Cities and municipalities as forerunners for global responsibility

Finnish Social Forum 29th August 2020

On the **15th May 2011** something changed in **Spain**

How does this story start?

- Crisis of representation: parties, unions, professional politics… unable to represent us
- Ordinary people claims the direct exercise of democracy
- The crisis unleashes all these forces
- Examples: 15M assemblies, "Stop Mortatges" plaform (PAH, Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca)
- Barcelona's traditions: social organisation, activism
- In this context the project of Barcelona en Comú starts (2014):
  - Politics from outside has its limitations
  - Segmented struggles help, but not enough
  - Conclusion: we needed to win the municipality. We needed to win the city. We created "Guanyem" (Let's win)

And indeed we won!

PROYECTOS MUNICIPALISTAS
Elecciones mayo 2015

Our discourse…
transforming the way that left-wing politics are done

Diagnose:
- it was not possible to reach people through the traditional discourse of the left in a context where there was a great dissatisfaction with institutional politics, where people had a negative opinion of traditional leftist actors (unions, traditional parties).
- Studies about political culture that are done worldwide show that people value democracy, but just not the kind of representative democracy that we have

Key element: **bring back local politics** to the people who live in the city.
The aim was not to merely implement leftist policies, but to change the way we do politics. And we wanted ordinary people to have the central role.

Our discourse based in 3 axis:
- Implementing radical democracy
- Feminization of politics
- Believe in municipalism as the best way of transform the global political strategy

Radical change in discourse

- Radical change in discourse:
  - Plain language, very little abstract concepts. Common needs
  - Avoiding: "working class" in a context of unemployment.
  - Beyond social rights: participation in local politics
  - Confrontation? Better common goods and democracy. Shared goals
  - Bringing politics back to people. Not just words but facts (more on the next session):
    - Code of ethics created through crowdsourcing (mandate and salary limitation)
    - Electoral programme through crowdsourcing (2nd semester 2014-april 2015. Online and street workshops. The top 40 to the programme)
    - Microlending and crowfunding finance (close to 300.000 euros from here)
  - Radical change in communication (drawing, songs, etc.):

Implementing radical democracy

Diagnose:
- Studies about political culture that are done worldwide show that people value democracy, but just not the kind of representative democracy that we have

Aims:
- **Bring democracy to our organisation** (not a coalition of parties, but a "confluence", open different forms of participation, etc.)
- What does it mean?
  - Bottom up approach to politics. People participates as individuals, not as a member of any organization
  - The confluence, stronger than the sum of the parts

- **Bring democracy to the City council**
  - Ambitious participatory process to create the strategic plans for the city and for each district (online and face-to-face participation)
  - Reform of the existing participatory institutions at the level of the city, district and neighbourhood
  - Specific plans created with the participation of a broad range of actors (e.g. tourism)

Feminization of politics

Diagnose:
- As a contraposition to the left-wing populism (strong, personal, usually male, leadership, etc.)

It means 3 different kinds of thing:
- Promoting **gender balance and gender equality** within the organization (public participation sphere)
- Applying **policies that promote gender equality**, although this is fundamental in order to have a more egalitarian society (changes the roles and seek to break down patriarchy)
- **Paying attention to the relational dimension of politics** -→ a new way of doing politics.
  According to [María Eugenia R. Palop](#), *transformational, **feminized leadership is one that "promotes teamwork, horizontality, participation and power-sharing".***

Municipalism as a tranformation strategy…

Diagnose:
- Local level politics is the easier way for ordinary people to impact on shaping politics everyday and everywhere

Why do we believe that municipalism is the best political strategy
- **Municipalism has a greater potential i**n terms of building a truly democracy and the feminisation of politics, compared to the State level action
- **Every-day problems are connecting local and global scale and they should be solved with the participation of the local scale**: housing, tourism massification, city mobility.
- **States are being questioned** by the citizens because they are not able to address current problems (climate change, migration, refugees crisis, covid-19)

… and International Municipalism as a global transformation strategy (fearless cities network)

Diagnose: **But this doesn't mean that we should only work at the local level and isolate from the rest of the world**.
Strategy: **We strongly believe that cities and municipalist movements should coordinate and work together to have a greater influence at the EU level**!

Some of the <u>benefits</u> of this kind of approach are the following:

1. **Allows us to act beyond the traditional theoretical and binary debates**: Often these debates don't get us anywhere in changing people's lives.
   - We don't need a hard ideology… We need to works towards **concrete goals** and solutions for people's everyday problems. Share our experiences and collaborate much more
2. **It's easy for us and difficult for them (right-wing nationalist movements)**
   - In the local level it is easier to create mechanisms of participation for migrants, women, elders, and join people, that is the most important thing and what we need more.
   - And at the same time a network of municipalist movements could be more difficult to combat for our opponents. It is more difficult to attack a network than a single node
3. **We need to win**. We need to show and demonstrate that we can win, we can change things, we are able to do it and it is possible: we need to show everyone that different policies are possible!! Winning the city is hard, you can be sure. But it's much easier than winning in some other contexts. We need to show small changes are possible… and that will change everything!

... and International Municipalism as a global transformation strategy (fearless cities network)
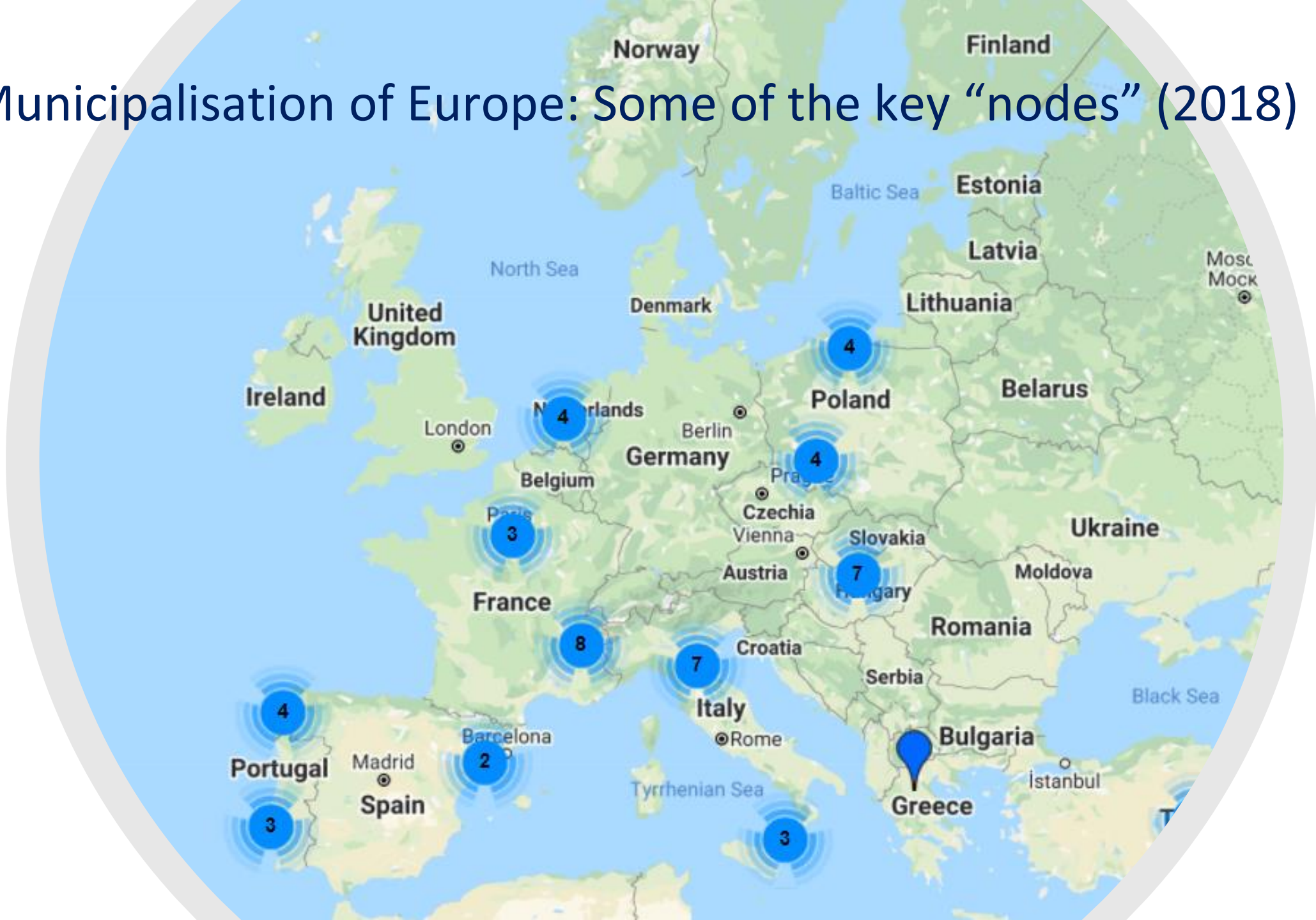
Diagnose:

- **Municipalise doesn't mean that we should only work at the local level and isolate from the rest of the world**.
- **We live in the era of cities**: more than half of the world's population lives in them, and predictions suggest that this trend will increase in the coming decades.
- **We are also living in the era of globalization:** the world today is hopelessly interconnected and subject to interdependencies that force us to think and act outside of conventional theoretical and political frameworks.
- **The phenomena of urbanization and globalization, far from occurring in parallel, are closely intertwined.** It is strongly expressed in cities.
- **Across Europe, Fearless Cities are building new, more democratic ways of doing politics and defending the commons from the bottom up**. Bold and innovative policies are introduced by cities to respond to the crisis in affordable housing and many other pressing challenges.

Strategy:

We strongly believe that cities and municipalist movements should coordinate and work together to have a greater influence at the EU level!

- Bring the municipalist debate to the Eurobubble and make sure that key MEPs are aware and understand municipalism as an european strategy to solve structural problems of the cities and EU. We are looking for more protagonism of the cities in the EU politics and funds...

Municipalisation of Europe: Some of the key "nodes" (2018)

Municipalize Europe!

Save the date → November 5, 2020

20 proposals to municipalise Europe (2019)

1 From the neighborhood to Europe (voice)

2 Cities vs Lobbies

3 Promote local democracy

4 Put housing on the agenda

5 Protect mortgages and tenants

6 Stand up to tourist speculation

7 Cities of Refuge

8 Facing the climate crisis

9 Breathable and healthy cities

10 Democratize Water and Energy

11 Oligopoly Off

12 Regulate platforms that make work precarious

13 Municipal procurement with securities

14 Ethical banking

15 Force multinationals to that they pay the taxes that they touch

16 Decentralized and democratic culture

17 Real Democracy

18 Feminize politics

19 Goals ahead of parties

20 Work in red

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