses cannot participate in the decision-making process since the demands of modern life limit the time and mental energy available for participatory activity (Michels, 1979 [1911]:15).

To some extent, this study also seems to corroborate Weil's (2014 [1942]) thesis that the ultimate interest of political parties is their corporate growth. We found that the political parties gradually gained protagonism, manifested in the shift from an organisational model of *confluence* that prioritised individual participation and decision making through careful deliberative processes, to a *coalition* model in which corporate logics and decision making are imposed through processes operating in parallel to regulated spaces. In this sense, the problem we identify with municipalism is not the lack of structure (Freeman, 1972; Biehl and Bookchin, 1998), nor its excessive size (Laamanen, 2022), but rather that decisions are taken outside the spaces defined by the organisation. This shift is particularly noticeable from 2019 onwards (four years after the constitution of the municipalist formations), marked by the progressive organisational decline and the growing distance between the movement and those in salaried positions in the municipalist platforms. In the 1980s, Petra Kelly, founding member of the Green Party in Germany, an iconic movement party in contemporary history, argued that if a party ceases to be a movement, it will be nothing (Parkin, 2016, 15). In a similar vein, our study of the municipalist cycle in Spain reveals the difficulties of maintaining the movement's autonomy as it enters a process of bureaucratisation.

This research also allows us to qualify some claims regarding the tensions between horizontality and oligarchy, that is, between movement and institution. As some authors (Panebianco, 1995 [1982]; Linz, 2006) argue, political parties cannot be characterised as a simple dichotomy between the two options; rather, horizontal and oligarchic dynamics are in constant tension. In this line, some authors have suggested that this conclusion can be drawn from Michels' own work (Drochon 2020:186). Panebianco argues that this tension is conditioned by the initial ideological principles of the organisation (Panebianco, 1995 [1982]). In the case of the municipalist platforms, these principles were guided by forms of direct democracy, the rejection of professionalisation and the rotation of leadership, all of which are central mechanisms for ensuring internal democracy. The decision of the CsM assembly to dissolve the organisation is an example of how the original principles of horizontality prevailed over the oligarchic pretensions of certain sectors.

This tension between verticality and horizontality is also evident in direct democracy practices. Although the innovative nature of these tools enabled the initial generation of a broad participatory process of experimentation and creativity (the assembly), as well as the legitimisation of organisational leadership (primaries), they also led to hierarchical dynamics and organisational fragmentation. In this way, the experiences analysed question the core proposals on horizontality as the essence of democracy (Maeckelbergh, 2009, Hard & Negri, 2017). In fact, certain principles that were originally perceived as problematic for maintaining organisational democracy were nuanced by the institutional experience. This is the case of organisational professionalisation, which was rejected as a mechanism for concentrating power. Moreover, the study shows how renouncing professionalisation can sometimes lead to a further concentration of power in the hands of salaried individuals. This leads us to question certain postulates which hold that less bureaucracy is a necessary condition for greater organisational democratisation (Breines, 1980; Laamanen, 2022). In fact, some people in the municipalist movement go so far as to argue that greater bureaucratisation of the organisation could have improved the synchrony between the movement and the institutional group. Finally, leadership, another issue questioned by the horizontalist thesis (Maeckelberg, 2009; Sutherland, Land & Böhm, 2014; Hard & Negri, 2017), is identified as a fundamental element for further reflection. The present study finds that internal cohesion can be either fostered or fragmented, depending on the type of leadership exercised. Likewise, despite its horizontalist origins, the project's association with certain individuals was cautioned against, aspects that the organisation itself was unable to resolve.

In summary, this study shows how the classic questions of organisational and democratic theory resonate in the experiences of municipalisms in Spain, and how the relationship of tension between movement and party remains a complex challenge when attempts are made to design horizontal structures. These reflections not only underline the difficulty of implementing democratic models within parties, but also highlight the importance of continuing to explore new forms of organisation that combine the positive aspects of both direct democracy and representation. How to maintain the initial participatory momentum? How to combine virtuous vertical and horizontal dynamics that allow for greater, sustainable control by the movement over the upper echelons of the organisation? These questions call for further exploration. Although some common patterns emerge in the evolution of municipalist organisations, we cannot extrapolate the results as a whole; more analysis is therefore needed of other relevant experiences during the political cycle in Spain during this period. Similarly, it would be interesting to explore the extent to which the organisational prefigurations incorporated into the municipalist movement parties have taken root in the *modus operandi* in other parties. This would allow us to analyse the impact of the attempt at democratisation that began in 2011 and seems to have come to an end in 2023 with the loss of the municipalist governments. In sum, the analysis of municipalist experiences offers valuable lessons on the evolution of political structures and their capacity to adapt to democratic ideals.

DECLARATIONS

Acknowledgements

The researchers would like to express their gratitude to the 72 individuals who generously volunteered to be interviewed from the cities of Zaragoza, Valladolid, A Coruña, and Castellón. We also extend our thanks to Mary Savage for her assistance with the English translation of the text.

Funding

Juan Mérida's postdoctoral contract is supported by the Gerda Henkel Foundation as part of the project '*Vive la Commune: Communalism as a Democratic Repertoire*', carried out by Radboud University (Netherlands) and the Universitat Jaume I (Spain). Project information available at: <https://www.ru.nl/en/research/research-projects/vive-la-commune-communalism-as-a-democratic-repertoire>

Ethics Approval

This study received approval from the Ethics Committee of Universitat Jaume I on April 21, 2023 (reference: CEISH/79/2023).

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Availability of Data and Materials

An open data report (in Spanish) is available at: <https://repositori.uji.es/xmlui/handle/10234/206460>.

REFERENCES

- Anria S (2018). *When Movements Become Parties: The Bolivian MAS in Comparative Perspective*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Béal, V., Maisetti, N., Pinson, G., & Rousseau, M. (2023). When Bookchin faces Bourdieu. French ‘weak’ municipalism, legitimation crisis and zombie political parties. *Urban Studies*, 60(11), 2195-2213. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00420980231153344>
- Blanco, I., Salazar, Y., & Bianchi, I., 2020. Urban governance and political change under a radical left government: The case of Barcelona. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 42(1), 18–38. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07352166.2018.1559648>
- Bianchi, I., (2022). The commonification of the public under new municipalism: Commons-state institutions in Naples and Barcelona. *Urban Studies*, 60(11), 1–34. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00420980221101460>
- Bianchi, I. (2024). The democratising capacity of new municipalism: beyond direct democracy in public–common partnerships. *Policy & Politics*, 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.1332/03055736Y2024D000000033>
- Biehl, J. and Bookchin, M. (1998). *The Politics of Social Ecology: Libertarian Municipalism*. <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/janet-biehl-the-politics-of-social-ecology?v=1581092767>
- Breines, W. (1980). Community and organization: The new left and Michel’s Iron Law. *Social Problems*, 27 (4), p. 419-429. <https://doi.org/10.2307/800170>
- Bua, A., & Davies, J. S. (2023). Understanding the crisis of New Municipalism in Spain: The struggle for urban regime power in A Coruña and Santiago de Compostela. *Urban Studies*, 60(11), 2054-2072. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00420980221123939>
- Cancela, E. & Rey-Araujo, P. (2022). Lessons from the Podemos Experiment. *New Left Review*, 138
- Calvo, A. & de Diego, A. (2017). *Municipalismo democrático: las organizaciones municipalistas*. In *Ciudades Democráticas. La revuelta municipalista en el ciclo post 15-M*. Icaria, Barcelona. pp. 225-250
- Cooper, D. (2017). Prefiguring the state. *Antipode*. 49 (2). <https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12277>
- Della Porta, D., Fernández, J, Kouki, H. & Mosca, L. (2017). *Movement parties against austerity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Della Porta, D. (2021). Comunicación en los partidos del movimiento progresista: contra el populismo y más allá del digitalismo. *Información, Comunicación y Sociedad*. 24 (10),1344–1360. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2021.1894212>
- Duverger, M. (2012 [1951]). *Los partidos políticos*. Fondo de Cultura Económica, México D.F.

- Drochon, M. (2020). Robert Michels, the iron law of oligarchy and dynamic democracy. *Constellations*, 27 (2), 185-198.
- Feenstra, R. A., & Tormey, S. (2023). From social mobilisation to institutional politics: Reflecting on the impact of municipalism in Madrid and Barcelona. *Social Movement Studies*, 22(1), 80-98.
- Feenstra, R., Tormey, S., Casero-Ripollés, A., & Keane, J. (2017). *Refiguring democracy: The Spanish political laboratory*. London: Routledge.
- Flesher-Fominaya, C. (2014). *Social movements and globalization. How protest, occupations and uprising are changing the world*. Palgrave
- Flesher Fominaya, C. (2020). *Democracy reloaded: Inside Spain's political laboratory from 15-M to Podemos*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fernández, B. & Rodríguez, E. (2024). La restauración de la normalidad. Del 15M a los gobiernos progresistas. Cuadernos de estrategia N°1. Madrid: Traficantes de Sueños.
- Fernández-Martínez, J. L., García-Espín, P., & Alarcón, P. (2023). Assessing the New Municipalism Reform of Advisory Councils: The Cases of Madrid and Barcelona (2015–2019). *Urban Affairs Review*, 59(5), 1567-1600. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10780874221109444>
- Freeman, J. (1972). The Tyranny of Structurelessness. *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, 151-164
- García-Espín (2023). Surfing Disappointment. The Uneasy Inclusion of Social Movement Activists in Local Participatory Institutions: A Case Study of Madrid (2015–2019). In A. Bua and S. Bussu (Eds.), *Reclaiming Participatory Governance*. London: Routledge
- Gerbaudo, P. (2021). Are digital parties more democratic than traditional parties? Evaluating Podemos and Movimento 5 stelle's online decision-making platforms. *Party Politics*, 27(4), 730–742. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068819884878>
- Graeber, D. (2015). *The Utopia of Rules: On Technology, Stupidity, and the Secret Joys of Bureaucracy*. New York: Melville House.
- Hard, M. and Negri, A. (2017). *Assembly*. Oxford University Press, New York
- Ibarra, P., Martí Puig, S., Cortina-Oriol, M., & Sribman, A. (2018). *Nuevos Movimientos Sociales: De la calle a los ayuntamientos*. Barcelona: Icaria.
- Joubert, T. (2023). Bridging bureaucracy and activism: Challenges of activist state-work in the 1980s Greater London Council. *Urban Studies*, 60(11), 2251-2270. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00420980221104594>
- Kitschelt, H. (2006). Movement Parties. In *Handbook of party politics*. Ed. Katz, R.S. & Crotty, W. Sage Publications (pp.278-290)

Laamanen, L. (2022). Organizing prefiguration. In *The future is now. An introduction to prefigurative politics*. Ed. Monticelli, L. pp. 191-203. Bristol: Bristol University Press.

Linz, J. (2006). *Robert Michels, political sociology, and the future of democracy*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.

Lobera, J., & Parejo, D. (2019). Streets and institutions? The electoral extension of social movements and its tensions. In U. Gordon & R. Kinna (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Radical Politics* (pp. 314–325). London: Routledge.

Maeckelbergh, M. (2009). *The Will of the Many: How the Alterglobalisation Movement is Changing the Face of Democracy*. London: Pluto Books

Mérida, J., & Tellería, I. (2021). ¿Una nueva forma de hacer política? Modos de gobernanza participativa y Ayuntamientos del cambio en España (2015-2019). *Gestión y Análisis de Políticas Públicas*, (26), 92–110. <https://doi.org/10.24965/gapp.i26.10841>

Mérida, J. (2024) The municipalism assault and its participatory challenges: Progress and limits in institutionalising and embedding participation. *Oñati Socio-Legal Series*. Doi: 10.35295/osls.iisl.1877

Michels, R. (1979 [1911]). *Los partidos políticos. Un estudio sociológico de las tendencias oligárquicas de la democracia moderna*. Buenos Aires: Amorrrotu ediciones.

Milan, C. (2023). From the streets to the town halls: Municipalist platforms in the post-Yugoslav space. *Urban Studies*, 60(11), 2158-2175. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00420980221090134>

Minguijón, J. & Pac, D. (2019). El caso de ganemos Zaragoza: una aproximación desde la sociología relacional. *Revista Internacional de Sociología*, 77 (1), 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.3989/ris.2019.77.1.17.153>

Minuchin, L., & Maino, J. (2023). Counter-logistics and municipalism: Popular infrastructures during the pandemic in Rosario. *Urban Studies*, 60(11), 2073-2095. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00420980221118492>

Mota Consejero, F., & Janoschka, M. (2022). Transforming urban democracy through social movements: The experience of Ahora Madrid. *Social Movement Studies*, 1–18. Online first. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14742837.2022.2028615>

Nez, H., & Ganuza, E. (2020). Del 15M a las instituciones: Las políticas participativas de Ahora Madrid (2015-2019). *Encrucijadas: Revista Crítica de Ciencias Sociales*, 19(1), 1–19. <https://recyt.fecyt.es/index.php/encrucijadas/article/view/80208>

Nunes, R. (2021). *Neither Vertical Nor Horizontal: A Theory of Political Organization*. Verso Books

Panbianco, A. (1995 [1982]). *Modelos de partido. Organización y poder en los partidos políticos*. Madrid: Alianza.

Parkin, S. (2016 [1994]). *Vida y muerte de Petra Kelly*. Madrid: Clave Intelectual.

- Pera, M. & Bussu, S. (2024). Towards Democratisation of Public Administration: Public-Commons Partnerships in Barcelona. *International Journal of the Commons*, 18 (1), 164-176. <https://doi.org/10.5334/ijc.1385>
- Pinto, M., Recano, L., & Rossi, U. (2023). New institutions and the politics of the interstices. Experimenting with a face-to-face democracy in Naples. *Urban Studies*, 60(11), 2176-2194. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00420980221091064>
- Prentoulis, M. & Thomassen, L. (2019). Movement parties. A new hybrid form of politics?. In *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary European Social Movements*. Ed. Fominaya, C. and Feenstra, R. London: Routledge.
- Postill, J. (2014). Democracy in an Age of Viral Reality: A Media Epidemiography of Spain's Indignados Movement. *Ethnography*, 15(1), 51–69. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1466138113502513>
- Subirats, J. (2016). *El poder de lo próximo. Las virtudes del municipalismo*. Madrid: Catarata.
- Roth, L., Russell, B., & Thompson, M. (2023). Politicising proximity: Radical municipalism as a strategy in crisis. *Urban Studies*, 60(11), 1–27. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00420980231173825>
- Rüdiger, W., & Sajuria, J. (2020). Green party members and grass-roots democracy: A comparative analysis. *Party Politics*, 26(1), 21-31. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068818754600>
- Russell, B., (2019). Beyond the local trap: new municipalism and the rise of the fearless cities. *Antipode*, 51(3), 989-1010. <https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12520>
- Stromquist, S. (2023). *Claiming the City: A Global History of Workers' Fight for Municipal Socialism*. London: Verso Books.
- Sutherland, N., Land, C. and Böhm, S. (2014). 'Anti-leaders(hip) in social movement organizations: the case of autonomous grassroots groups'. *Capital and class*, 41(10), 759-781.
- Tormey, S. (2015). *The end of Representative Politics*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Van Outryve, S. (2023). Realising direct democracy through representative democracy: From the Yellow Vests to a libertarian municipalist strategy in Commercy. *Urban Studies*, 60(11), 2214-2230. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00420980231156026>
- Ubasart, G. (2012). Municipalismo alternativo y popular ¿Hacia una consolidación de las tesis del nuevo localismo y la politización del mundo local? *Revista de Estudios Políticos*, 135-162.
- Ureta, M. (2022). Partidos-Movimientos y Democracia Interna. Un análisis a partir de gobiernos locales de Decidim Ripollet (Cataluña) y La Voz del Pueblo (País Vasco). *Contraste Regional*, 10 (20), 68-86
- Vittori, D. (2022). Vanguard or business-as-usual? 'New' movement parties in comparative perspective. *International Political Science Review*, 43(4), 595-610. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01925121211026648>

Villasante, T.R. (1976). *Los vecinos en la calle. Por una alternativa democrática a la ciudad de los monopolios*. Madrid: Ediciones de la Torre.

Villasante, T.R. (2018). *Democracias Transformadoras. Experiencias emergentes y alternativas desde los comunes*. Madrid: Viejo Topo.

Weil, Simon (2014 [1942]). *Notas sobre la supresión de los partidos políticos*. Colección Centellas. Palma de Mallorca: Editorial José J. Olañeta.