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Working-class suburban housing, homeownership and urban social movements during Francoism in Barcelona, 1939–1975

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Abstract

The issue of homeownership in the working-class peripheries of post-war Europe has received little attention in planning history. The main reason is probably that public housing built at the time of massive operations of constructing Modernist housing estates in Western and Eastern Blocs adopted tenancy as the predominant form of tenure in almost all cases. In the context of widespread growth of urban homeownership during the second half of the twentieth century in European countries, this paper addresses the singularities of ownership in Francoist Spain. In this case, the main peculiarity is that the working classes that flocked to inhabit the new outskirts were the main protagonists of the intense process of the spread in homeownership. First, the article discusses the ideological roots of the spread of homeownership in Spain as a singular phenomenon. Second, the spectacular growth of homeownership in the peripheral working-class districts of Barcelona and in the municipalities of its metropolitan area is analysed. Then, the paper considers the relationships observed between ownership in the new peripheries and the development of powerful urban movements. A final epilogue places such movements in the Western European context.

Keywords

Homeownership; mass housing estates; densifying neighbourhoods; Barcelona planning post-1939; Barcelona working-class post 1939

Tenancy and homeownership during the Franco regime

The text displayed below exposes some circumstances that demonstrate the importance of home- ownership during the Franco regime in Spain. The article is the result of a more extensive research project that has studied the housing of the outskirts of Barcelona and its role in the morphological and social transformation of the city. As a result of this research, the evolution of the residential landscape of the outskirts, the community response to infrastructure deficits, or the transform- ations of the domestic space have been observed.[1] In particular, home

ownership has been ident- ified as a fundamental factor to be taken into account in relation to such transformations. A first descriptive approach to this factor can be read in a previous brief article.[2] However, this new look on the subject completes the topic in a more extensive, analytical, and relational way, drawing the connections between the observed data, urban social movements, and possible comparable inter- national case studies.

Among the three revolutions that have radically modified the housing problem in Western Europe since the end of the nineteenth century[3], the changes in forms of tenure stand out.[4] Indeed, the high percentages of homeownership in European countries around 1990 are striking. Two out of every three people in the United Kingdom lived in a home they owned in this period. With few variations, this observation can be extended to a large number of countries. In Spain, a very high percentage of homes were owned. In fact, Spain is the country that has occupied first position in homeownership since 1960 (Figure 1).

Two aspects of the extremely high percentages of homeownership in Spain are significant. The first is the rapid increase in homeownership that exceeded that of other Western countries at the time, and the second is a paradoxical bias in this increase. This is because this real cultural change occurred in the working-class. This is the most significant difference from other countries, where the increase in home- ownership was a more characteristic feature of the upper and middle classes. From 1950 to 1975, and especially after 1960, a new culture of ownership was imposed among the working classes who had been displaced to the suburbs. This situation would have a decisive impact on the housing issue in Spain.

Recently, it has been argued that this change was the result of interventionist policies of the first Franco regime, which was controlled by leaders of the Falange; a party inspired by Italian fascism.[5] From the approval of the *Ley de vivienda protegida* (Protected Housing Law) of 1939 and according to a consolidated, conservative ideal, ownership was promoted as a form of framing and social pacification.[6] José Luis Arrese, a high-ranking Falangist leader and minister of the Ministry of Housing that was created in 1957, came up with the widespread slogan: 'No queremos una España de proletarios, sinó de propietarios' (We want a Spain of owners, not proletarians).[7] However, the *Ley de propiedad horizontal* (Horizontal Property Law) that he promoted, which was approved in 1960, did not respond to the Falangist-inspired interventionist policy that was typical of early Francoism. Instead, it reflected the liberalizing economic policies of the new technocratic government inaugurated in 1957, which was considered the beginning of the second part of Franco's regime (until 1957, Falangism, the Spanish version of fascism, maintained its ideological hegemony in the Francoist governments and inspired a strongly interventionist economic policy. The change of government in 1957 marked the first technocratic government, made up of members of the secu- lar institute of Opus-Dei, which promoted a liberalizing economic policy). The new legal regulation on the horizontal division of property was not a commitment to the ideal of ownership, a guarantor of the moral order of the home as defended by the Falangist and National-Catholic discourses, but essentially an instrument that facilitated the transmission of ownership of homes from communities of owners and stimulated the market for privately owned housing.

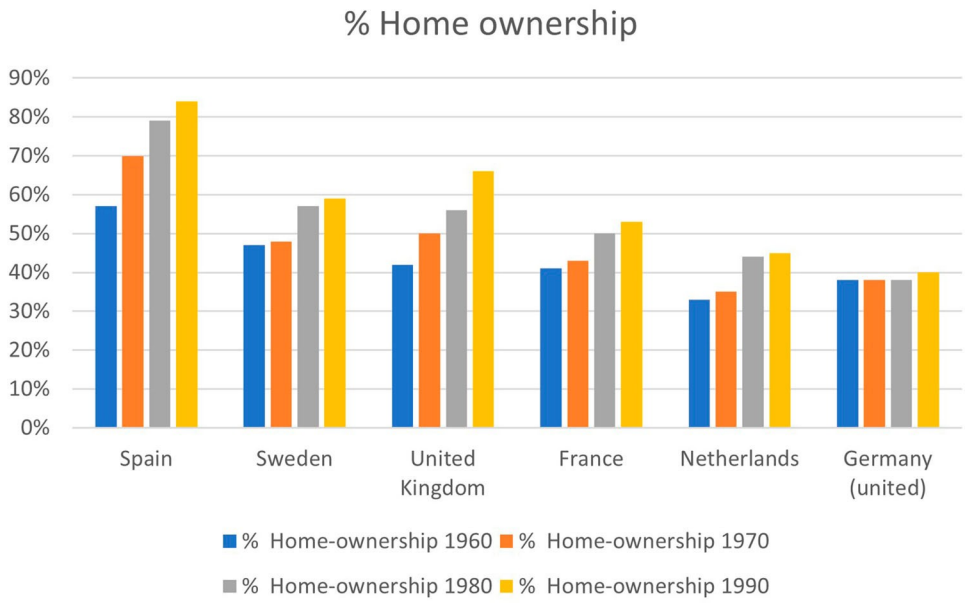

Figure 1. Home ownership rates in six European countries during the period 1960–1990 (Source: Trilla, 2001).

Between 1939 and 1957, housing policies in Spain were rather modest and erratic compared to other European countries, to the extent that shortages and reactive responses such as freezing rent increases were more decisive. The institution Obra Sindical del Hogar (OSH) was founded in 1939 to solve the problem of social housing through the construction and public administration of affordable housing. This was not the only institution involved in the construction of social housing, but it was by far the most fundamental and most active agent. Therefore, its results can be used to illustrate the distance between the Falangist leaders' narrative and the facts. In 1952, a deficit of 800,000 dwellings was estimated, while between 1942 and 1953 the OSH only built 21,737 dwellings, which is less than 3% of the deficit. This indicates the scarce quantitative relevance of social housing construction.[8] Housing policies depended on the Ministry of Labour, which used its scarce resources to activate the economy and mitigate the very serious unemployment rates. Housing for the working class was not a priority. State aid was aimed mainly at the middle classes. A failed economic policy and a housing policy that actually neglected the working classes led to a critical situation, at a time when immigration to the big cities was increasing. With rising prices, the gap between wages and the cost of accommodation grew. Thus, the freezing of rent increases promoted by the *Ley de arrendamientos urbanos* (Urban Leasing Law) of 1946 was much more decisive. This was a reactive and circumstantial measure that made new rents more expensive, penalized owners and discouraged new investments in the sector.

In those years, with the resumption of migration to big cities, the housing problem worsened rapidly and the decrease in supply caused further expansion of shantytowns, cohabitation and a powerful informal housing market. The constant deterioration of living conditions in Barcelona, in a context of ineffectiveness, rationing and a strong black market, led to the maximum expression of disagreement with the early Franco regime. What was known as the tram strike of 1951, which was actually a user boycott that became a real general strike at the hardest point of Franco's dictatorship, was a blow to the regime. The immediate remodelling of the government meant the entry of ministers who were somewhat more favourable to a certain degree of economic liberalization. In May 1952, rationing, which had been in force since the end of the civil war, officially disappeared.

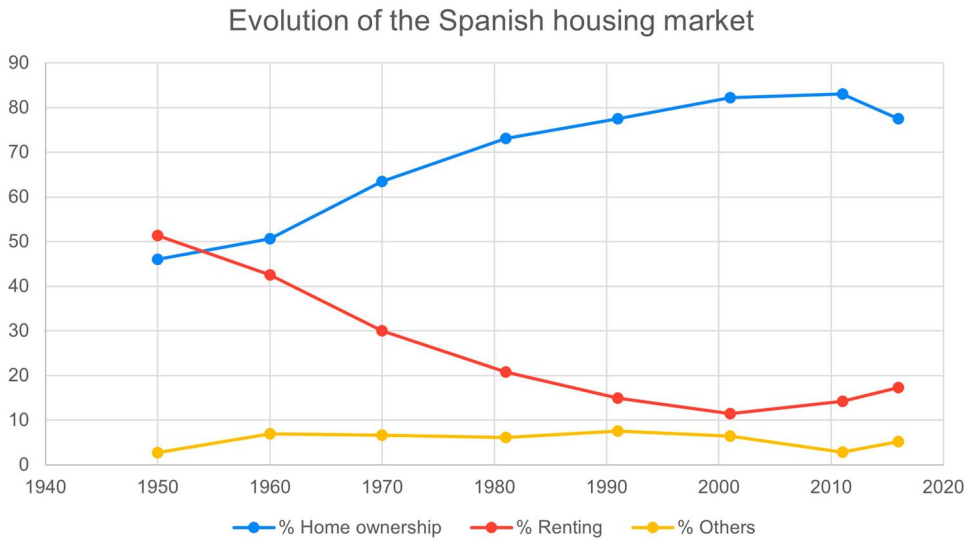

Figure 2. Evolution of the Spanish housing market (Source: INE).

The housing issue came to be considered 'the main national problem'. In 1954, within the frame- work of the *II Plan de Vivienda* (Second Housing Plan), the new *Ley de renta limitada* (Limited Income Law) offered exemptions, tax discounts, priority supply of materials, subsidies and credits. This completely redefined the regime of official protection for private promotion. Other comp- lementary liberalizing measures, such as the approval of the *Ley del suelo* (Land Law) of 1956, which sought to expand the supply of qualified land, and the *new Ley de arrendamientos urbanos* (Urban Lease Law) of 1956, which partially unblocked rents, were less effective. Because the block- ade of rent increases and the high rates of inflation undermined the alternative of renting, home- ownership began to grow first in cities such as Zaragoza, Valencia and Madrid. In Barcelona, this trend arrived slightly later (Figure 2).

In the decisive government remodelling of 1957, the *Ministerio de Vivienda* (Ministry of Hous- ing) was created. It was headed by José Luis Arrese, a Falangist who was absolutely loyal to Franco. His slogan 'No queremos una España de proletarios, sinó de propietarios' ('We want a Spain of owners, not proletarians') and the approval in 1960 of the Horizontal Property Law seem to culminate the Falangist influence on housing policies. However, the previous twenty years of Falangist interventionist policy contradict this. Since 1945, the press has unsuccessfully requested the organization of horizontal property. The inaction is surprising when we consider the declared will to mobilize the savings of the middle classes to activate the economy and mitigate unemployment. This is especially true if we consider the experience of Argentine Peronism, which is so close in some aspects to Francoism. In Argentina, the inflationary process also led to the freezing of rent increases in 1943.[9] The Peronist government's response to the serious housing problem was the approval of the Horizontal Property Law of 1948, which supported social housing plans and mortgage loans. This experience, which was echoed in the press, did not have any impact on Spanish official circles.

Ordering the horizontal division of property does not seem to represent a commitment to an ideal property mechanism that guarantees the moral order of the home, as supported by conserva- tive discourse. Instead, it seems more like an instrument that facilitated the transfer of property and stimulated the market, at a time when probably the regime's interventionism was still suspicious of this market. With these precedents, housing minister Arrese's actions fundamentally show the capacity for verbalization and propaganda to defend the new economic liberalization that the tech-

nocrats of Opus Dei imposed, rather than the expression of genuinely Falangist ideology.[10] In fact, the formula 'Non "tutti proletari" ma "tutti proprietari"' sums up the housing policy of the Italian Christian Democrats and dates from 1946, which makes Minister Arrese a rather late epigone.[11] While Italian Christian Democrats founded by De Gasperi was constituted from its origins in the period after Italian fascism and World War II as a liberal-conservative party – Amintore Fanfani's housing policies and his well-known INA-Casa plan can be recognized as a Keynesian example of promoting economic activity through the construction of social housing – the propaganda of Spanish Falangism did not adopt a sustained housing policy, but a totalitarian and erratic interventionism of contradictory decisions.

Overwhelmed by users' demands, the same delegates of OSH in 1959 also seemed interested in consolidating the ownership of their beneficiaries. They understood that these were not simply tenants, but de facto owners and they 'felt the need to root this conception in a public deed and in the obligation (by the current mortgage guarantee) of taxation by the owner, to carry out all those ordinary and extraordinary works that the conservation of the dwelling requires'.[12] They therefore considered that the beneficiaries should bear all kinds of maintenance expenses. The conflict was not resolved, and the claims did not cease until this became one of the central issues in 1970s urban movements. In any case, at the end of Franco's regime, the high rates of home own- ership in the new working-class suburbs seem to confirm the success of the slogan 'we want owners, not proletarians'. However, the number of owners were not exactly the result of Falangist ideology, nor an expression of social justice. Nor did working class home ownership have the expected effect of social pacification, as we shall see.

Within a clearly regressive fiscal system, housing policy meant that the weakest sectors actually subsidized higher-income families. This is because the official protection covered the construction of rental housing for the middle and wealthy classes, while the economically weakest classes were forced to access the housing market, with the extra effort that this entailed.[13]

The increase in homeownership in working-class peripheries

Unlike Madrid and other large Spanish cities, Barcelona maintained high rental and low property ownership rates for longer. It occupied the lowest position within the large urban provinces of Spain. However, at the end of Franco's regime and during the early years of democracy, an analysis of the housing censuses drawn up by the National Institute of Statistics (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas, INE) highlights the rapid transition from rental to ownership. In addition, it shows the pioneering role of the working-class peripheries in this process. In 1950, only 5.2% of dwellings in Barcelona were owned, which is lower than the 6.7% found in 1930 (the census figures used for the research, which were obtained from a 5% sample, also coincided with figures from a 2.5% sample, carried out directly on the family sheets of the 1950 Population Register by Borja Igle- sias, who found a percentage of 6.4%. In the working-class municipalities and metropolitan belt of the city, the rates are surely higher because their centres, in which the middle and wealthy classes lived, and the areas where agricultural production persisted, increased the property indexes. Own- ership rates were in the order of 18–20% in Badalona and Hospitalet and 37–40% in Santa Coloma, Sant Boi, Terrassa and Sabadell).[14] In 1960, when cohabitation, overcrowding and self-help housing were at historical highs, rent represented 84.4% of the total, while ownership remained at 11.2%.[15] Between 1960 and 1970, the percentage of ownership tripled to a significant 34.2%, of which 18.5% were still paying the instalments and only 15.7% had completed the payment.[16] The 1981 housing census confirms this great change in the city of Barcelona: 52% of the city's households were already owned, while 46% were rented[17] (Figure 3). Data refers to all the housing available in each period. This increase in ownership has a paradoxical social bias because the new peripheral working- class neighbourhoods were the spearhead of homeownership in the city. In 1970, when homeow-

nership stood at 34.2%, districts 9 and 10 of Barcelona that have the most working-class character and the greatest urban growth, had 44% homeownership. Although a percentage of homeownership had existed in these outlying districts since the interwar period, the high homeownership rates of 1970 were essentially 'new homeownership'. In contrast, districts 3 and 11, which had grown more recently and were more economically privileged, had much lower ownership percentages that were always below 30% (29% and 22%). In these neighbourhoods, many of the housing constructions were for rent and had been protected in some way. The difference in percentages reveals that it was much more difficult to obtain the benefits of official protection in the depressed peripheries. A comparison of the thematic map of the highest percentages of home ownership with the socio-professional maps by administrative districts shows coincidence with the map of the highest percentages of workers in industry and services and with the highest percentages of immigrant population. However, the most affluent neighbourhoods, with a high percentage of managers, liberal professions and technicians, were those with the lowest rates of ownership. The comparative study of correlations in access to property (paid or with pending mortgage payments) was based on over a thousand census tracts for working and wealthy classes (52% and 11.8% respectively of Barcelona's population in 1970). It shows a spectacular increase in property ownership in the working class world. While the correlation between ownership and wealthy classes in 1970 was negative (−0.26), that of the working classes was clearly positive (+0.32). It reached +0.39 in the five peripheral districts of the city. The observation of figures by administrative neighbourhoods shows how the rate of access to ownership was higher for the working class (+0.37 correlation) than the city average (+0.25) between 1965 and 1970 (Figures 4–7).

Data from the municipalities of the metropolitan belt further reinforce this link between subur- ban working-class neighbourhoods and homeownership and must be interpreted from the perspec- tive of total continuity with respect to districts and working-class neighbourhoods on the outskirts of the Barcelona municipal demarcation. In 1960, the proportion of working population in these municipalities, including Hospitalet, Cornellà, Badalona, Santa Coloma or Sant Adrià, far exceeded 80% of the active population, which was well above that of Barcelona at around 60%.[18] They already had high rates of ownership in 1950 and reached rates of between 57% and 65% of homeownership in the 1960s.

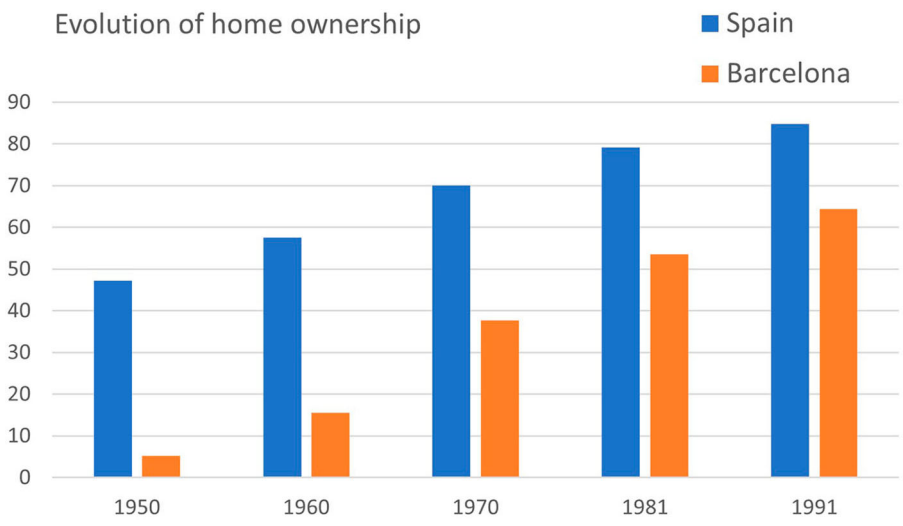

Figure 3. Evolution of home ownership in Spain and Barcelona, 1960–2001 (Sources: Trilla, 2003; INE).

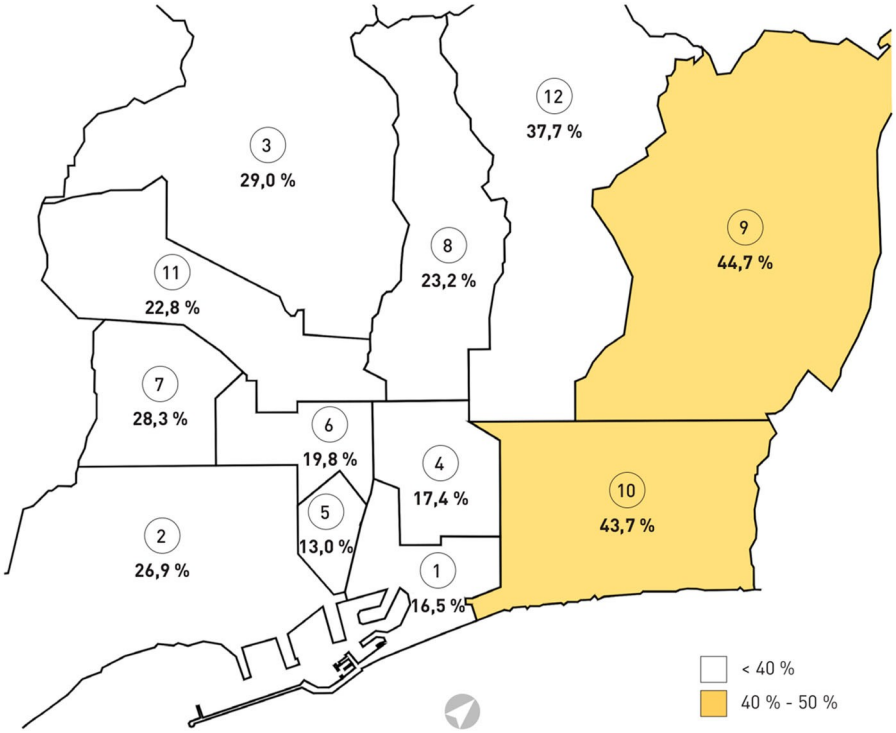

Figure 4. Home ownership rates by districts in Barcelona, 1970. (Source: authors' own compilation, based on digi- tized housing data for 1970 from Barcelona City Council's Department of Statistics and Diffusion of Data).

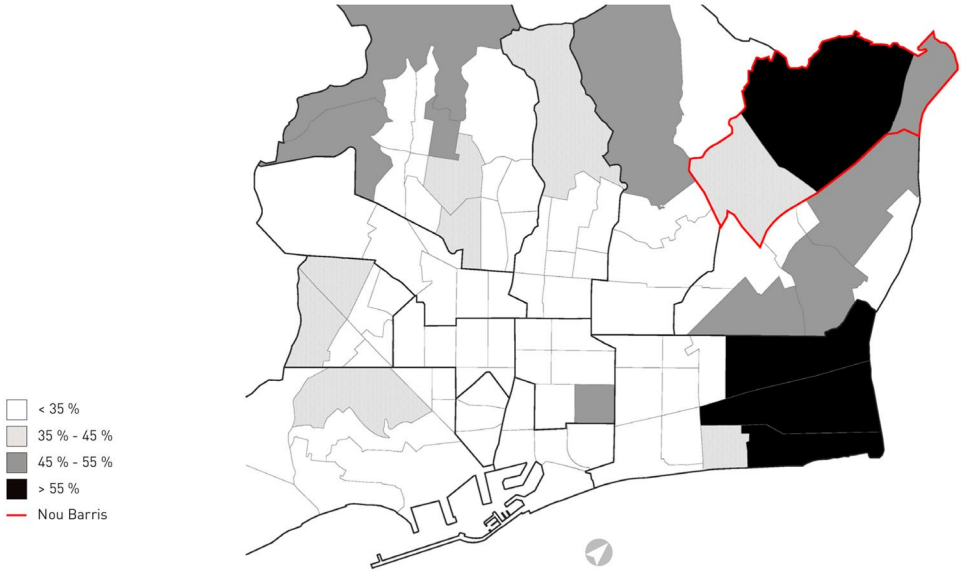

Figure 5. Home ownership rates by neighbourhoods (the Nou Barris district is highlighted), 1970. (Source: authors' own compilation, based on digitized housing data for 1970 from Barcelona City Council's Department of Statistics and Diffusion of Data).

The picture that is drawn in 1970 is the contrast between a richer metropolitan heart, with a greater social mix, that was still dominated by renting, and a more uniform working-class metropolitan belt with indisputable predominance of homeownership. If data on the entire metropolitan working world are compared with data from the provincial surveys of 1968 and 1975, the global

jump is spectacular in just seven years. In 1968, 20% and 21% of skilled and unskilled workers were owners, whereas in 1975 these rates had risen to 59.2% and 50.1%, respectively.[19] In the 1981 housing census, the percentage of ownership in the municipalities of the metropolitan area already exceeded 60% to 67.4% in Hospitalet and was even higher in more distant working-class municipalities of the metropolitan area. Therefore, the data show that working families who settled on the outskirts during the great cycle of residential construction between 1950 and 1975 were the true spearhead of the spectacular change in housing ownership that occurred in Barcelona and in the belt of surrounding municipalities.[20]

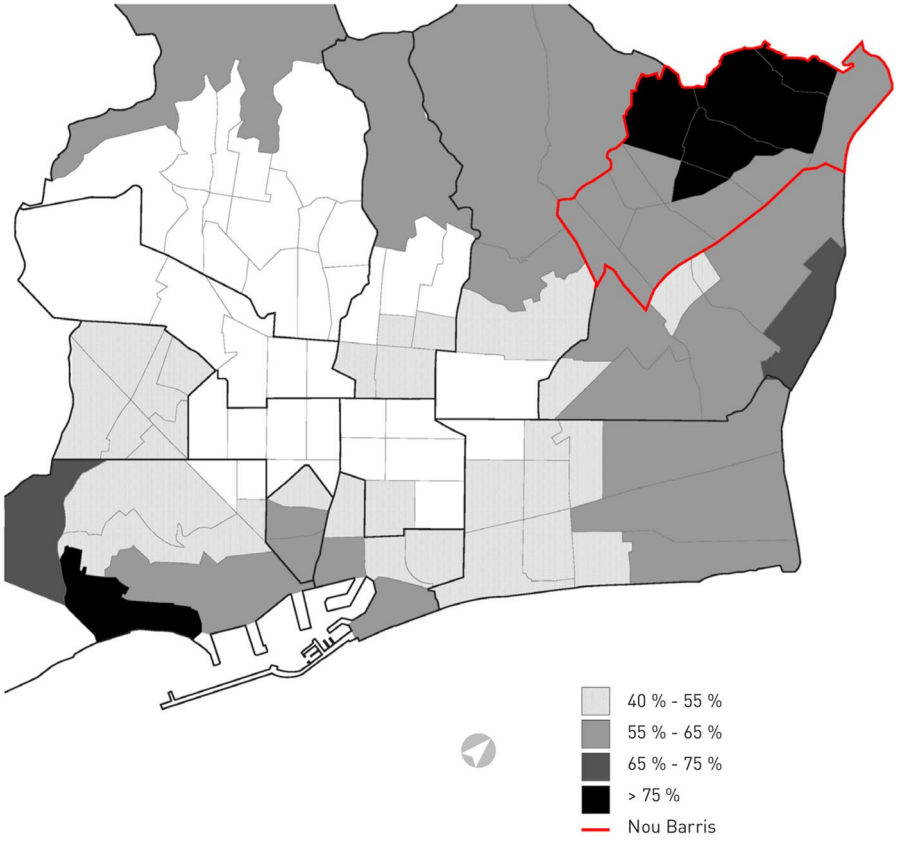

Figure 6. Male and female workers' rates in industry, communication, services and transport, 1970. (Source: authors' own compilation, based on digitized housing data for 1970 from Barcelona City Council's Department of Statistics and Diffusion of Data).

The Horizontal Property Law of 1960 had an extraordinary impact on the working world, particularly in the new peripheral neighbourhoods. Nou Barris, the working-class district with the largest working-class and immigrant population in the city, was an exemplary case. According to the 1950 census, at this time the ownership rate was 23%[21], which was very similar to the rate during the 1930s. This was not the starting point for the high rates of worker ownership that emerged during the 1960s and 1970s. Actually, the high rates of ownership in proletarian districts of the city such as Nou Barris were for new property, belonging to families that had moved to these districts for the first time to live on the new estates, and properties of families living in flats in buildings with four or five floors, which, during the 1960s and early 1970s massively replaced the old, one-story tiny houses. By 1965, peripheral working-class districts 9 and 10 were already ahead in the percentages of flats owned, at 28.6% and 26.6%, respectively. With property rates of around 18% in 1960, the administrative neighbourhoods of the future district of Nou Barris exceeded an average of 29% in 1965.[22] In Roquetes, a neighbourhood with a population of 6,000 people that combined

informal urbanization, the densification of the more formal urbanization of small houses from the interwar period, and the new industrial estates, 58% of the houses were already owned in 1964.[23] In 1970, district 9 (Figure 6.3) witnessed for the first time the *sorpasso* of ownership over rent: 44.7% of main households owned and 43.5% rented. However, in Nou Barris the progress was even greater, with a homeownership rate of 48.4%, which is eight points higher than the rest of the district and seventeen points higher than Barcelona (Figure 6.5). At the end of the crisis, in 1986 in the district of Nou Barris (which retained the highest percentage of 'low socioeconomic categories' and a greater proportion of immigrants), 69% of the population had accessed their own home.[24] Nou Barris had established itself as the most representative Barcelona district of the great movement for homeownership by the working masses (Figure 8).

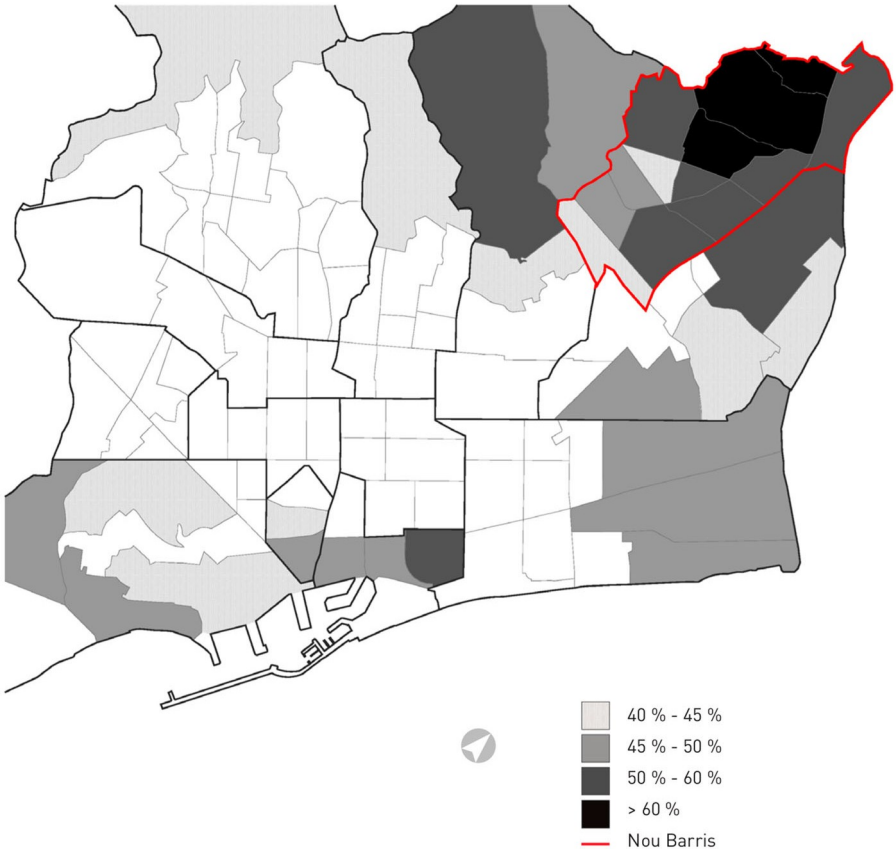

Figure 7. Immigration rates, 1970. (Source: authors' own compilation, based on digitized housing data for 1970 from Barcelona City Council's Department of Statistics and Diffusion of Data).

The distribution of homeownership by neighbourhood (Figure 9) also confirms the differences between a more working-class and immigrant northern outer ring and a more central southern ring, which is somewhat more socially varied. In 1970, the northern sector of Nou Barris had a homeownership rate of 56.1%, which is clearly above the district average (48.4%). The percentage of homeownership in the southern sector was visibly lower, at 39.2%, which is identical to the rest of district 9. The Ciutat Meridiana housing estate stands out in the extreme north, where three out of every four flats were owned. However, in quantitative terms, what outlined the average behaviour of the entire northern sector was the aggregate of densified neighbourhoods of Prosperitat-Verdum-Roquetes, where around 60% of homes had this type of tenure. The analysis by census

tracts (Figure 10) also shows some housing estates with high ownership rates, in the south and in the north (Figure 11).

Figure 8. Densification process in the neighbourhoods of Verdum and Prosperitat, 1963 (Source: National Archive of Catalonia, TAF Fund).

One of the distinguishing features of the north of Nou Barris was the presence of a high percentage of dwellings with 'imperfect' ownership. This was not just the case of the population in neighbourhoods with self-help dwellings, which, like Torre Baró, Vallbona and Roquetes Altes, had fought since the 1940s to prove with papers the legality of the purchase contracts for their plots and the right to have infrastructure and facilities that never arrived due to this condition of illegality. On another level, this was also the situation in the OSH deferred property estates built in the 1950s, such as the part promoted in the Trinitat Nova estate. In this case, the deferred property regime suffered from the shortcomings of legal uncertainty and a lack of clear delimitation of the adjudicator's obligations in the event of original con- struction problems. The adjudication of the dwellings was managed under a system of deferred access to the property. This system consisted of the beneficiary receiving the use and enjoyment of the dwelling, but would not acquire ownership until the contractual term had elapsed and all amortization instalments had been paid. The implication of all these neighbourhoods of 'imper- fect' properties in the urban movements during the last years of the Franco regime would prove decisive.

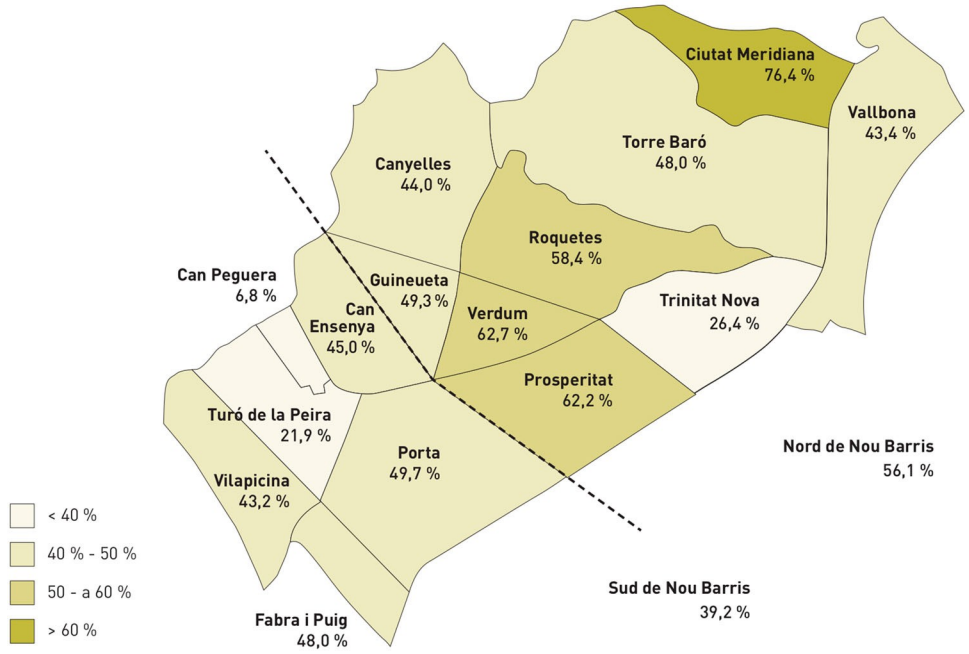

Figure 9. Home ownership rates by neighbourhood in the Nou Barris district, 1970. (Source: authors' own com- pilation, based on digitized housing data for 1970 from Barcelona City Council's Department of Statistics and Diffusion of Data).

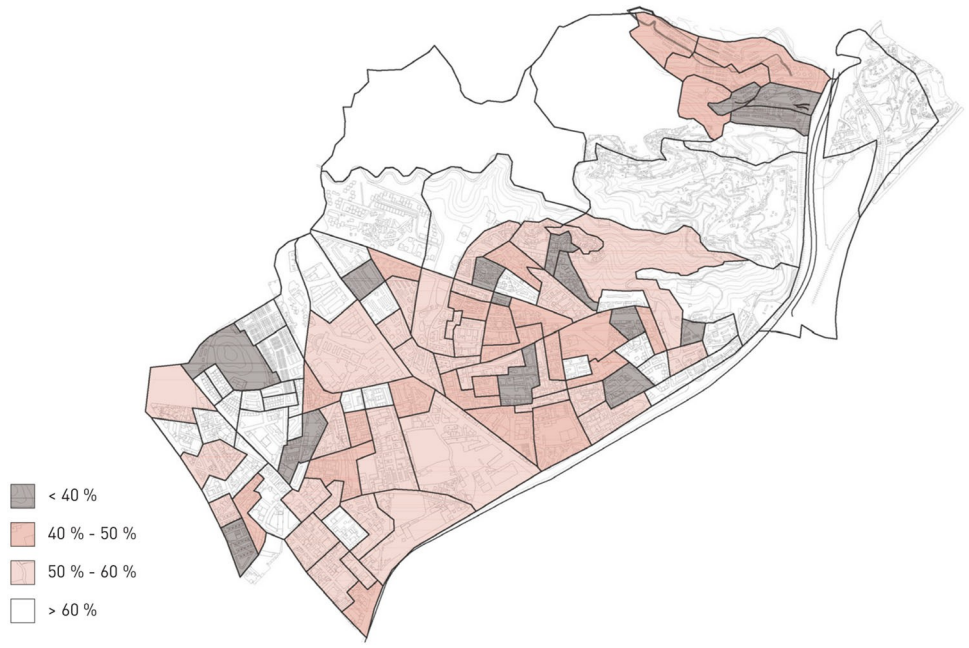

Figure 10. Home ownership rates by census tract in the Nou Barris district, 1970. (Source: authors' own compi- lation, based on digitized housing data for 1970 from Barcelona City Council's Department of Statistics and Diffu- sion of Data).

Figure 11. Les Roquetes, 1979. (Source: La Vanguardia, January 1979).

The rise of urban social movements: more homeownership, more radicalness

Suburban working-class neighbourhoods may have played a leading role in the development of the social urban movements that marked the anti-Franco mobilization so much. According to Manuel Castells: 'The social mobilization around urban issues that took place in the neighborhoods of most Spanish cities during the 1970s was, to our knowledge, the most extensive and significant urban movement in Europe since 1945'.[25] This argument is applicable to large Spanish cities but particularly to Barcelona and peripheral districts such as Nou Barris. The intensity, radical nature and successes of the struggles of the *asociaciones de vecinos* (neighbourhood associations) on the outskirts of Barcelona, with maximum expansion and incidence in the period 1972–1974, have been revealed in the main studies.[26]

Their fundamental role in the crisis at the end of Franco's regime has been pointed out, due to their ability to influence the agenda of political change that made the transition to democracy possible and their defence of the interests of the subordinate classes in this process. The neighbourhood movements caused the dismissal of two mayors of Barcelona, in 1973 and 1976, and the resignation of another one in 1975.[27] In the struggle to obtain a fair share from the state as collective consumption, they obtained important urban and social conquests. They also became schools of democracy.[28] They were, in many ways, the vanguard in the struggle for democratic town councils.[29] A series of monographs has tried to recover the development of the neighbourhood movement in certain peripheral areas, and the emergence and consolidation of a working class culture and consciousness, a culture that is closely linked to the migratory reality. In this regard, social networks were important in the configuration of a collective neighbourhood identity, which is closely linked to that of the working-class. This identity was also reinforced through the struggle of the communist clandestine union Comisiones Obreras (CCOO).[30]

Although there has been a tendency to focus almost exclusively on the late Franco regime and the transition to democracy, early neighbourhood self-organization in the suburban working-class neighbourhoods, forced by immediate needs, should not be overlooked.[31] The first neighbourhood demands and actions that took place during the 1950s and 1960s made it possible to 'articulate a critical mass and the first organisational structures'. This critical mass, together with the first neighbourhood struggles that also bordered on or directly transgressed Francoist legality, would make it possible to start a neighbourhood movement that developed with great intensity during the 1970s.[32] Throughout this process of gestation of urban movements, the support of grassroots Catholic organizations and parish centres in the outskirts, and, in more advanced phases, the militants of political parties (anti-Franco parties, especially communists), played a fundamental role (the hierarchies of the Church were declared pro-Francoist from the Civil War of 1936–1939 and, after the Second World War, with the disappearance of their Axis allies, the Church and what was known as national-Catholicism became the main ideological support of the Regime. However, starting in the late 1950s, grassroots Catholic welfare organizations and parish centres in the most popular neighbourhoods became increasingly involved in neighbourhood demands).[33]

An expansion of the time frame of analysis and an examination of the long duration of neighbourhood movements allow us to observe, from a diachronic perspective, the absolute mutation in the objectives and forms of struggle. The comparison with the situation and the type of urban movements between the wars in Barcelona is very illustrative of these changes. The great rent strike of the summer of 1931, caused by the high price of housing rents, or the tram strike of 1951 due to the increase in ticket price (which was no more than a way of expressing dissatisfaction with the impact of rent and the expenses of commuting to work on the family budget), ceased to be the main object of working families' protests during the late Franco regime. New housing conditions with remarkable access to ownership by working families in the periphery, and real wages that were absolutely different from those in the early Franco regime, gave way in the late Franco regime to completely new objectives and forms of urban protest.

One of the key issues still to be examined by the historiography of urban movements is the possible effect of homeownership on the development and content of these struggles. However, the absence of any reference to home ownership in previous literarture is highly significant.[34] The first episodes of mobilization, which were activated to self-build the sewage system in the 1960s, or the activities carried out by the first associations in self-help peripheral neighbourhoods, fundamentally involved the owners. They were not mainly anti-Francoist struggles or struggles for an abstract 'right to the city' but movements to conclude and de facto legalize the ownership of houses that had grown over time (and did not have a connection to a water network or a sewage system). Later struggles for medical facilities and schools, improved public space, bus lines or green areas that took place during the 1970s were also the logical extension of houses into the neighbourhood space and the culmination of efforts to con- solidate ownership after many years of dedication to acquire a home, generally with pending payments. Property ownership initially meant greater residential permanence, as can be seen in Nou Barris district.[35] From the end of the 1950s, ownership, which was more or less precarious and insecure at the beginning and still 'imperfect' or 'postponed' later on, stabilized and rooted many working families in their new neighbourhoods for many years. This established the foundations of authentic communities brought together by dense layers of stable networks of kinship, countrymanship, friendship, neighbourhood ties and spaces of secondary sociability.[36]

There was great residential stability, in contrast with the extreme residential and associative volatility of the interwar period and the early Franco regime. With residential permanence, networks of neighbourhood solidarity and networks of countrymanship were reinforced. Homeownership continued to act as a driving force from the end of the 1960s, not only for the few militants of political parties and unions involved in neighbourhood associations, but also for the

'active sectors' and the more massive 'potential base' of residents who participated more or less actively in the demands of these movements. In many cases, these people had paid off or were paying loans on their homes.[37]

In the Nou Barris district, the complex self-built construction of the sewage system in Les Roquetes neighbourhood stands out. It was carried out communally during holidays from summer to spring 1965, while the water supply network was completed in 1968. The water operation was a success not only because it managed to provide homes with water, but also because it generated a surplus that was the starting point for the formation of the Social Centre of Les Roquetes, established in July 1968 in the church of San Sebastián de Les Roquetes, an autonomous neighbourhood association, without the tutelage of the priest who promoted and coordinated the 1965 episode. We can find similar cases in other contexts of the metropolitan area.

The trigger for the greatest mobilization and articulation of the neighbourhood associations between 1969 and 1973 were the threats of expropriation arising from the master plan for a large sector.[38] This involved the destruction of 4,370 homes with no clear prospect of rehousing. After assemblies, mobilizations and questions put to the municipal authorities that were not answered, on 11 May 1973, the residents took their protest to the municipal plenary session, which was to approve the plan: 'Hundreds of residents of Nou Barris burst into the City Hall with banners and after boycotting the plenary session, they demonstrated in the centre of Barcelona until the police broke them up. The next day the mayor was dismissed and the master plan was withdrawn'.[39] In the same years, between 1969 and 1973, the strike on loan payments for properties in the housing estates of OSH in the metropolitan area was again motivated by an ownership issue. The protests that took place, involving complaints to the authorities, mass assemblies, press campaigns and public actions in the street, exemplify this type of collective action. They were isolated at first, but later coordinated with other housing estates in the metropolitan area.[40]

The second phase of the neighbourhood movements from 1974 is the best known, to the point that it has almost tended to be identified with the entire phenomenon. However, it is very different from the previous one because the focus of the protests and demands was clearly shifting from the home to the neighbourhood. This second phase of neighbourhood movements had as its focus not only the housing estates in which the terms of the contract on homeownership were no longer the central object of discussion, but also and above all the densifying neighbourhoods. Once the basic domestic problem had been solved, complaints about transport and road safety (traffic lights, pedestrian crossings, etc.), the lack of paving and street lighting, and the limited public facilities (schools and preschools, medical clinics and green spaces) took the lead. These were the type of demands that, initiated in 1972, would become widespread especially after 1974 in almost all the densifying neighbourhoods and in the housing estates of the 1960s in the northern part of Nou Barris: Les Roquetes, Prosperidad, Verdum, Guineueta and Ciutat Meridiana.

Neighbourhood associations also played a role in the new private housing estates from the late Franco regime and in the densifying neighbourhoods, with less marked working-class dominance and with better housing and urban planning standards from the outset. However, in them neighbourhood mobilization of a certain impact was less significant, less radical and had more attenuated claims. The truth is that in this part of the district that was better connected to the city centre, better equipped, and socially diverse, families probably considered that the demands or protests were less relevant.

In short, both in the Barcelona conurbation as a whole, and on a smaller scale within the current district of Nou Barris, the greatest struggles and the most significant mobilizations, took place in the most peripheral neighbourhoods, the most working-class, those with the largest immigrant population, and those with higher rates of ownership, which was generally 'imperfect' ownership. These outskirts were the site of the most radical mobilizations and those with the greatest impact on the inhabitants. They took place in the years prior to what has been considered the fundamental

period of neighbourhood emergence, starting in 1974 and immediately following Franco's death in 1975.

Do Spanish cities diverge from large European cities?

> Neighbourhood struggles and their intensity have always been explained as a reaction to the serious shortfalls in these peripheral neighbourhoods. However, looking at the entire chronological framework, we can see that during the 1940s and 1950s, when the deficits and living conditions were harsher and more precarious, there were no protest demonstrations. According to Castells, '… a deficit is not a crisis, in the same way as misery by itself has never been a social contradiction.' The urban crisis would manifest itself when 'the material organization of daily life through the urban system appears more and more in contradiction with popular desires and aspirations and with the functionality of the system itself'.[41] The greatest mobilizations took place in the 1970s, just when things began to clearly improve in relation to the 1950s. They were part of a wave of great transformations in daily life, housing, urbanization, facilities provision, social cohesion and the progressive fabric of the sociability of the neighbourhood. They were also in tune with the more global protest and social protest movements that spread internationally during those years.[42]

The 1970s was a period of structural rupture that took different forms depending on the country. It marked the definitive end of the post-war boom in Europe. After years of growth, the perception of an urban crisis prevailed in political and cultural discourses in Europe, and emerged in multiple aspects and with specific differences according to the contexts of each country. In the ideological field of the left, the urban crisis acquired an increasingly central role, as a fundamental change of perspective was imposed. Alongside the struggle in the sphere of production (in the factory), the struggle in the sphere of reproduction gained increasing prominence, and urban conflicts became more relevant on the political scene. The 1970s were years of intense activism and a wide, varied cycle of social mobilizations with broad participation of younger generations. During the last decade, urban historians have begun to explore the local movements that until the 1980s united 'conservationists, activists and ordinary residents who struggled against urban planning and inner-city development'.[43] The transformations of inner cities indeed played a fundamental role in their emergence. Also promoted by young people, the squatting movements of the 1970s and 1980s[44] and countercultural movements such as the communes of the 1960s to 1980s have received attention in recent urban historical scholarship.[45]

In Spain, urban movements associated with inner city transformations were much less present. As discussed above, peripheral neighbourhoods were the main leaders of powerful urban movements. The comparison between Spain and Italy is particularly interesting. In Italy, struggles and initiatives for the conservation and adaptation of historic centres played an essential role that was not found in Spanish cities. Furthermore, struggles and action in peripheral Italian neighbourhoods had a very different meaning.

Italy shared with Spain the oppositional hegemony of a communist party that had revised its strategy, was open to struggles in the sphere of reproduction and sought alliances with other progressive forces. They also shared the divided role of the Catholic Church, in which ecclesiastical hierarchies supported conservative positions, while grassroots Catholicism made its contribution to social demands. However, two fundamental distinguishing features should be highlighted. First, in Spain, urban struggles were incorporated in the struggle against Franco's dictatorship. The strength and meaning of this struggle was broadened by reinforcing its alli- ances in the context of pro-democracy forces in a political situation of change. Manuel Castells in 1974, after the experiences of the urban struggles in Paris, defended that 'an urban claim that confronts fundamental social interests (…) can only succeed by transforming itself into a social movement and can only crystallize as such if it is closely linked to the struggle overall policy'.[46] In Italy, the

communist party (PCI) was in power in many of the large city councils. In the struggles of many of the peripheral neighbourhoods, there was opposition between the planning institutions of the municipality and the Comitati di Inquilini (tenants' associations) of some of the peripheral borgate (housing estates) with a strong presence of extra-parliamentary political organizations.

The second differential feature was the fundamental weight of homeownership among the popular classes in the new outskirts in Spain. In Italy, activists and people involved in the movements of the 1970s were always or almost always tenants (the Italian Communist Party, which was very resistant to property ownership, only revised this attitude after the electoral defeat of 1979).[47] The greatest opposition and radicalism was initiated by tenants' associations promoted and sup- ported by parties of the extra-parliamentary left (Alianza Operaria, Lotta Continua), who resorted to forms of struggle such as squatting, the permanent occupation of flats or empty spaces inside the blocks of the borgate and reductions in rent or transport ticket payments. The cases of Corviale[48],

Primavalle, San Basilio and Casal Brusciato on the outskirts of Rome[49], or Villaggio del Pilastro on the outskirts of Bologna[50] are illustrative in this regard. In Spain, both activists and the potential base of the urban movements of those years were largely people who were homeowners or descendants of them.

In Spain, everything seems to indicate that expectations of improvements triggered the struggles rather than the extent of the shortcomings. As has been seen, home ownership did not discourage demonstrations but instead turned out to be the central motivation of neighbourhood struggles and, in general, a factor that rooted people and increased their commitment to the fate of the neighbourhood. The purchase of housing undoubtedly overstretched the popular classes, while the wealthier classes had easier access to subsidized buildings with limited costs. However, the constant increase in rental prices during Franco's regime and the first democratic period progressively alleviated the economic effort of paying instalments.

In 1977, in the midst of a process of political reform, the country was plunged into a serious economic crisis that reflected the duration, depth, dimension and extension of the reform. While inflation skyrocketed with price increases of over 20% per year, the foreign deficit reached worrying levels, and unemployment rose from 3.7% to 21.5% between 1975 and 1985. However, this worrying data did not trigger the outbreak of violent riots that began and spread in the same period on the outskirts of many European cities. Nor did the evictions make front page news as they have since 2008.

Violent riots, such as the one in Vaux-en-Velin on the outskirts of Lyon in 1979, the one in Bristol in 1980, or those in Vénissieux and Brixton in 1981, established the beginning of a cycle of urban violence that has continued on the outskirts of many European cities up to the present millennium. These were the expression of citizens who were disappointed and frustrated by the growing gap between the immigrant population and the rest of the urban population, due to the clear entrenchment of the mechanisms of segregation.[51] They revealed failure in the integration of some peripheries into a uniform urban model.

Although the circumstances were as explosive or more so in large Spanish cities, there were no such outbursts. Although it is true that the ethnic gap was much smaller in Spain, in Barcelona it still existed, and yet it did not represent a barrier to a process of integration and inclusion that contrasts with what was happening in certain urban peripheries in other European cities. There is clear divergence with respect to other European countries in which multiple factors are undoubtedly involved. However, access to ownership, which has historically been a way of accessing citizenship, is a factor that cannot be underestimated. In a period of serious economic crisis and despite the galloping increase in unemployment in the most segregated neighbourhoods, access to ownership and incorporation into the anti-Franco struggle of neighbourhood mobilizations in favour of public and increasingly popular social issues, clearly generated expectations of change and became pathways to citizenship. The forces that led the new democratic municipalities, which were previously

involved in neighbourhood demands, undertook a determined policy of intervention to alleviate shortcomings in those peripheries and improve their facilities and public services.

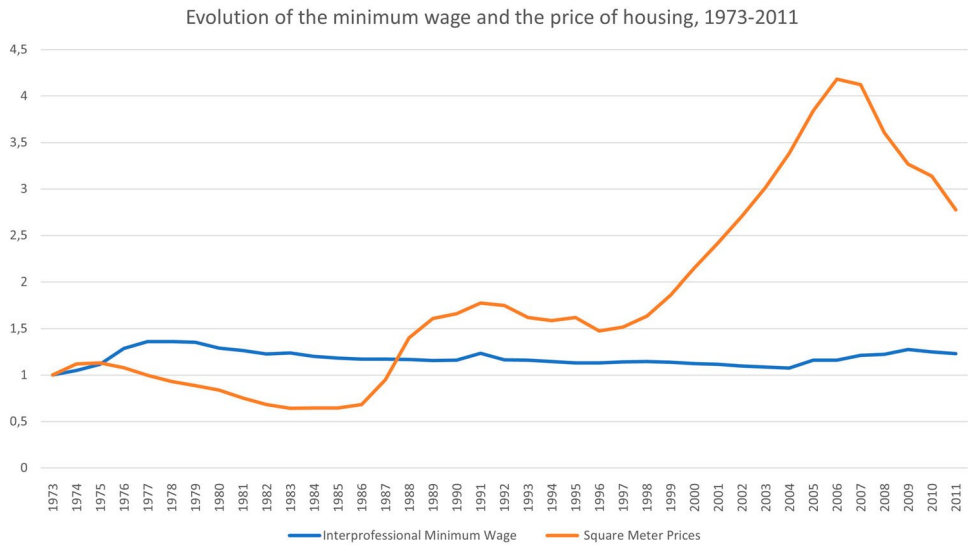

Figure 12. Evolution of the minimum wage and the price of housing, 1973–2011 (The increase in prices and 1973 = 1 is discounted). (Source: authors' own compilation, based on digitized housing data for 1970 from Barcelona City Council's Department of Statistics and Diffusion of Data).

Table 1. Evolution of social rental housing stock in Europe (Source: Trilla, 2001).

	1960	1970	1980	1990	2001
Germany (RF)	15%	22%	16%	13%	10%
The Netherlands	26%	31%	39%	38%	35%
France	26%	28%	24%	25%	25%
Sweden	15%	22%	23%	23%	22%
United Kingdom	26%	31%	33%	25%	21%
Spain	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%

Costly homeownership and active participation in the social and physical construction of the neighbourhood had the paradoxical effect of rooting the most segregated population in their neighbourhoods and in their city, in a process of empowerment and obtaining recognition from the rest of the inhabitants. Therefore, it is not surprising that this entire process was subsequently assumed to be a success story, without much analysis. Unfortunately, the progressive access to homeownership contributed to the erosion of an already diminished public stock of social housing, which in Spain has remained at around 2% for decades, when in other European countries, as shown in the table (Figure 12), the percentages far exceed two digits, such as 32% in the Netherlands or 18% in the United Kingdom or Sweden Table 1.

Starting in 1980, in the middle of an international context of liberalization of the economy and reduction of public intervention, a clear policy of protected housing seemed unnecessary and the free housing market was relied on exclusively. Consequently, ownership did not stop growing in newly built homes or due to the progressive shift from rental to property ownership and in the inherited protected housing stock. The approval in 1985 of the Boyer Law that liberalized rents did not change this trend. In fact, when many families who had enjoyed a frozen rent were faced with the threat of unforeseeable increases, they opted to purchase their own home.

Starting in 1997, the price of housing skyrocketed in a speculative process fuelled by expectations of

sustained growth, the shrinking rental market, and the unprecedented expansion in the granting of mortgages in the heat of a neoliberal economic policy that deregulated credit. In Spain, the crisis was worsened by the consolidation of poor management of housing policies inherited from previous periods, such as the tax advantages offered for the purchase of homes or the definition of mechanisms to build mostly protected housing under a purchase-sale regime, without planning the production of a significant stock of social rental housing.[52] Lacking the containment of social housing stock, the speculative real estate bubble grew disproportionately, and the economic crisis that followed its bursting lead to a long decade of emergency. Although it is true that in many cases the ownership of a flat has been a real lifesaver for many families, from 2008 the indebtedness of many of the families with the most precarious economy or affected by the growth of unemployment in the following years multiplied mortgage evictions and meant the entry into a long phase of unprecedented housing precariousness that we are still suffering. The housing issue has once again burst into the centre of the political agenda.[53] It is in this revealing sense that the current mayor of Barcelona reached her position after standing out as leader of the Platform for People Affected by Mortgages (Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca, PAH). In this new agenda, we must not forget the role of housing stock rehabilitation policies. These are programmes that, in the case of Barcelona, increasingly focus on the most vulnerable settlements in the city.[54] However, the general model of rehabilitation subsidies does not precisely address the particularities and specific needs of neighbourhoods. Once again, ownership becomes a fundamental factor since most of the programmes are activated at the initiative of the owners, who are usually co-financers of the interventions.

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