

The prefigurative politics of social movements and their processual production of space: The case of the Indignados movement

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates how the prefiguration of an alternative future by social movements produces new space through a processual dynamic. A case study of the Indignados movement in Barcelona shows how mobilizations evolved from symbolizing an alternative future in the square to constructing alternatives in the city in the post-encampment period. In the alternative projects forged during the post-square period, activists re-appropriated urban spaces and transformed them, wanting to live differently and to produce a radically different city, now. We conceptualize these new spaces as ‘prefigurative territories’, integrating the seemingly divergent anarchist-inspired theory of prefiguration with Lefebvre’s Marxist theory of space production. This integration helps to capture how participants strategized the type of evolution of the movement after the square as well as the type of space being produced. While the square’s encampment was a *détournement* of a capitalist space with limited spatial creativeness, in post-square counter-spaces the prefiguration of a different society takes an offensive stance, setting concrete objectives to counter-plan the state’s organization of space. Counter-spaces arise through a dialectical movement that preserves the first two dimensions of prefiguration, a consistency between means and ends and a proleptic foretaste of the future society, that realize and become the third dimension of created alternatives. This dialectical movement unfolds through three processes: experimentation, demonstration, and proliferation through ‘open prefiguration’. Prefigurative territories, we argue, signal strategic horizons, but members struggle with conflicts when opening up.

KEYWORDS: Social movement, movement of the squares, Indignados, prefigurative politics, space production, territory, garden, Lefebvre, 15-M, social centre, prefiguration

1. Introduction

The mobilizations that started in 2011 brought the concept of space to centre stage in the study of social movements (Pickerill and Krinsky, 2012). From Tahrir Square to Puerta del Sol, from Gezi Park to Syntagma Square, the occupation of urban space represented a new, common repertoire that made these movements part of a global ‘cycle of protest’ (McCurdy et al., 2016; Varvarousis et al 2021). Space was occupied, settled and transformed. The literature on the movement of the squares has analysed how the camp was used as a repertoire of contention (Kaika and Karaliotas, 2014), how it embodied a vehicle for practicing real democracy (Ramadan, 2013; Martínez and García, 2015), and how it articulated a symbolic significance against commodification of public space (Pickerill & Krinsky, 2012; Marcuse, 2011; Sparke, 2013) producing new spatialities with differing political imaginaries (Halvorsen, 2017; Kaika and Karaliotas, 2014; Karaliotas, 2017; Burgum, 2018).

A few studies have scrutinised the prefigurative nature of camps and the ways activists have attempted to reconcile strategic and expressive politics in everyday practice (Reinecke, 2018; van de Sande, 2013; Pickerill and Krinsky, 2012). As Naegler (2018:511) asserts, “prefigurative spatial and organizational practices can create the physical and/or conceptual safe spaces in which organizing and processes of imagining alternatives take place”. Activists in the indignant camps, as we will see, created the means of daily reproduction through the modification of space: from the communal kitchen to the medical care tent, from the library to the collective kindergartens (Ramadan, 2013; Maeckelbergh, 2012; Marom, 2013). This re-organizing of space was not simply instrumental, for the purposes of mobilization. Following Lefebvre, we can read it as interventions in the very process of appropriating social space (Dhaliwal, 2012; Halvorsen, 2014), as both the materialisation and the terrain of prefigurative politics in the camps. Even though prefiguration went hand-in-hand with the production of new space in the square, the materialities and processes of this enmeshment have, so far, scarcely been investigated and a spatialisation of prefiguration is largely missing. The absence of scrutiny of why and how the movements evolved beyond the squares, deliberately taking spatial forms different from the camps exemplifies this gap.

Studies that have focused mostly on Southern Europe have recognised the importance of prefigurative spin-off projects at neighbourhood level following the encampments (Arampatzi, 2017a, 2017b; Asara, 2020; Karaliotas, 2016; Flesher Fominaya 2017; Martínez and García, 2015). These include initiatives such as community gardens, workers’ cooperatives, social centres, and solidarity clinics, and their identification as commons (Varvarousis et al 2021; Roussos, 2019), urban solidarity spaces (Arampatzi, 2017a), partial organizations (Simsa and Totter, 2017), prefigurative spaces (Naegler, 2018), or simply as “social outcomes” of the movements of the squares (Varvarousis et al, 2021). These discussions have however all overlooked the how and the why that prefigurative politics took on specific and different spatial forms. The questions asked here connect with why the movements shifted from the squares to the neighbourhoods.

In Spain, the Indignados movement emerged against the backdrop of a dramatic economic and housing crisis exacerbated by severe austerity reforms and corruption scandals. Occupations turned the main squares of more than 70 Spanish cities into a prefigurative stage for assembly democracy (Asara, 2016). In several of these cities, material interventions within the square were temporarily bounded by the movement itself. Already after the first week of occupation in Barcelona, participants in long General Assemblies (GAs) began to debate the need for the movement to decentralize. After less than three weeks, the General Assembly (GA) decided that the movement would leave the square to intentionally start the second phase of mobilization focused on the neighbourhoods, with periodic assemblies and the so-called ‘creation of alternatives’ at the neighbourhood level. Questions as yet unanswered include: What kind of limitations did the occupied square pose on prefigurative politics? Why did prefigurative politics evolve from the square encampments to neighbourhood spaces? How were new spaces produced in and then beyond the square?

We address this gap in the literature by considering the intersection between prefiguration and space production via the notion of prefigurative territories because this allows to understand the processual generation of space from the square to the post-square phase. By studying the case of the Indignados movement in Barcelona, we seek to uncover how the movement’s prefiguration of an alternative future unfolded as it took different spatial forms processually during and after the square. By combining prefiguration and Lefebvrian theories of space production in dialogue through the concept of prefigurative territories, it is possible to grasp, on the one hand, why particular kinds of spaces were produced, an element missing in the prefigurative politics literature, and, on the other, how this outcome resulted from the social movements’ *process* of prefiguration, an element missing from Lefebvrian theory. Furthermore, our understanding of territories, for which we are indebted to Lefebvre, Raffestin and the decolonial Latin-American debates, allows to grasp the counter-hegemonic modes of inhabiting of, and the ontological alternatives engendered by, movements. Thus, our paper contributes to the blossoming field of prefigurative politics, to studies on the geographies of social movements, and to the wider debate on territories and Lefebvrian reflections on space production.

Our analysis draws on the first author’s ethnographic observation of the movement. Between May 2011 and May 2014 and in January/February 2016, she spent more than 600 hours as a participant observer in the square, community gardens, neighbourhood assemblies, coordination meetings and events, in occupied spaces and in social centres taking ethnographic notes and recording everyday practices of appropriating space, paying particular attention to interpersonal and political conflict. She undertook 74 in-depth interviews and six mini-focus groups with movement participants (38 women and 51 men), ranging in age from 20 to 70 years. Interviewees recounted the origins of their projects, and how and why they became involved. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003).

The second section of the paper discusses its theoretical foundations, including prefiguration, Lefebvrian theory, and our notion of territory and then presents the concept of prefigurative territories. We argue that movements’ prefiguration gives rise to new spaces through appropriation. Prefigurative territories can be of

two different kinds: diverted spaces produced in the first prefigurative moment, and counter-spaces emerging in the second and focussing on the building of alternatives. Section three analyses the prefigurative production of space in the occupied Plaça Catalunya, showing that this was a *détournement* of the square's space where abstract discussions and reproduction needs were integrated, but its spatial creativeness was limited. Section four follows the spread of prefigurative territories from the occupied square to three emblematic projects, namely four new community gardens, a self-managed project on an appropriated vacant lot, and a cooperative centre, and expounds on the shared origins, horizons and approaches of these projects. Section five discusses cross-cutting findings, arguing that Indignant prefiguration produced territories countering what Lefebvre called abstract space both during and after the square occupation, but a shift from diverted to counter-space took place due to limitations of *détournement*. From symbolising an alternative world in the square to the post-squares spaces building alternatives, the dialectical movement unfolded through three processes: experimentation, demonstration, and proliferation through open prefiguration. In the final section, we discuss the challenges the projects face in opening and scaling up.

2. Prefiguration and space

2.a Prefigurative politics

Prefigurative politics, or prefiguration, is an approach to activism and social change that inscribes the goals of the movement into its practices and activities, creating the (vision of) alternative society, both in the present, and through a future-oriented creation of alternatives. The concept lies at the intersection between several debates: anarchist and autonomist activism and theories of social change (Ince, 2012; Graeber, 2009), the new politics of the New Left (Maeckelbergh, 2011b), Gandhian non-violence and direct action (Franks, 2003; Carter, 1988), the women's and alter-globalization movements (Robnett, 1996; Maeckelbergh, 2011a; Graeber, 2002) and, more recently, the cycle of occupy protests (Maeckelbergh, 2012; Smucker, 2013; Pickerill and Krinsky, 2012; Simsa and Totter, 2017; Naegler, 2018; Reinecke, 2018). The anarchist origins of the concept can be traced back to Landauer (2010:188), who advocated disengagement from existing modes of social organization and reconstruction through the creation of alternatives (Day, 2005) and to Kropotkin's (1912) proposal to enact the social relationships we desire immediately instead of waiting for the revolution. This resonates with the idea of building the new world "in the shell of the old" (Day, 2005; Ince, 2012). Boggs (1977) and Maeckelbergh (2011b) find resonance in 19th century anarchist ideas of syndicalist and council communists, the 1848 revolts, the 1871 Paris Commune and the Spanish Civil War.

Prefigurative politics consists of three connected dimensions (Yates, 2015):

1) a homology (and, for some, equivalence) between means and ends

This homology is connected to the rejection of hierarchy, premised on the idea that an egalitarian society cannot start from authoritarian organization (Franks, 2003). Personal transformation, living and practicing relationships, and political forms that embody the desired society, cannot be separated from structural change (Epstein, 1991; Breines, 1982). For some, there is a substantial equivalence of means and ends (Landauer, 2010:201), while others stress that there is rather a consistency or homology between means and movement goals (Yates, 2015; Swain, 2019). For critics like Breines (1982), the emphatic focus on means is typical of the New Left's "wariness of hierarchy and centralized organization". Nevertheless, in recent literature, there is a shared understanding that prefigurative politics is also strategic: through *experimentation* and horizontality, it creates the structures and processes necessary to collectively decide the goals of a movement (Maeckelbergh, 2011a; Swain, 2019). While prefiguration can recouple means and ends by aligning expressive and strategic politics, some highlight the challenges to effectively sustain prefigurative organizing in the face of entrenched social injustice (Polletta, 1999:12; Reinecke, 2018).

2) a foretaste of a future democratic society

In line with the means-ends conflation, prefiguration is, for some, 'synecdochic' because "it contains elements of the object it is representing" (Franks, 2003; Carter, 1988). Prefiguration here involves an action which is itself a model for the change one wishes to bring about (Graeber, 2009:210). Others however point out that prefigurative politics can only be future-oriented whenever it is not just simply synecdochic, given that this puts at risk part of the desired whole turning into an essential form of action and, hence, a fetish. It should instead be 'proleptic' (Swain, 2019; Yates, 2015). Prolepsis means that actions of a movement can enact or anticipate some feature of an alternative world, projecting themselves to a later stage of development, representing a future as already existing, "assuming it is possible before it is, in order to help make it so" (Swain, 2019:58). Behaving "as if" certain institutional conditions were already there, can reconstitute "what's real" (Cooper, 2020). In a generative temporal framing situated in forward-looking time, goals themselves are subject to constant critical (re)evaluation through *experimentation* (Swain, 2019; Gordon, 2018). As the Zapatistas say, "preguntando caminamos" ('asking, we walk').

3) building alternatives

The construction of alternatives builds on *experimentation* in mobilization and everyday activities, and on the proleptic (rather than synecdochic) enactment of the future. It is rendered effective through *proliferation* of similar practices and *demonstration* that alternatives are possible (Yates, 2015). Prefigurative politics espouses interstitial transformation, social change in the cracks of dominant

social structures of power involving transformation of values, accretion, the building of community (Wright, 2010; Breines, 1982; Epstein, 1991), and re-subjectivation in “real utopias” and alternative economic practices (Gibson-Graham, 2006; Monticelli, in press; Gordon, 2018). The focus of attention shifts from the destruction of capitalism to “building something else” (Holloway, 2010:50).

Following Lefebvre (1991:393), the “desire to ‘do’ something, thus to ‘create’, can only occur in a space – and hence through the production of a space”. However, while a few prefiguration studies have recognised that prefigurative politics is an “inherently spatial and performative genre of political activism” (Jeffrey and Dyson, 2020:5), an analysis of the intersection between space production and prefiguration has been missing. To better understand how prefiguration produces new spatialities and of what kind, we turn to a Lefebvrian understanding of space production.

2.b Lefebvre and differential spaces

For Lefebvre (1991), space is a social product. Each society and mode of production produces its own space. Social space is nowadays principally a commodity consumed, a means of production, and a means via which the bourgeoisie dominates (ibid: 26, 50, 337, 349). Space is “the weapon and the sign of class struggle” (Lefebvre, 1991:349, 109), whose production witnesses a deep conflict between the usage and appropriation of place for use value, and its domination through private ownership for exchange value. For Lefebvre, capitalism and processes of statecraft organize space as abstract space, which is fragmented, hierarchical, and aims to be homogenous, flattening out spatial diversity and imposing a logic of exchangeability. Fragmentation occurs by separating into specialised, isolated spaces, following the needs of the division of labour, for example by parcelling out housing from the space of leisure and work, and by segregating into ghettos. Abstract space is a repressive space, continuously attempting to destroy all that resists and can jeopardise its advance, that is differences (ibid:285). It seeks to dominate nature and reduce the particularities of places and of “the urban” (Lefebvre, 1980:78-79; Lefebvre, 2003). “Social demands and commands” are dictated by commerce, real estate, power and productive labour (ibid:380).

Class struggle, however, prevents abstract space from achieving absolute dominance, generating differences “which are not intrinsic to economic growth qua strategy, ‘logic’ or ‘system’” (ibid:55). A clash “between the productive consumption of space and one that produces only enjoyment, and is therefore unproductive”, can unfold (ibid:359). For Lefebvre, the struggle to differ is the common hidden thread across all struggles. Against identification with any ‘model’, ‘difference’ wills to be other and is already other (Lefebvre, 1980:31,60). Utopia means, in a proleptical fashion, resonating with prefigurative politics, “willing what is revealed by creating itself: difference” (ibid:111).

Appropriation and difference cannot be thought of or lived separately. Differential space is produced through

appropriation, as in the midst of uprisings. It involves an “inversion of the world” (Lefebvre, 1991:348, our translation) and of abstract space, the “shattering of a system” (ibid:372). Against fragmentation, differential space “restores unity to what abstract space breaks up: to the functions, elements and moments of social practice. It will put an end to those localizations which shatter the *integrity* of the individual body, the social body, the corpus of human needs, and the corpus of knowledge” (ibid:52). It is a space where life rhythms and times are lived (Leary-Owhin, 2016:273), and can eventually give rise to an architecture of pleasure and wisdom, of “community in the use of the gifts of the earth” (Lefebvre, 1991:379).

However, there are different types of differential space, emerging through differing practices. One of these is diverted space (*détournement*). This occurs when communities divert a homogenous existing space, reappropriating it for a different purpose than formerly, as in most “modern experiments in communal living” (ibid:380), so that a “theatricalized or dramatized space is liable to arise [...] by means of symbols and differential valorisations which overwhelm the strict localization of needs and desires in specialised spaces” (ibid:391). Several studies have interpreted occupations of squares as diverse as Tiananmen Square (Hershkovitz, 1993) and Occupy London Stock Exchange (Burgum, 2018) as temporary practices of *détournement* where artifacts, places and significations of the dominant culture were temporarily appropriated and transformed into symbolic forms, taking on new meanings.

We argue that the occupied Plaça Catalunya turned into a diverted space, accentuating differences and affirming the integrity of human needs by restoring unity to the “corpus of knowledge” and the “corpus of human needs” (Lefebvre, 1991:52) through what we refer to as a ‘mirroring integration’. Lefebvre’s theory on the shortcomings of *détournement* can further help us understand why the Indignados movement decided to leave the square and create new spatial forms. For Lefebvre, the previous purpose of diverted space conditions the form, function and structure of the new space. Such an inappropriate spatial morphology will most likely determine a ‘loss of impetus’ and failure of *détournement*. Lefebvre is clear that *détournement* only ends domination temporarily because it does not entail a *creation*, only a reappropriation (ibid:168). He emphasises that differential forces “often hold a defensive stance, they resist” (Lefebvre, 1980:30), and manifest themselves through spontaneity. The forces of homogenization, in contrast, seek to absorb differences, and “will succeed if these retain a defensive posture and no counterattack is mounted from their side” (ibid:373).

Counter-space is another, more important type of differential space, which occupies a central place in the Lefebvrian project for an ‘other’ society. For Lefebvre, the “project for a different society” should take the “road of the concrete” via “active theoretical and practical negation, via counter-projects or counterplans”, embodied in ‘counter-spaces’ (ibid:419). It is here that an inventive capacity (also in a morphological sense) unfolds and “differential forces” with “a radical critique of the political realm, politics and the state” (ibid:387, our translation) mount an offensive strategy (Lefebvre, 1980:30). They emerge as “initially Utopian alternatives to actually existing ‘real’ space” (Lefebvre, 1991:349), for example, “when a community fights the

construction of urban motorways or housing developments, or when it demands 'amenities' or empty spaces for play and encounter" (ibid:381). They involve a collective management of space "against specialized spaces and a narrow localization of function" (ibid) and entail relationships with different groups "with their multiple, varied and even contradictory interests" (ibid:419,422). They may even form "unlikely alliances" (ibid:380) between, for example, radical groups and others defending "their privileged spaces, their gardens and parks" (ibid:381).

Counter-spaces can exert "pressure grounded in spatial practice" to modify the "distribution of the portion of social surplus production allotted to society's collective 'interests'" (ibid:383). They can confront the state as organizer of space by thwarting its strategies and plans imposed from above. Struggling for concrete objectives, "local powers" (ibid:382) can force authorities to take their counter-projects into account, opposing a real democracy to administrative rationality (Lefebvre 1991:420; 2009a:250). This could lead to wider, radical revolt (ibid:235). Counter-spaces can constitute a leeway to slowly change everyday life (a similar concern of prefigurative politics) through collective management of the space (Lefebvre, 1991:422). Several recent political geography studies have analysed counters-spaces, in the form of occupied spaces, as collective world-making through the articulation of an alternative, subaltern urbanism (Vasudevan, 2015a, 2015b) or "vernacular architectures" characterised by makeshift forms of inhabiting the city and alternative "techno-popular knowledges" (Minuchin, 2016:904). What is still lacking is an understanding of how counter-spaces can emerge as prefiguratively linked to social mobilizations. In the next section we combine the two strands of theoretical foundations, to develop the concept of prefigurative territories.

2.c Prefigurative territories

The prefigurative politics of movements can give rise to new processual spaces through appropriation. Our proposition here is that, as a social movement develops, prefigurative politics may evolve through space production from a homology between means and ends and a foretaste of the desired future, to the third more powerful dimension of prefiguration, i.e. the building of alternatives. This happens through a movement of preservation of the first two components (*first prefigurative moment*) but further realization and becoming into the third dimension (*second prefigurative moment*), which resonates with Lefebvre's dialectical thought (see Goonewardena et al., 2008:31). Diverted spaces characterise the first prefigurative moment (means-ends consistency and prolepsis), while the second prefigurative moment (creating alternatives) gives rise to counter-spaces. This dialectical movement materialises with the processual generation of spaces and the evolution from ephemeral, diverted space, i.e., the square encampment, to the creative production of post-square counter-spaces where the "project for a different society" takes an offensive "road of the concrete" (Lefebvre,1991:419) by setting specific objectives and counter-plans.

'Prefigurative territories', in our conceptualisation, mean the spaces produced by each of the two different moments of prefiguration, following a decolonial and processual reading of territory for which we are indebted

to Lefebvre, Claude Raffestin, and the Latin American movements and debates. More particularly, we follow Halvorsen's open definition of territory as "the appropriation of space in pursuit of political projects" (Halvorsen, 2019:791). This is "the ground upon which struggle unfolds" (Arampatzi, 2017b:48), involving both state- and capital-centred strategies to exercise domination, and bottom-up attempts to appropriate space beyond state sovereignty, modern private property and exchange value (Halvorsen,2019). This builds, first, upon Lefebvre, for whom territory represents a historically specific form of social space, enabling and resulting from processes of statecraft to make space manageable and calculable (Brenner & Elden, 2009; Elden, 2010). For Lefebvre, territory is not only a space produced by the state. It witnesses and is the result of a confrontation between the state's production of national territory as an abstract grid and the configuration of territory as the stake, site and dimension of social struggles for *autogestion* and social reproduction (Lefebvre, 2009a:134; see also Halvorsen 2015; Brenner and Elden, 2009). Our understanding of territory also follows largely from Raffestin's (2019) performative and relational conception of territory. He sees territory as linked to the notion of project, as a space where work (energy or information) has been applied, and as a manifestation of social relations marked by power. His conceptualisation anticipates later developments in geography by questioning the opposition between networks and territories and by de-centring the debate on territory from state power (Schneider and Peyré Tartaruga, 2006). For Raffestin territory implies some boundaries, even if porous (Raffestin, 2019; see also Delaney, 2009).

Finally, we borrow from a strand of the Latin American debate that sees territory as an "arena of dispute" (López-Sandoval et al., 2017) between global and local forces, a potential actor for social change in the face of perverse globalisation and neoliberalisation (Santos, 1996; Manzanal, 2006; López-Sandoval et al., 2017) based on a "collective fundament" of "experiential assertion of social groups to space through collectivity and appropriation (López-Sandoval et al., 2017; Escobar, 2008). Terms such as 'de-territorialisation' and 're-territorialisation' refer here to the loss or seizure of control over territory resulting from power conflicts linked to processes of globalization or proletarianization, and to appropriation and resignification practices by social movements and communities, respectively. The constitution of territories is important because they involve subaltern modes of inhabiting ontological alternatives and counter-hegemonic arenas of social experimentation with new forms of (self-)managing the economy, health, education, politics and culture, and relationships of reciprocity with other living beings (Wahren 2011; Escobar,2008; Asara, 2020). This links with the role of autogestion for Lefebvre, which, in a means-ends consistency relationship, is for him both the means and the end (Lefebvre, 2009:194) as everyday life is transformed through intervention in the space and in the realm of social needs (Lefebvre, 1976:124; 2009:193).

Spanish and Catalan literature underlines the recent increase in 'territorial conflicts'. These follow on from a growing distrust of institutional forms of democratic representation and a growing concern for local identity and quality of life that new urban development plans threaten when seen against a background of changes in governance that push urban growth, increase integration in global flows and competition between cities (Nello,

2003; Del Romero, 2014). The territorial conflicts born after the global economic crisis have witnessed a diversification and complexification of grievances and claims that go far beyond opposition to specific plans and involve a proactive critique of how the city is ruled and for whom (Del Romero, 2014). The Indignados movement is a paradigmatic case of such a shift (ibid) that project a “re-territorialisation of politics” (Arampatzi, 2017b:48; Halvorsen, 2012). Here, “prefigurative” territories underscore the processual features of territory as a “contested product of social relations” (Ince, 2012:1645), “never complete but always becoming” (Painter, 2010: 1094), constantly “in tension between the present and the future, the actual and the possible” (Ince, 2012:1653). It signifies the struggle these movements are prefiguratively waging for difference, a world “other”, living the values they wish to be hegemonic.

The evolution from diverted to counter-space resonates with Badiou’s (2012) fidelity to the inaugural event. In our case, we show how the prefigurative territories after the square kept the imprint of Plaça Catalunya’s social practices and imaginaries, but evolved into something new. In the square’s diverted space radical imaginaries were synecdochically and proleptically reproduced in a “mirroring integration” of the square’s social reproduction and abstract discussions about the “world to be”. In the post-square counter-spaces alternative visions, à la Lefebvre, “difference”, were concretely implemented (non-ephemerally) in an offensive strategy contesting the state as the organizer of space, while retaining the means-ends consistency and its proleptical dimensions.

The strategic dimension of prefigurative politics lies in collectively determining the way forward through *experimentation* (Maeckelbergh, 2011a), but also through a vision of transformational change, in a “highly conscious and theoretically-informed manner” (Simsa and Trotter,2017:291) and set of concrete objectives typical of counter-spaces. Mounting a counter-attack through territorial self-management, counter-spaces can force authorities to take into account their counter-plans, while engaging in *demonstration* and *proliferation* through ‘open prefiguration’ (Dhaliwal, 2012:268). Open prefiguration engages with diverse groups with multiple, often contradictory, interests (Lefebvre, 1991:380), possibly leading to conflicts and internal and external (re)politicization. This will ensure that prefigurative territories never become ‘insular enclaves’ (Dhaliwal, 2012) or isolated, closed, inward-looking communities (Reinecke, 2018:1302; Karaliotas, 2017:14). How do these ideas then explain the material reality of the occupied square and the projects that followed?

3. Plaça Catalunya: The space of an occupied Square

The Barcelona encampment began on 16 May 2011, one day after the attempted eviction of the protesters from Madrid’s Puerta del Sol. One hundred and fifty people took part in the first assembly, proclaiming the Square a ‘free and pacific space’. The first assemblies were “very improvised [talks]; people going up to the microphone and shouting words” (I13:17). A car in the middle of the square provided electricity for stage

equipment attached to it. After the initial excitement and chaos, the Square “look(ed) like a Moroccan ‘souk’, with so many people looking for something although there was not much to search for” (I24:471). Activists divided the central square into three spaces for “open forum and discussions”, symbolically named Tahrir, Iceland and Palestine. The General Assembly became the organ for deciding on issues linked to the management of the Square, with autonomous commissions multiplying day by day, responding to the needs of a swelling encampment (see Figure 1).

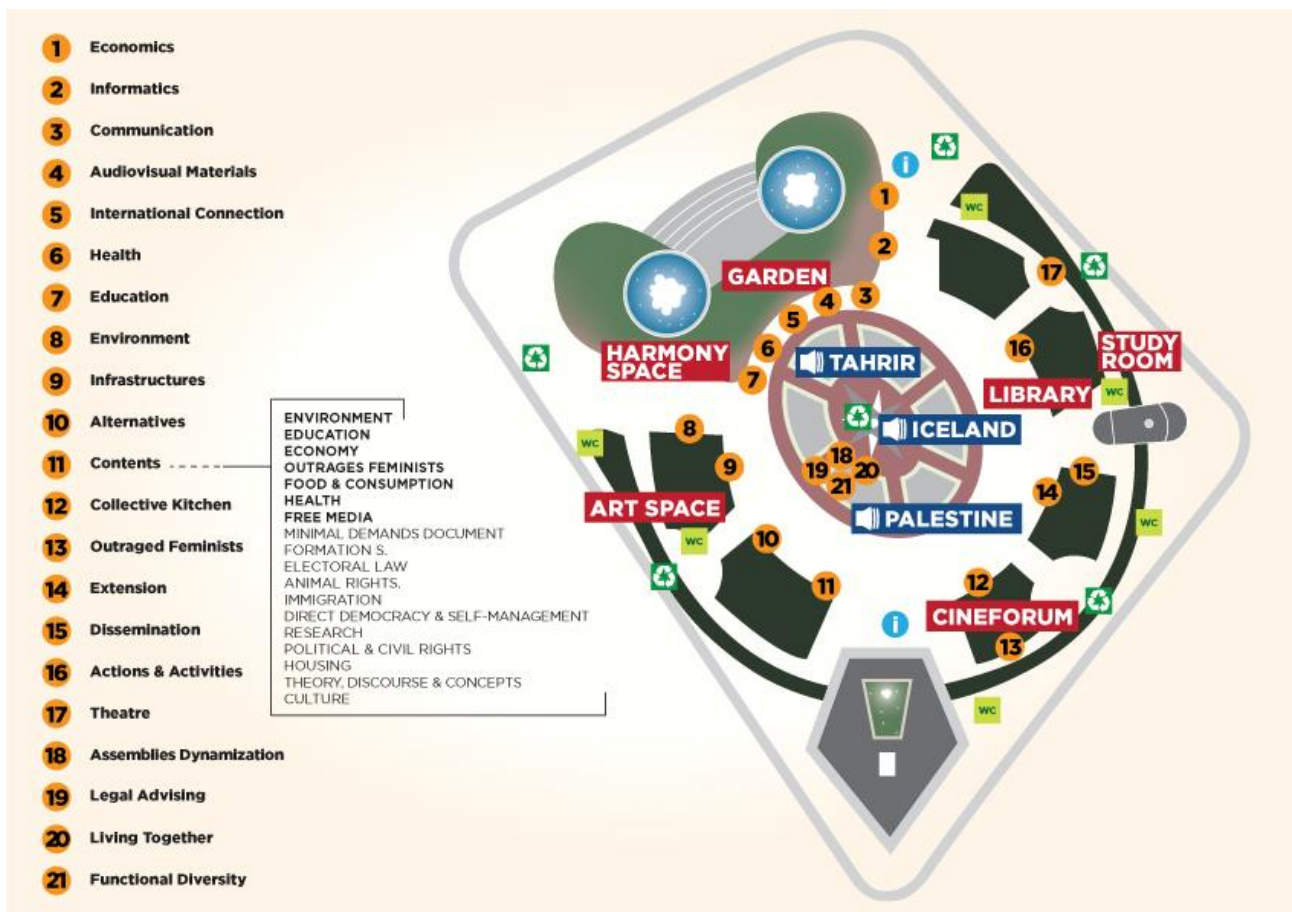


Figure 1. The Square

The Square gradually turned into a Lefebvrian diverted space “theatricalized” and “eroticised by means of symbols and differential valorisations” beyond the “strict localization of needs and desires” (Lefebvre, 1991:391). Participants called it a “micro-cosmos” of “imagination and creativity” (I19:616), “a space for experimenting” (I79), synecdochically combining psychophysical and social needs, and artistic and cultural expressions. The first commissions, each with its tent in the space, realized the proleptic dimension, enacting the future world in the present, while securing the social reproduction of the Square. A Kitchen Commission provided food to everyone volunteering their contributions, avoiding the use of plastic dishes. An Environment Commission demanded an ecological encampment: it organized recycling and cleaned the Square. An Economics Commission managed the money collected from donations, and an Infrastructure Commission set

up the technical facilities, such as the bathrooms, green electricity from cycling dynamos and solar panels powering the stage. An Activities Commission coordinated speeches, concerts, and other events, set up a library with donated books, allocated cinema discussion space and designated an art gallery with canvases and sculptures. An Education Commission operated a children's playground and set up a study room next to the Theatre tent so that "students can study here in the square"[1]. The Health Commission offered first aid, natural therapies and psychological help. A Living Together Commission diverted conflicts, organised laughing therapy sessions and massages in a Harmony Space, next to the Community Garden. Just as Lefebvre envisioned, the square became a "dramatized space" (Lefebvre, 1991:391) where life rhythms and times were lived, a space "to relieve yourself, where everyone brought to the table the emotions she was carrying"(I79). Poetry reading was one of the most emotional moments, featuring renowned Catalan leftist poets.

Reminiscent of Lefebvre, a 'mirroring integration' was established between the corpus of knowledge and the corpus of social needs. The division of commissions and spaces charged with organizing the encampment was paralleled a few days later with a similar distribution of sub-commissions within the Contents Commission, i.e. the one charged with producing the texts and demands of the movement (see Figure 1). The commissions responsible for the management of the square focused on reproductive tasks, e.g., the Environment Commission took care of cleaning the square, while their Content counterparts organised theoretical discussions and produced manifestos, e.g., the Environment Sub-Commission discussed environmental problems and policies. Abstract reflections (Lefebvre's corpus of knowledge) about the society to be were integrated with practices of social reproduction (Lefebvre's social body and corpus of human needs).

However, *détournement* implies some clear limitations. The crowds had destroyed the flowerbed of the square by treading on them, so a group of activists, the Garden Group, replanted the damaged 60 square metre plot with edible plants, creating the square community garden. This modified public property and the Legal and Environmental Commissions were worried that the authorities could use this as a legal infringement to order evictions. They questioned its existence and raised the possibility of its removal. As a diverted space, the square's spatial morphology jeopardised activists' creative capacity. The Garden Group had to write a letter and manifesto explaining "what is the point of a garden in Plaça Catalunya". The garden, they claimed, was "a *symbolic* space to reflect on urban agroecology and the necessity to change the agro-food model" (I41) through collective creation, making possible "another city, a city with more gardens and less banks, with more common spaces and less privatizing speculation" [...] "(A) real democracy cannot exist if [...] the control of our food is in the hands of multinationals" (15M Garden Group, 2011). A "coherent space" builds consistency between process and claims for structural political change, means and ends. "Crowning the square's beautiful assemblearian abstractions", the garden "reduce(d) the distance between our ideas and our acts", showing that "we are capable of self-managing what we demand"(ibid). The garden was synecdochically prefigurative, as a participant powerfully explains,

“Plaça Catalunya was a micro-cosmos of alternatives. There had to be a garden to explain that [...] the power we have is also to decide what we eat and produce, no? That we could also come full circle in the Square, produce what we would eat in the collective kitchen.”(I40:132).

4. After the square

“We have to widen the movement to other places. We changed the face of Plaça Catalunya, but we can change the face of all Catalunya and of all Spain” (GA square participant)

Already since the first days of the occupation of the square, participants began to debate the need for the movement to leave the square and decentralise to the neighbourhoods, the when and the how. This would have been the beginning of the new phase of ‘creation of alternatives’, which became a mantra of square discussions. Indeed, the challenges of continuous activism in the square and the (morphological à la Lefebvre) unsuitability of Plaça Catalunya as the space to enact transformative change was obvious to participants, as epitomised by the obstacles posed to the small square garden. The square was ceasing to be viewed as a “panacea”, enthusiasm was fading, abstract discussions could not lead to anything tangible or enduring in the square, and the encampments were attracting homeless and needy people benefiting from the free food provided by the Kitchen Commission and a nice sleeping site. The prefigurative territory of the square was revealing the limits of a symbolic space. After less than three weeks’ occupation, the GA decided on the post-square phase of mobilisation (see Asara, 2016 for more details). Following Lefebvre, we can read this development as activists’ awareness of the intrinsic limits of *détournement*. After less than a year since the movement’s decentralisation, neighbourhood assemblies began to lose their initial dynamism. They focussed exclusively on political discussions and the organisation of actions, that led to a lack of groundedness in the concrete and everyday appropriation of spaces. Soon, new place-based projects were emerging in their bosom (ideationally and then concretely), attracting energy and people, and showing the importance of territories for prefiguration.

In this section and the next, we follow the aftermath of the square in the following projects: in the urban gardens of the Poble Nou and Raval neighbourhoods; in ‘Recreant Cruïlles’ (RC), a re-appropriated vacant lot in the neighbourhood of Nova Esquerra de l’Eixample; and in ‘Ateneu Cooperatiu La Base’(LB), a cooperative social centre in the neighbourhood of Poble Sec,. These cases exemplify post-square Indignant projects; they are diverse in terms of activist background, social class, landed property and neighbourhood, enabling a multi-perspective approach. All are neighbourhoods in the centre of Barcelona. All are working class inner city quarters with a considerable immigrant presence, experiencing gentrification by professionals and tourism. Most core participants in Raval, Poble Nou or Poble Sec were unemployed or precarious salaried workers in their late 20s and 30s, facing rising rents and costs of living. This had a bearing on the type of alternatives being created (Cruz et al, 2017). The projects performed a ‘double role’ (Arampatzi, 2017a) of both answering the ideals of radical socio-economic change and the need to create resilience support mechanisms, offering,

for example, support with child caring or employment opportunities. Eixample, a middle-class neighbourhood with pockets of high income, was the exception. Its demographic was older, with more middle-class people oriented to quality-of-life considerations. We present the projects here.

All projects we studied were spin-offs of the square: territories that prefiguratively allowed alternative forms of inhabitation and practicing the relationships of economy, politics, culture and society through specific 'projects' in both a Raffestinian and Lefebvrian sense. In October 2011, the 'Garden Commission' of the indignados assembly of the Poblenou neighbourhood squatted an empty lot of 1,000 square metres, creating the first indignados urban community garden catering for about 20 families, followed by two more indignados gardens. Our other case study, the Xino Garden in Raval, preceded the occupation, but the Square brought new recruits and renewed activity. As with the gardens of Poble Nou, the decision to occupy and transform RC, a vacant 5,500 square metre urban lot owned by the municipality, also came from the Eixample Indignados' neighbourhood assembly. Similarly LB, an umbrella project hosting different sub-projects in a rented building with more than 150 members, was conceived in autumn 2012 in one of the Poble Sec Indignados' assembly commissions. These prefigurative territories became possible because of the bequests of previous social movements (Fominaya, 2017), including from the neighbourhood movement (Castells, 1983), the squatters' and alter-globalization movements (Martínez and García, 2015). LB, for example, emerged from the convergence of the Indignados with the students' and squatters' movements. The imaginary of the square, and later the projects, were strongly imbued with ideas of Barcelona's rich anarchist and cooperative past (see Asara, 2020).

The projects we studied had different tenure arrangements, different degrees of conflict, and different levels of engagement with authorities and the market. The community gardens squatted private space; LB rented it from the market. The activists there, some with a squatting background, sought a degree of permanence, free to develop their projects without being vulnerable to the insecurity of being labelled an illegal occupation, which would have acted as "a brake for the projects, an obstacle for advancing" (I52:465). Despite "continu(ing) to question the private property regime" (I49:287), the activists decided on renting to sustain the project, with rents paid through members' fees and a quota from the earnings of the remunerative sub-projects. RC, on the other hand, was situated on a previously-disused public lot, operating since 2013 under a use lease from the municipality. Since autumn 2011, activists mounted a campaign of public events, participatory seminars and assemblies with neighbours to discuss ways to appropriate the fenced lot and what projects to implement. They eventually applied to a call from the municipality for community organizations to lease disused public land with programs to self-manage it. The leased space was part of the disused lot (580 square metres), but was intended as a 'Trojan horse' (I75) for appropriating the whole 5,500 square metres.

Activists in RC, as in the other cases, aimed to produce a counter-space, a territory from which to launch a broader transformation in the neighbourhoods and in the city, generating alternative urbanisms. In 2006, the municipality had promised to build public housing and two schools on the lot. The project was intended to

generate momentum and press the municipality to deliver the facilities quickly, while creating a new green cultural space in the abandoned lot. The production of this counter-space involved a Lefebvrian articulation of “unlikely alliances” (Lefebvre, 1991:380) of diverse actors, e.g. the Association of Students’ Parents, environmental groups, and the Neighbourhood Association, which the activists joined to enable them to apply for the municipality’s call that required juridical standing. Operating since January 2014, the project includes a permaculture community garden and spaces for cultural and social activities. It is envisaged as a spur for broader planning modifications in the neighbourhood, including pedestrianization and the creation of the first square.

We observe a multi-functionality (or Lefebvrian integration) in all projects, combining (re)productive and ‘unproductive’ spaces for play and encounter (Lefebvre, 1991:382) with political or intellectual activities. In the gardens, participants grew food, held assemblies, and organized concerts, communal meals, activities for children and workshops. Rather than just being “productive spaces”, activists envisaged their community gardens as “agro-cultural spaces” (I40), where people could enjoy cultural activities together in a green space in the middle of the city. The Poblenou garden served as a launching site for denouncing housing speculation and evictions propelled by the housing crisis that affected the lives of the neighbours.

LB was not only a social space, but was also a project for self-employment, for organizing political action, and envisaged to establish a self-managed economic infrastructure in the neighbourhood. The building opened in January 2014, after a collective ‘moment of construction’ (Minuchin, 2016:896), where shared objectives and principles were defined, such as community, autonomy, equity, solidarity and permaculture, and a common fund was established to pay for non-remunerative activities. The nine LB sub-projects comprise a consumers’ cooperative of 40 families, a communitarian canteen, a catering cooperative, a bar (all four projects use local agro-ecological food), a 3,000-book library, a co-maternity and shared nursing group for 30 families committed to free education principles, and a ‘Crafts Ateneu’ providing training and services on carpentry, construction, and electrical work. LB’s weekly agenda includes social, cultural and political activities, from monthly second-hand barter markets to managing a local newspaper and organizing seminars. LB participates with 60 more entities in an anti-gentrification campaign to stop the city’s new neighbourhood plan.

As our LB interlocutors argued, the local dimension enables them to “bring the revolution to our everyday life” (I49) and to create and sustain a “base” (therein the name), rooted in community and autonomous economic structures. LB participants share an ideological commitment to the overarching goal of ‘cooperativism’ and ‘cooperative neighbourhood’, i.e. a self-managed solidarity infrastructure based on cooperation among neighbours, aimed at “satisfying all aspects of our lives”(I49:388), gradually building a political counterpower in the neighbourhood, and, subsequently, the city. Participants strive to put into practice the common principles in their everyday life in a type of means-ends consistency. For example, the permaculture principle, a symbiotic connection with nature and its rhythms, is followed in the use of ‘agroecological’ food for the canteen and catering, and ecological materials and methods for building refurbishment.

As with LB, a concrete production of the vision of a cooperative neighbourhood, the RC project exemplifies for participants the shift of the Indignados movement to a proactive attitude “from protest to proposal and from proposal to action”(I69:38). Instead of only making demands on the state, they acted to realize these demands, demonstrating that “a different model of a city”(I69) is possible. They want a city with less cars and more space for pedestrians and they proleptically put this into practice, for example, by closing the surrounding streets to traffic for the day of the monthly ‘Market of the (agro-ecological) Peasants’. Similarly, activists in the urban gardens do not work there solely to meet their needs. They also work there because of a long-term dream to supply the city with food through (peri)urban agriculture. The gardens are a proleptic production of this future in a concrete place. They are the space that infuses the productive with the reproductive, the present with the future, the symbolic with the material. Different from the square orchard, post-square gardens are a long-term alternative and not an ephemeral space.

5. The prospects and tensions of prefigurative territories

We make two arguments in this article, bridging Lefebvrian theory on the production of space with prefigurative politics literature. Firstly, prefigurative politics is interwoven with re-appropriating space and producing new space, in a symbiotic relationship that we called prefigurative territories, which counter the homogeneity and fragmentation of abstract space. In the Indignados movement, the prefiguration of an alternative world produced new space both in and after the square. Secondly, prefigurative politics within the Indignados movement from the first two dimensions of prefiguration, the synecdochic-proleptic and the means-ends consistency (first prefigurative moment), in the encampments, evolved to the third dimension, the creation of alternatives (second prefigurative moment), in the spin-off projects, that nonetheless preserved the first two components (with an emphasis on prolepsis rather than synecdoche). This dialectical movement was made possible through three processes: experimentation, demonstration, and proliferation through open prefiguration. While the first moment produced diverted space with an ephemeral symbolization of alternative imaginaries, the second moment produced counter-spaces building alternatives. We go into these two arguments more closely below.

The settlements in the square diverted a commercial hub, a quintessential abstract space, and a centre of city life (Martinez and Garcia, 2015). The square’s prefigurative politics involved production and intervention onto the space; the square encampment was a breeding ground for Lefebvrian differences through a *détournement* of a “space of capitalism” (Lefebvre, 1991:360), but this materiality was contingent and symbolic. Plaça Catalunya was “a micro-cosmos of alternatives”, as an activist put it. The children’s playground, the community garden, the poetry readings: all were synecdochic of the alternative society; one where solidarity, cooperation and sharing, equality, autonomy and self-management, ecological visions, artistic and cultural sensibilities, caring and creative expressions were moulded through experimentation. The Square was a

differential space “restoring unity” to “the functions, elements and moments of social practice” (Lefebvre, 1991:52), satisfying the needs of its daily reproduction, from psychophysical well-being to food, “coming full circle” through the community garden “eating what we cultivate”, and showing that “local, seasonal, ecological agriculture managed by the producers” is possible (15M Garden Group, 2011). However, the square’s previous purpose and spatial morphology acted as a hindrance for the spatial creation of alternatives, as the letter substantiating the square’s garden shows. Participants could not implement their “projects” in a Raffestinian and Lefebvrian sense, more than in a symbolic manner or in an ephemeral form which was limited to the square’s everyday social reproduction. This could only be done by creating new space via counter-spaces. Lefebvre’s theory helps to capture how participants strategized the type of evolution of the movement after the square (leaving the square intentionally), as well as the type of space being produced.

Similar to the square’s diverted space, the post-square prefigurative territories countered abstract space, its violent thrust towards flattening out spatial diversity, its fragmentation and its segregation serving exchange value. For example, RC activists referred to their living space as an “alienated neighbourhood” (I73), “a neighbourhood with fast roads, few parks and no squares, and no feeling of belonging to a neighbourhood” (I73). The second prefigurative moment also allowed the building of enduring counter-spaces pursuing prefigurative political projects. These are territories that, different from the square, freely involve constant modification and intervention onto the space materialities. As an activist of the Xino garden put it:

“You decide everything about the space. Indeed the Xino garden has been transforming itself every year, changing elements and things, and this means that when you produce a space, you appropriate more of it, you want to take care of it and you feel it is yours”(I40).

In the RC permaculture garden, activists cultivated a small space for Mediterranean aromatic medicinal plants favouring environmental biodiversity and attracting butterflies, and created a small pond for toads, while vegetables and fruit trees were planted in the portion of land not leased, to reclaim it. From bio-construction to art performances, counter-spaces “create alternatives for which there is a need on the part of people, open way out spaces for things that the system does not give you, [...] for people that want to do and create things“ (I43). Activists strive to produce unproductive space for enjoyment and rest, to play and encounter. As a garden participant recounted, counter-spaces are “a small paradise” holding “a playful dimension”(I42):

“Coming here, on a summer afternoon ... the afternoon comes along and you don’t even realise it, nor have you consumed, nor stayed in front of the television watching rubbish, nor on the internet, hooked like a drug addict... It is a space to enjoy”(I42).

Compared to the square’s diverted space, where the synecdochic dimension took central stage, in the post-

square projects, an offensive stance is taken setting clear objectives to struggle against the state's abstract organization of space, attempting to thwart its top-down urban plans and strategies through alternative urbanism proposals:

“We want to build a neighbourhood, and do things that the city has taken from us. We want to have an impact from the bottom on urban planning, that citizens can build a counter-power, in the case of urbanism, to the urban planners, to the city council, to those that design the city top-down”(I73).

Other counter-spaces similarly exert “pressure grounded in spatial practice” (Lefebvre, 1991:382) and hold a broader strategic transformational vision that goes well beyond the bounds of their immediate territory, contributing to what Aramatzis (2017b:51) called ‘struggle communities’. LB activists oppose the city's new plans for the neighbourhood and yearn to create a “cooperative neighbourhood”. The Poblenou community gardens were squatted to counter housing speculation and urbanism dictated by real estate priorities rather than by the needs of “community users” (Lefebvre, 1991:360). As with the other gardens, it attempts to enact a different agro-food system. -How then, does this dialectical movement from the first to the second prefigurative moment occur, and, correspondingly, from diverted to counter-space? We found that this occurs through three different processes that are outlined below.

- *Experimentation* bridges the first two dimensions (the first prefigurative moment) to the third component of prefigurative politics (the second prefigurative moment). Experiments consistent with their ends are developed within the bounds of “a pragmatic desire to maintain and build alternative projects” (Chatterton and Pickerill, 2010:480) adapted to everyday constraints, but always entailing self-reflection and a continuous work of self-definition. As one LB participant told us:

“we will not be able to change things if we do not organize ourselves in a way that is an image of what we want to do and that strengthens us. Otherwise we won't be able to change the existing order, and we would only be able to reproduce it” (I48:72).

LB attempts to implement an urban cooperative economy combining activism with self-employment. The ecological construction works, and the use of agro-ecological products and self-employment are prime examples in LB of an experimental “living according to alternative values”. In LB, the moment of construction was essential in defining the project's common principles, namely it “inform[ed] the crafting of political imaginations” (Minuchin,2016:906). A group of architects in the community gardens experimented with “bioconstruction” (I43) and other types of “vernacular architectures” (ibid:904) characterised by makeshift and ecological approaches to construction. The multifunctionality of counter-spaces reconnects different spaces: of work and non-work, of everyday life and the environment (Lefebvre, 1991:382, 59) through a form of “everyday politics” (I40).

- The building of alternatives occurs through a concern for *demonstration*. As one RC participant mentioned, referring to the activities and celebrations that closed the traffic in adjacent streets:

“(our objective is) to demonstrate not so much discursively, but in the daily practice by occupying space...that it is indeed possible that the neighbourhood is really pedestrianized and experiment with what this would imply” (I69:34).

Born as an “initially Utopian alternative to actual existing 'real' space” (Lefebvre, 1991:349), the projects seek to demonstrate the “impossible-possible” (Lefebvre, 1980:111), that the alternatives proposed are “not at all utopic” (I50:246, LB). In LB, demonstration connects to history through collaboration and dissemination of the research work of the cooperative ‘La Ciutat Invisible’ on the history of cooperativism in Barcelona, demonstrating that the radical cooperativism of the 1930s was not a “marginal alternative”, but one that can be part of the future.

- Two other important concerns of post-square projects are *proliferation* through *open prefiguration*, that is, the continuous opening up of the territories to the wider neighbourhood (Dhaliwal, 2012). The projects keep detailed and freely-accessible information of their activity. Emerging out of the confluence of diverse movements and groups, they actively seek to change their neighbourhoods and see ‘opening up’ as a vital strategy for not turning into “insular enclaves” (ibid). Activists in the Xino garden, for example, purposely advertised and opened their project to the quarter. In Poble Nou, after the success of the first garden, activists occupied two other nearby lots, responding to neighbours’ needs and demands. In a related way, the RC project was based on proactive inclusiveness from its outset, involving citizens and environmental organizations. The cartoon painted on the entrance door of the occupied lot declares: “this space is yours”. LB, although housed in a rented property, was also conceived as a space for the wider neighbourhood, has an open membership policy, and is used by other collectives. Following Lefebvre, prefigurative territories are interstices in the centre of the city which can endure as counter-spaces only as long as they are capable of building alliances among diverse social groups.

Opening up to the wider non-activist environment inevitably involves tensions with residents and other groups who may not share the political objectives or ambitions of the core activists who started a project. The question is not whether there is conflict but whether conflict is productively renewing politics, or, instead, leading to a stalemate. In Poble Nou, many new participants were not linked to the Indignados movement, and did not care to protest against gentrification and housing speculation, nor did they share a communitarian ethic. As one founding participant put it, they merely wanted “a piece of land to cultivate” (I44:25). As conflict bred, core activists produced a “Handbook of the Good Orchard” to define the minimal behaviours with which participants should comply to continue to use the garden (i.e., taking care of the orchard and participating in

the assemblies). Open prefiguration engendered a conflict that led to a repoliticization of community gardening through a resolution that, although fragile, implied the imposition of one of two parties' interests over the other, and inevitably the exclusion of a few.

When the garden assembly reached out from the activist core in the Xino garden, it attracted new recruits without a previous activist background, many motivated only by the enjoyment of a pleasant neighbourhood space, rather than by “a radical critique of the political realm, politics and the state” (Lefebvre, 1991:387, our translation), e.g., of the agro-food model. As one activist complained, they “did not get assembly dynamics” (I40) and were not following established farming rules. A clash between old and new participants ensued over “who is going to impose their vision about the garden”, or ultimately “whose garden is this” (I40:743). After a period of conflict, the assembly decided to organize a day of formation and debate to discuss “how we all would like the garden to be”. Veteran participants explained the workings of assembly processes, and shared farming knowledge. They discussed rules about practical matters, adjusting and accommodating the rules where necessary to the expectations of new participants. In this case, the conflict resolution involved confluence and compromise.

In RC, too, there were two parties with diverging interests. The core Indignados activists wanted the whole lot to become a green area. They proposed placing planned public facilities in other vacant public buildings in the neighbourhood, and so avoiding the construction of new facilities. On the other hand, the more traditional neighbourhood association and the parents' group perceived the green area as a transitory instrument only to pressure the municipality into constructing the promised facilities. This was a latent conflict-in-process during fieldwork, whose eventual resolution we could not follow. In LB, inclusion meant accommodating the viewpoints of diverse internal groups. For example, tension occurred during the refurbishment of the building between environmental activists on the one hand and participants of the squatter and student movement on the other about carrying out the work in a more ecological manner (using lime mortar, organic paint, and plasterboard), which was time- and cost-intensive. Through deliberations, environmentalists convinced the rest of the group to abide by a permaculture principle in its everyday actions. Conflict may lead to the exclusion of some people in some cases, and, in others, to compromise, creative solutions or renewed politicization. There is no automatic opening-up; it has to be proactively worked out. Whatever their outcome, conflict is the necessary fruit of relationships between diverse groups and the “unlikely alliances” of counter-spaces (Lefebvre, 1991:380), which are, themselves, indispensable for establishing enduring political projects for these territories.

Our fieldwork was undertaken during the early life of these prefigurative territories and their dynamism may fade with time if the activist cores become more endogamic and detached from local residents. Prefigurative territories face constraints: limited time, burn-out, and economic difficulties, such as those affecting the self-employed LB cooperativists. This may limit engagement with people in the neighbourhood despite aspirations for broader change at the city level. While the means-ends consistency is sought, prefigurative politics can entail pragmatic negotiations and contradictions, such as paying rent or doing remunerated work, creating a

“sense of living between worlds: the one they are struggling against and the one they are trying to achieve” (Pickerill and Chatterton, 2006:737). We partly see these contradictions as linked to the ‘open character’ of their prefiguration. For example, the decision to rent the space in LB is associated with the concern of ensuring permanency for the sake of sub-project advancement and groundedness in the territory. The cost of rent could be paid through the fees of the 150 members involved in LB, thus minimising the risk that similar projects encounter of “clos[ing] down due to (an) inability to pay rent” (Bresnihan and Byrne, 2015:49). While their eventual success or failure depends on their articulation with broader processes of political-institutional change (see Varvarousis et al 2021), here our interest is not in an overall assessment of the transformational potential of prefigurative territories, but in a better understanding of their processual dynamic.

6. Conclusion

In this paper, we sought to understand how and why the prefiguration of social movements produces specific spatial forms. More particularly, by combining the prefigurative politics literature with Lefebvrian theories on space production via the concept of prefigurative territories, we show how prefigurative territories in the Indignados movement evolved from the first two dimensions of prefigurative politics, the means-ends consistency and the proleptic/synecdochic enactment of the future, to the third more powerful building of alternatives, producing two different types of Lefebvrian differential spaces: diverted spaces and counter-spaces.

This paper is based on one of only a few studies undertaken on the concrete materialities of place-based projects of the movement of the squares. We argue that Indignant prefigurative territories are counter-spaces from which a broader offensive strategy is mounted, while contributing to a transformation of everyday life. For Lefebvre, “even the most *seemingly insignificant* [counter-space], shake existing space to its foundations, along with its strategies and aims - namely, the imposition of homogeneity” (Lefebvre, 1991:383, our emphasis). Prefigurative territories can embody the enactment of different forms-of-life whose difference “may lie more in doing things differently than in doing different things” (Pellizzoni, 2020:1), enacting alternative ways of inhabiting and practicing the territory in a prefigurative manner (see Asara, 2020; Centemeri and Asara, 2022). Prefigurative territories can create counter-hegemonic spaces of social experimentation entailing new forms of (self-)managing and practicing the economy, politics, education, culture, and nature. For Lefebvre, irrespective of their eventual success, counter-projects of counter-spaces, with their production and intervention onto the space through autogestion, can act as “the social foundation of a transformed everyday life, open to myriad possibilities” (ibid:422). In this article we endeavoured to reveal how these territories can emerge and evolve through everyday difficulties. Additional work is needed to delve more deeply into the challenges and conflicts that prefigurative territories encounter, and to further scrutinise the processes of prefigurative production of space in other social movements.

Footnotes

[1] Minutes of the Acampada, which can be found at <https://acampadabcn.wordpress.com/documents/actes-de-lassemblea-general/>

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