From social movements to social factory. The 15M movement in Poblenou, Barcelona.

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“El corazón (...) de la cuestión urbana est(á) en el estudio de la política urbana, es decir, de la articulación específica de los procesos designados como ‘urbanos’ con el campo de la lucha de clases (...)”
Manuel Castells (1971)

1.- Introduction

There is no doubt that recently one of the most interesting phenomena with the greatest impact in both media and politics has been the 15M movement. This movement, also known as indignado or the indignados, receive this name because of the crowded protests held throughout the Spanish State on the 15th May of 2011. These demonstrations led to the occupation of squares and other urban spaces. The most relevant were the Plaça de Catalunya in Barcelona and Puerta del Sol in Madrid. Three years after “the take of the neighbourhoods” (Pastor, 2012), fact that caused the decentralisation of the movement around a great number of new squares (Castells, 2011), the characterisation of the 15M as a social movement, particularly focusing on its decision-making structure and system, has become the centre of attention of social sciences, without considering its link with the conflict and struggles for the city.

This paper tries to bring into question this characterisation by means of an ethnographic approach realised in 2013 and based on the Assemblea Social del Poblenou (ASP9) as one of the different social assemblies that appeared in Barcelona during this decentralisation process towards different neighbourhoods. The 15M movement kept originally a large number of the elements that set up the social movements (SM), even falling into a markedly citizenism-based program “[...] by recognising the ‘real’ democracy as a solution for social injustices”2 (Delgado, 2013: 68). Indeed, the ASP9 would question the most recent neoliberal urban politics by claiming matters of social (re)production and setting up projects that prioritize the use value of the space over its own exchange value (Lefebvre, [1974] 2013; Harvey, 1982).

The role that these social assemblies play in fighting against the current dynamics of exploitation will be shown by highlighting the glocal structuring (Swyngedouw, 2004), i. e., a multi-scale relation with the territory (Martí i Costa 2012).

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1 The content of the pages is the result of a work influenced by many readings and reflections, and great people. That’s why I would like to thank to all my colleagues from the Observatori d’Antropologia del Conflicte Urbà (OACU), and especially to Giuseppe Aricó for his advices, comments and suggestions. I wouldn’t have done it without them.

2 Quotation marks of the author. Translation is mine.
and Bonet i Martí, 2008) of the ASP9. As stated by several authors (López Sánchez, 1986; Garnier, 2006; Harvey, 2013), these dynamics of exploitation are found not only in the workplace, but also through other forms of surplus extraction (privatisation, displacements, etc.) in the means of production and social reproduction that the city itself represent as a place of and for conflict.

Through a fieldwork based on participant observation, semi-structured individual interviews and documentary reviews, the final analysis delves into the study of two cases of collective appropriation performed by the ASP9 as symbolic actions for turning the current social situation around. The first case is the squatting of the headquarters of a former 19th-century consumer cooperative, known as Flor de Maig, in order to turn it into a Centro Social Okupado (CSO) or Ateneu3. The latter one is another squatting and later start-up of a self-managed community urban garden called Hort Indignat del Poblenou.

2.- From social movements to social factory

The following paragraphs include a brief review of the principal theoretical frameworks that have helped to define and analyse the SM since the mid-Seventies, emphasising those related to the referred urban question (Castells, 1971). In addition, it will be explained how certain authors try to classify and analyse the 15M movement within one of these frameworks or their evolution, and how some relevant factors as the material question have been ignored. In contrast, this paper will focus on how some of the collectives and movements succeeding the 15M act as exceptional figures, considering the city as a space of conflict and confrontation. Finally, it will be underlined the fact that many studies related to the 15M movement have noticeably focused on its decision-making structure and system and the search for agreements as elements of democratic renovation.

In his work Theorizing Social Movements (1995), Joe Foweraker points out how the theories connected to the SM may appear as an answer to the need of explaining new ways of social mobilisation that are not influenced by the conventional politics. The development of these theories, mainly in Europe and the United States, has its own different and defined characteristics. According to Diani (1992), amongst the theories close to the North American trend there would be those connected to the Collective Behaviour, whose main promoters were Turner y Killian (1987); those related to the Resource Mobilisation, by Zald and McCarthy (1987); and those associated with the Political Processes, whose principal defender was Tilly (1984). All these theories would offer a distinct instrumental approach. They ignore issues about social identity or meaning and focus on essential factors as why, how and when people get involved in social movements; how these movements are organised and why they go through special mobilisation and demobilisation cycles (Gledhill, 1999).

However, within the spectrum of theories classified in the European thought, there would be those interested on matters of identity and consciousness,

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3 This is the name that this kind of spaces receives in Catalonia.
developed by Alain Touraine (1977) or Alberto Melucci (1989), influenced by the post-structuralism (Gledhill, op. cit.). There are some authors, like the abovementioned Mario Diani, who have tried to develop its own definitions in an attempt to bring together the different existing trends. Diani thinks that a social movement is “[...] a network of informational interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations, engaged in a political or cultural conflict, on the basis of a shared collective identity” (1992: 13). Nevertheless, this kind of theoretical efforts could outline a concept of SM that, with the aim of encompassing different trends and lines of thought, would finally get blurred.

Cities play a relevant role in the creation of SM as they encourage the foundation of groups, acting as real “social incubators” that facilitate complex relational exchanges (Nicholls, 2008). In this regard, it is impossible to mention SM in urban contexts without remembering Manuel Castells. Before the Spanish author, urban sociology was focused on the studies about community and social integration. Castells coined the term “urban social movement” (USM) in his book The Urban Question (1976). These movements would have a potential transforming function within the class struggle in the city, equivalent to the function performed by the trade unions in the sphere of production. Lately, Castells tried to refine even more his theory in The City and the Grassroots (1983), where his initial perception of the role of the USM was moderated, so that these movements would start to focus their attention in developing new ways of local resistance, as a kind of reactive utopias, and changes in the urban meaning, that is to say, demands for collective consumption, cultural identity and territorial self-management, as well as an institutional integration and semi-dependency relationship with political parties. Castells based his opinions partly in the role and evolution showed by the neighbourhood associations (NA) as USM in the 80s in many cities of the Spanish State. As it will be explained further below, movements as ASP9 reject this aspect through a noticeable confrontation regarding institutional politics, property rights questioning, leader recognition and a firm commitment for horizontal and assemblies models of participation. Moreover, they create new ways of democracy practices in a specific material situation. However, it does not mean that they reject the idea of building alliances with other collectives and movements, including political parties, or that they restrict their actions to the local spheres of activity. As SM, the ASP9 is best defined under new “multidimensional ways of mobilisation that adopt more heterogeneous compositions and usually transcend the local particularism” (Martí i Costa and Bonet i Martí, 2008: 1).

One of the most frequent critiques to the ideas of Manuel Castells is based on the fact that he didn't take into account the contextual variables. This aspect led to the appearance of new theoretical approaches, like the theory of Political Opportunity Structures (POS), whose main defender is Chris Pickvance. In the mid-Eighties, this author held a theoretical clash with Castells. Pickvance (1986) highlighted the importance of these variables arguing that they were not criteria to decide the success or the failure of the USM, but rather had a great influence in facilitating or complicating the achievement of their objectives. In a later study (Pickvance, 2003), the same author calls attention to the popularisation of the term “USM”, pointing out the fact that its use relates certain authors to “[...] a group of writers who distrusted established political parties and believed in the
potential for radical change of non-institutionalized urban political action [...]" (Ibid.: 104). Although Pickvance suggests using the term “urban movement” to avoid this assimilation, for the purposes of this paper it will be used the most popular term “SM”. It is easy to find at present some studies about the 15M and the Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (PAH)⁴ that use this framework as a reference for analysing both movements (Martínez and García, 2012).

Regardless of these theoretical disagreements or the suggestions about using one term or another and in relation to the studies about SM in urban areas, it is necessary to remember that it is impossible to separate them from their principal field of action: the city. Nevertheless, the theoretical framework provided by the POS presumably forgets the material conditions (Thorn, 2012) and the cities are not outside the sphere of production, as pointed out by some authors like Kling and Posner (1990) and Harvey (2001). In this way, the SM may or may not have class character, may be related to identity or autonomy questions, but it is obvious that they have appeared because of the mode of production prevailing in the city, the capitalist system. Therefore, its definition cannot be established from the lack of the material question and the urban conflict. As Fainstein and Hirst remark: “[...] the relationship between mode of production, class and USM remains an open issue” (1995: 184).

In this direction, it is important to underline that urban space is not only discussed as a simple reference to a social sphere where life happens, but also a sphere of production that organise life itself. That is, a space conceived in a comprehensive way, in its interfering and interdependent aspects of social space —relations of production— and physical space —material, architectural— (Herin, 1988). Quoting Lefebvre (1976: 67-68): “the urban [...] has to do with a way of meeting, reunion and confrontation with all the elements that take part in the social life”. Thereby, the city is prefigured as a conflict scene and its social space as the basis of the struggle for the production and reproduction of the urban life (Harvey, 2013). The ASP9 can be situated as a SM in this context of confrontation where these movements do not leave the class questions although construct their mobilisations around issues directly referred to social rights or citizenship aspects. So, the ASP9, PAH or the mareas⁵ would be carrying out “[...] part of the job that should be done by the unions⁶” (Moruno, 2013).

Thus, it is useful to focus the urban areas as “social factories”, as the geographer Pere López Sánchez explains, in order to understand the role of the 15M and especially the following movements and collectives. This author shows how “[...] at the same time that the factory, as a behaviour matrix, is emptied, the dynamics of the capital doesn’t represent the denial and disappearance of the factory, but to the contrary it entails the displacement to a higher level [...]”

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⁴ According to the website www.urbanrise.net, the Platform of Mortgage Victims (PAH) is a citizen network formed by people who can not afford their mortgages and are in risk of being evicted and excluded from the society for the rest of their lives because of their debt with banks.

⁵ The mareas could be defined as SM that are mobilised for specific questions (education, health, etc.) related to social reproduction. They are identified by a colour and one the most important aspect in common with the 15M is the rejection to the movement institutionalisation, the absence of leadership and its horizontal model. Definition is mine

⁶ Translation is mine.
the territory” (1990: 6). And that territory would be the city. In this regard, some studies related to the *indignados*, like the one performed by Abellán *et al.* (2012), place this movement into the sphere of broadening “their repertoire of civil disobedience towards questions of urban politics and property rights, a core institutional framework of contemporary capitalist societies” (Ibíd.: 321).

Cities are the scene of unpredictable social actions (López Sánchez, 1993), and to turn it into a social factory or a *factory-city* (Gaudemar, 1982), the purely urban phenomena must be controlled, as well as all the aspects in a factory are controlled and planned. Accordingly, “the diversity, alterity and freedom of cities trigger the erection of a range of bureaucratic organizations to control and rationalize this increasingly fragmented society” (Nicholls, 2008: 843) and social resistances could appear right against this attempted control.

Having said that, if cities are framed as the field of action of the SM, then a question that was already discussed in the work of Castells would show up again: the thought that these phenomena are only local, considering their struggles “locked into engagements over fragmented and particularistic issues” (Uitemarkl *et al.*, 2012: 2548). Nothing could be further from the truth. Urban conflicts are closely linked to the capitalist restructuring at a global level. This is called *glocal* perspective (Swyngedouw, 2004; Köhler and Wissen, 2003). As a dialectical relation, the global aspect is not outer or external to the local aspect or other special scales, but something that is produced, reproduced, modified and challenged at many scales (Ibíd., 2003). In that way, although fights appear in the closest local sphere, they are considered an answer to the widest global showed in the everyday practices. Nevertheless, if urban struggles want to achieve the objectives further than a local level, they have to escape from what David Harvey calls the “militant particularism” (Harvey, 2001) through the integration and interconnection between them, so that it is possible in order to trigger a wider policy change. The different assemblies and collectives which appeared in Barcelona since the decentralisation of the Barcelona 15M Camp in Plaça de Catalunya still work in coordination areas where they exchange plans and objectives, as well as design common actions or establish alliances with other organisations, like political parties or NA. A question to be evaluated would be if these structures and alliances are enough and work so that let this particularism go to largest spheres of social transformation. According to Erik Swyngedouw, “to be sure, identity, difference and place loyalty are central in any emancipatory project, but solidarity, inter-place bonding and collective resistance demand a decidedly scaled politics” (2004: 42).

To conclude, some authors (Estalella and Corsín, 2013; Rivero *et al.*, 2013) have studied the 15M and similar movements, like Occupy WS or Taksim Gezi Park, as laboratories for new democratical practices. In this regard, the *indignados* would represent a certain equal utopia in the streets and squares occupation, in the creation of an assembly management system for decision-making, in the autonomy and the absence of leadership, in the spokesperson’s rotation, etc. In the same way, anthropologists like David Graeber (2011 and 2013) observe this phenomenon paying special attention to the creation of new

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7 Translation is mine
models of direct democracy based on the agreement or importance of prefigurative politics, instead of questions of material nature.

On the other hand, as Manuel Delgado (2011) points out, all these approaches forget one question: the chimera of a possibility of interaction without previous considerations, without taking into account the origin of the subjects; of an extreme democracy in which everyone takes part under the same conditions, social contexts aside. Once again, the urban question.

3.- The ASP9: Origin and characteristics.

The Barcelona 15M Camp (#AcampadaBCN), as it will be known the 15M movement in the Catalanian capital, starts up on 16th May of 2011 by occupying the centre of Plaça de Catalunya. During eighteen days, “the place turned into a little demanding city in the heart of the show-room city; right in the area that best symbolise the capitalist appropriation of the urban centre [of Barcelona]” (Antebi and Sánchez, 2012: 77).

The program of the 15M movement, spread in the camp sites throughout the country, demanded, amongst other questions, changes in the electoral law; special attention and respect for the social rights recorded in the Spanish Constitution; abolition of unfair laws, like the Sinde Law; a progressive tax reform; omission of the benefits for politicians; measures against corruption and abuses by Banks; a real separation between the Church and the State; green energies and elimination of nuclear power stations; and recovery of the historical memory. The program, considered open and prepared by a multilocal assembly system, included highly reformist measures, claiming for “a continuous activation of the citizenship apart from the formal policy and as a permanent resource of supervision and critique to the governmental and economic powers” (Delgado, 2013: 77).

Before its self-dissolution on 3rd June of 2011, the #AcampadaBCN had already started to plan the move of its actions to the different neighbourhoods of the city. The point was to progress in a similar line as happened in Madrid when they convene the decentralisation. The #Acampadasol announced on 24th May the creation of municipal assemblies and neighbourhood organisations throughout the area, fact that finally led to the setting-up of the Asamblea Popular de Madrid, as a coordination element.

This decentralisation context is the origin of the ASP9. Some of the indignados who took part in the #AcampadaBCN decided to organise themselves as a neighbourhood assembly. Amongst these indignados, there were activists from a CSO of the neighbourhood, together with another heterogeneous small group

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8 Translation is mine.
9 http://www.movimiento15m.org/
10 The Sinde Law is the popular name of the Second Final Provision of the Law on Sustainable Economy (Law 2/2011) that deals with the property protection regarding the new technologies and the information society.
11 Translation is mine
still active in Poblenou and originally created as a result of the general strike in September 2010. Some members of the CSO “La Teixidora” (known as “La Teixi”, as it will be referred from now on) will contribute, amongst other question, with their knowledge and experiences in assembly methodology. According to what Clara says, one of the interviewees, “people from ‘La Teixi’ encouraged and gathered people at the beginning of the Assemblea\textsuperscript{12}. Thus, it appears a slight convergence between SM (Martínez and García, 2012). This process will get even closer as time goes by, confusing the limits between them.

At first, the meetings of the ASP9 took place in an open space right next to a municipal social and sports facilities. The square at issue, initially without name, was renamed as \textit{Plaça dels Indignats}, although its current name is Josep Maria Huertas Claveria, a known journalist and neighbourhood activist. Later, after the occupation of the former neighbourhood consumer cooperative headquarters by the ASP9, question that will be discussed below, the meeting places were alternated every two weeks. In winter, the meetings took place always in the cooperative facilities because of the weather conditions.

During this first year of ethnographic research, six assemblies meetings and some of the organised protests and acts of civil disobedience have been recorded. Through gathering primary information, the most outstanding members of the ASP9 have remarked that, during the first meetings, they had an attendance of tens of people, even more than a hundred. However, during the fieldwork, the maximum attendance was 32 participants and the minimum was 9 participants, with a strongest male presence and an average age over 45.

The main roles of the ASP9 are performed by the moderator and the secretary. The function of the moderator is to keep the discursive nature of the meetings, assign speaking times and make sure that the points included in the agenda are discussed. For its part, the secretary is in charge of recording the agreements and write up the minutes of the meeting. These minutes will be posted later on the website of the ASP9. These are rotating roles, hence the people who will perform these tasks in the next meeting will be elected at the end of each assembly.

The ASP9 rejects the appearance of cadres or leaders and gives priority to the individual sense of belonging to the group. Just as indicated above, at first the germ of the ASP9 was formed by an entities coordinator of the neighbourhood gathered around a general strike but, once people from Plaça de Catalunya joined up, “was not formed by political collectives any more […] and turned into an individuals assembly\textsuperscript{13}, remembers Alfredo, one of the interviewees. The assembly nature of the ASP9 is unquestionable. According to Walter Nicholls, “though actors may cooperate in a common political enterprise, they do not cede organizational autonomy to the collectivity” (2008: 844). Anyway it does not mean that its transforming political nature is rejected or, as Manuel Delgado (2013) pointed out, it must not be seen as a simple demand for democracy as an antidote against capitalism. As Clara remarks once again, “the ASP9 is a

\textsuperscript{12} Interview with Clara (IC). Poblenou, 21/10/2013. Translation is mine

\textsuperscript{13} Interview with Alfredo (IA). Poblenou, 07/11/2013. Translation is mine
political movement but you don’t have to agree with politicians [...]. It's a leftist movement\textsuperscript{14}.

The main structuring framework of the different assemblies in Barcelona is called \textit{Interbarris}. It is a coordination area that meets once a month and rotates between the neighbourhoods of the city. The frequency of the meetings may be higher when they are about to claim or fight for fundamental rights. However, regardless this monthly meeting, there are some groups that discuss and plan certain topics mainly related to health and banking. These groups, that are constituent parts of \textit{Interbarris}, have their own dynamics and are considered highly independent in relation to their internal structure and the decisions they make.

In this theoretical framework, \textit{Interbarris} could be considered as a first step in search for general proposals that stay away from the strict neighbourhood sphere as a territorial delimitation. It would be a matter of searching what Nicholls defined as “urban insurgent networks” (2008: 848), where groups, with their different traditions about political, ideological and/or organisational questions, are aware of their interdependence when attempting complex issues. Through \textit{Interbarris}, the ASP9 is connected national and internationally and develops campaigns and actions at other levels under the \textit{glocal} perspective, trying to avoid the fragmentation of the fights and build alliances that go beyond the immediate areas (Swyngedouw, 2004). Some proposals, like those related to the housing or bank branches occupation, State actions supporting the \textit{mareas}, etc., are coordinated in this meeting place. The ASP9 is actively involved in the working group related to health, that should be taken into account under the social reproduction scope since, as Marx emphasised, it “represents the basic needs, the means to keep the normal living conditions of the working man\textsuperscript{15}” (Marx, [1867], 1990: 165). The ASP9 working group on health cooperates with a campaign at State level against the Government measures that restrict the access to public health for immigrants from countries outside the European Union. As one member of this working group said in an ASP9 meeting: “Black people are screwed up. If we don’t rise up now, in three years we all will be screwed\textsuperscript{16}”. However, outside the working groups, general actions are also organised in \textit{Interbarris}. As example, the participation in preparing and designing the actions for the internationally performed protest in the 15M anniversary commemoration, the 12M15M, or the meetings for the events occurred in Istanbul’s Taksim Gezi Park (Turkey). In this case, the supporting actions were graced with the presence of two of the leaders from the Turkish camp. On both occasions, during the preparatory meetings, it was possible to hear calls for a “unity of actions”.

Nevertheless, all the results are not positives. Although the ASP9 keeps a medium average level of participation, although decreasing as mentioned above, there are other neighbourhood assemblies in a different situation, nearly critical. As Eulalia, an outstanding member of the ASP9, comments: “We need more people. The attendance has been higher, but in other assemblies the

\textsuperscript{14} IC. Poblenou, 21/10/2013. Translation is mine
\textsuperscript{15} Translation is mine
\textsuperscript{16} Assembly, 06/11/2013 Translation is mine
situation is worse. My daughter attends to an assembly and there is hardly anyone there. We need people to make things happen because we all talk about it and make proposals but eventually we do need help\textsuperscript{17}. Sometimes this situation makes it difficult to perform actions at a greater level. As discussed in January 2013 in a meeting of the ASP9, “in Interbarris, the spirit is good. I mean that the rest of assemblies have a positive and enthusiastic attitude, despite a low attendance in some of them with only 5 members\textsuperscript{18}. This gives some idea of the complexity and difficulty of carrying out coordinated actions with a wider character and that may overcome the “militant particularism” proposed by Harvey (2001).

On the other hand, during the development of the fieldwork, it has been proved how the initial distrust of the ASP9 towards the parties and politics eventually cools down, especially in the way as certain actions that need a greater support to be performed are planned. In this case, it happens not a vertical structuring that could pass on the local scale, a city or a neighbourhood, but another with a horizontal nature where there is a search for coming alliances with some organisations deeply established in the territory. This aspect will be studied in the next section.

4.- Squatting and resistance: Flor de Maig and the Hort Indignat.

Two of the actions of collective appropriations performed by the ASP9 since their constitution on September 2011 are analysed below: the squatting of the Flor de Maig building and the start-up of the community urban garden known as Hort Indignat. For a better understanding, first it will be exposed a brief exposition about Poblenou as neighbourhood in the contemporary context of Barcelona.

Poblenou belongs administratively to the 10th district, Sant Martí, of the city of Barcelona. At the end of the nineteenth century, during the industrialisation process in Catalonia, the neighbourhood developed a spectacular economic growth based on the commercialisation of agrarian products, new born industries established on their territory, mostly with textile purposes, and the attraction of a large population from other parts of Catalonia and the rest of the country looking for job opportunities. Its growth was so large that it became the greatest industrial concentration of the area and used to be called The Catalan Manchester. However, with the fall of the classical industrial production throughout Catalonia during the second half of the twentieth century, the neighbourhood succumbed to the process of decay that occurred in many similar European areas. Today, the ruins of old factories and huge chimneys that populated the area can still can be found (Marín, 2006).

During the first decade of the 21\textsuperscript{st}-century, Poblenou underwent a deep urban renewal known as Plan 22@. The purpose of this plan was to change from “an industrial-fordist model to a post-fordist one\textsuperscript{19} (Marrero, 2003), through the

\textsuperscript{17} Interview with Eulalia (IE). Poblenou, 23/09/2013 Translation is mine
\textsuperscript{18} Assembly, 23/01/2013 Translation is mine
\textsuperscript{19} Translation is mine
transformation of “200 industrial hectares at the centre of Barcelona into an innovative and productive district for the concentration and the development of knowledge intensive activities” (Barcelona City Council, 2008).

This initiative, among many others, was part of the policies promoted by the local government intended to place Barcelona in the group of cities that aspire to become real centres of decision, "nodes of the global economy that focus the higher functions of control, production and management in the entire planet; supervision of media; the power of real politics; and the symbolic capacity to create and spread messages" (Castells, 1999: 481).

Flor de Maig

The Flor de Maig building is placed within the perimeter of the abovementioned District. It is the former headquarters of the consumer cooperative with the same name founded in 1890. At the end of the Spanish Civil War, the Flor de Maig building suffered different setbacks so it passed into private hands. In 1978, due to the lack of facilities in the district and the neighbourhood pressures, the Ateneu Popular Flor de Maig was revisited as a space for social and cultural activities, taking over the council the rental costs. However, this situation ended at the beginning of 2012, when the municipal government notifies the Presidency of the Ateneu its decision to not renew the lease contract. Five months later and with the intention of occupying the building, the Recuperem la Flor de Maig platform is formed encouraged by the ASP9 and ARRAN, a youth organisation linked to political parties in the Catalonian pro-independence left, besides the collaboration of some members of the local NA. “The occupation of Flor de Maig was one of the actions amongst the aspirations, the aims marked by the ASP9. There are empty spaces to be used and we will use them. And it is a way to prove that we can self-govern that space”, Clara says in an evident statement of the ASP9 thought about the space under use value criteria (Lefebvre, [1968] 1978) against municipal urban policies that pointed in the opposite direction.

The cooperative’s old building, as seen by the occupants, becomes into a CSO, a place where to “report the urban management of the 22@ project aimed at the needs of the 'Marca Barcelona’; the historic deficit since Franco dictatorship that has never been sufficiently approached, that is, the recovery of all the buildings that were a neighbouring and working creation, with cooperative purposes and to give an answer to the needs, challenges and unfulfilled desires in the current capitalist society.”

Regarding the "social factory", and recalling the geographer Pere López Sánchez (1993), the dynamics of class exploitation does not occur only in the workplace, but also through other forms of surplus extraction (privatisation of the urban space, land prices, rents, etc.) in the means of social reproduction.

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22 IC. Poblenou, 21/10/2013. Translation is mine
23 Translation is mine
that is the city. Thus, by means of the establishment of alliances with based political organisations, and those which work for the citizenship rights in the workers own environment (Harvey, 2013), the ASP9, by this occupation and far from the Castells’s reactive utopias, takes an active approach challenging the control of the capital over the city. As Lefebvre marked, “urbanism [...] in a positive, humanistic and technological appearance, conceal the capitalist strategy: the domain of space [...]” (1972: 161).

However, these alliances proposal is not a new phenomenon. As Martínez and García point out in their study about public spaces and fights over the housing in Madrid, squatting of spaces to create CSO also means “the recruiting of new activists [...] that begin to participate in all its dimensions: assemblies, self-financing activities, building maintenance, advocacy campaign, policy debates definition, etc.” (2012). Therefore it produces an increase in the abovementioned affinities to new people and collectives. In this regard, and as an example about Flor de Maig, it could be discussed the incorporation of the whole consumers cooperative at Poblenou, which have founded a coordinator organisation that participates actively in all its actions and have established their headquarters at the CSO facilities. Nevertheless, this process of alliances and convergences creation is not trouble-free. So, during some meetings of the ASP9, the need of separate their own activities from the CSO’s has been evaluated. In a meeting on December 2012, certain comments were made about this fact, pointing out that Flor de Maig “has its own dynamics and assembly management and it must not be misunderstood. Participants are mostly the same, but it is necessary to establish this separation.”

The community urban garden *Hort Indignat*

The second action of collective appropriation is the occupation of an abandoned lot and the subsequent start-up of self-managed urban garden in the area. This lot has an area of approximately 800 m², and according to the cadastral database (Ministry of the Treasury, 2012), its use is mainly industrial, because it was formerly one of the soaps industries that were part of the industrial fabric of the neighbourhood. Its current owner is the savings bank *Caixa Catalunya*, nationalised entity in September 2011 during the reorganisation process of the banking sector designed by the State Government under the current economic crisis framework. During the fieldwork, it has been found out that the banking institution´s original idea, after a previous re-zoning of the area, was to build a medium-high quality apartments building.

The occupation of the community garden, which took place without the support of any other entity of the neighbourhood, must be understood within the context of ASP9´s claims that have been noted above. As Paco commented during his interview: “our incentive, motivated by the 15M movement, is to reclaim the spaces, the urban spaces; take over them”. And he continues, “people who is

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24 Translation is mine  
25 Translation is mine  
26 Assembly, 19/12/2012 Translation is mine  
27 Interview with Paco (IP). Poblenou, 23.11.12
involved in this movement [...] of the urban community gardens have the right to occupy a space with no life in it and we bring them to life. We don't deteriorate it; on the contrary, we enrich it. What these words make clear is what Lefebvre pointed out in its celebrated work *The production of space* ([1974], 2013), where the French philosopher defined the space as a social product in which it is possible to establish dialectic differences between a conceived space and a lived space, that is, between the planners space and the users space. In the framework of the 22@ in Poblenou, this conceived space is assigned to offices, hotels and housing at prohibitive prices, established around the power relationships and capitalist production (Aricó and Stanchieri, 2013), while the community garden is, as the interviewed reminded us, a space for life.

We face again a contraposition between values, between different ways of making the space and where, as Jaume Franquesa pointed out, the use value “must be subordinated to the demands of the exchange value, authentic raison d’être of the changing geography of the capital” (2007: 6). These two ways of understanding the city mean the confrontation and the conflict, inherent aspects to the urban space where the ASP9 plays an active role.

**Conclusions**

Without any doubt, to go deeply in the search for a definition, or a specific theoretical line, about SM means a hard work and sometimes definitely frustrating. It is a complicated task that leads us to “a marshy [...] and barren ground”, as Manuel Delgado (2010) remarks. Therefore, although this paper comprises a brief review of its conceptualisation, with special emphasis on those SM related to the urban question, it has been chosen to focus on a more descriptive perspective, based mainly on the city as a natural area of action for the SM.

As the sociologist Vicente Pérez Quintana emphasised, “in the next decade, the scenario in which social movements and, specially, the NA, are going to move is the one related to the economic crisis [...]. In this scenario, the old strategies of resistance to defend social and public rights and the new strategies of politicisation to recover the capacity of mobilisation must be combined” (2009: 1). Under these circumstances, the ASP9 appears as a new figure in the scenario of urban space. A field where now has established original and considerable differences with the 15M movement, while at the beginning there were some coincidences in objectives and practices of action.

As an urban figure, the ASP9 has established alliances with other organisations in order to achieve wider objectives. It has joined to similar movements so as to overcome local particularism and has broken with the reactive view of USM, showing a proactive role in social change. This is confirmed by their property rights questioning, through the occupation of buildings and lots, and the fights

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28 IP. Poblenou, 23/11/2012
29 Translation is mine
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referred to the relative aspects of the consideration of the city as a mean for the social reproduction. Not a trouble-free road, as some questions have shown, like its difficult self-determination as a collective, the maintenance of the participation or its structuring with networks and alliances in other geographic spheres.

It is still too early to evaluate the evolution and ability of this kind of movements to organise and carry out proposals that brings out real changes. However, its analysis could represent a good chance to focus the glance of the social sciences, not only in all the possibilities they provide us with regarding new ways of direct democracy, but also in understanding the conflicts inherent to the urban issue. In brief, the recovery of the urban question and its significance in the transformation of our cities.

To conclude, this would be the right context to suggest a definition of the ASP9 as a SM, as a group of persons that fights collectively in the framework of a city as a space of conflict, and that maintains a horizontal organisation, common objectives and the idea of wide social transformation.

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