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## ARTICLE

# The suburban question: grassroots politics and place making in Spanish suburbs

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### Abstract:

Manuel Castells spoke of the urban as a unit of collective consumption, yet much of the politics of collective consumption he documented was evident in the suburbs. The tendency for suburbs of most complexions to lack services and amenities has been and continues to be a focus of politics in Europe. In Spain, as elsewhere in Europe, a grassroots politics surrounding the making good of these deficits in basic services and amenities has broadened and formalised somewhat to become part of a competitive local representative politics concerned with shaping a sense of place. Here we consider this legacy of grassroots politics as it has played out more recently in a politics of place making in Getafe and Badalona in metropolitan Madrid and Barcelona. In conclusion we suggest that this enduring suburban question – of making the suburban urban - places them at the centre of contemporary metropolitan governance and politics. However it also raises further issues for study – notably the scalar politics in which suburban place-making is empowered or constrained, the role of political parties and individual politicians on the place making process, the point at which grassroots politics of collective consumption becomes urban entrepreneurialism.

## Introduction

As academics we are comfortable with focusing a good deal of our analytical attention on aspects of change – gentrification and urban regeneration - in the city ‘proper’. Arguably, we remain reluctant and perhaps less interested in analysing change in the suburban expanses of regions that surround historic urban cores. Yet, if we accept the broad thrust of a ‘Los Angeles School’ (Dear, 2003), notions of ‘planetary urbanisation’ (Lefevbre, 1971 cited in Merrifield, 2013) or, more modestly, the implications of megalopolitan urbanisation (Lang and Knox, 2008), then pretty much everything suburban of one sort or another represents the majority of contemporary urbanisation and urban experience. In quantitative and qualitative terms the *suburbs* emerge as the key formative spaces in which to examine the contemporary urban question.

The focus of this paper on suburban politics rests on two contentions. First, contemporary urbanisation begs us to consider the differentiated nature of the urban within heavily urbanised regions in which a variety of settlement types occupy specialised places within increasingly complex social and economic divisions of labour (Bogart, 2006; Cox and Jonas, 1993; Phelps and Wood, 2011, Phelps, 2012). These would include the historic city cores but also a variety of suburbs, post-suburbs and perhaps rural settlements that are nevertheless in the orbit of urban and suburban centres. Second, that evolution in the complexion

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of settlements – including suburbs – is an important though barely analysed focus for, and contributor to, evolution in local politics, including that around collective consumption. So, for example, longstanding trends towards the urbanisation of the suburbs (Masotti, 1973) into post-suburbs (Teaford, 1997) and cities ‘proper’ in the United States pose any number of questions regarding the urban as a unit of production and consumption as well as the changing relationship between the two both there and elsewhere.

In this paper we consider some of these questions by looking at the contrasting fortunes of two Spanish suburban municipalities – Getafe within the Madrid metropolitan area and Badalona within the Barcelona metropolitan area. We begin by bringing together two different bodies of literature; that on grassroots politics and collective consumption and that on the urbanisation of the suburbs. We then briefly describe the main methods used to collect the original interview data reported later in this paper. We then pass on to consider the role of urban social movements in Getafe and Badalona respectively. In both cases grassroots urban social movements have become co-opted into formal representative political structures at municipal level. In Getafe, in a context of a settlement essentially formed from new and continuing to experience expansion of employment and a relatively homogeneous migrant population, grassroots movements have conferred a legacy on Mayoral entrepreneurial projects aimed at place making and the urbanisation of a suburb. In Badalona, economic and demographic transformation have left grassroots movements searching for a role as attempts to stave off the shift of an historic city into a dormitory have foundered on an increasingly fragmented population and identity. In conclusion we return to consider some of the broader issues regarding the value of studying the urban question through studying suburbs and processes of suburbanisation.

### **The suburban question in an age of planetary urbanisation**

In a recent exploration Brenner (2012) asks whether the apparent arrival of Lefevbre’s (1971) era of planetary urbanisation side steps the urban question by reaffirming the impossibility of there being something socially specific about the urban (Saunders, 1981). Perhaps ‘The “urban question” ... needs to be *reposed* in the most fundamental way in light of early-twenty-first

century conditions ... Do we *really* know today, where the “urban” begins and ends, or what its most essentially features are socially, spatially or otherwise?’ (Brenner et al, 2012: 118 original emphasis). Planetary urbanisation represents a quantitative transformation in society whereby the majority of the population now live in officially defined urban areas. However, it also, more profoundly, represents a *qualitative* transformation in which a host of spatial oppositions are being rearticulated (Brenner et al, 2012: 132).

In this paper we contextualise such qualitative transformations by linking discussion of the politics of collective consumption to an eclectic literature on suburbs and their evolution within the emerging heavily urbanised regions found in many advanced economies.

### **The suburban character of heavily urbanised regions**

For some then, traditional labels of city and suburb are ‘zombie’ categories (Knox and Lang, 2008) and a new lexicon is needed to discuss the sorts of qualitative transformations implied by nascent planetary urbanism. In simple terms, much of the experience of planetary urbanism is necessarily ‘in-between’ – in-between what we regard as the containers of economic, social, political and ideological life – cities and nations. In some senses, then, the experience of planetary urbanism is distinctly sub- or inter-urban. In heavily urbanised regions it makes little sense to speak of the urban as an undifferentiated unit but to acknowledge the social and economic and other divisions of labour that exist among settlements within these regions. Arguably we have not done enough to define and elaborate upon one key

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term in our existing vocabulary – the suburb. The literature on suburbs and suburbanisation has, for example, only recently begun to expand at a significant rate in belated response to the global significance of processes of suburbanisation and their increasingly diverse social, ethnic, economic, political and administrative basis (Harris, 2010).

Questions of how one might adequately theorise such complexity at the scale of heavily urbanised regions are beyond the scope of this paper, but one implication here is whether suburbs aren’t better settlements to examine when considering the urban question, the associated politics of collective consumption and evolution in urban politics. Merrifield (2013) poses the question of what the right to the city means in an age of planetary urbanism, where the city is less than ever a clearly defined monocentric ‘container’. The answer would be clear to members of the Los Angeles school (Dear, 2004; Dear and Dahmann, 2008; Soja, 2000) but also a range of other scholars with a more direct interest in city-region politics (Phelps, Wood and Valler, 2010; Phelps and Wood, 2011) including in Europe (Phelps et al, 2006; Phelps and Parsons, 2003; Ronneberger and Keil; 1994) and even the evolution of suburbs specifically (McManus and Ethington, 2007) who have highlighted reversals in traditional relationships between the binary of city-suburb. Thus, McManus and Ethington (2007: 3222) suggest that ‘It may no longer make sense to look at urbanization as divided between the kind that takes place centrally and that which is peripheral’ while, intriguingly, Dear and Dahmann (2008: 270) argue that ‘urban space, time and causality have been altered’. Elsewhere we have attempted an incomplete enumeration of some of the key transformations of late modernity implied by Dear and Dahmann (Phelps and Wood, 2011). These include: the decline of cities into suburbs; the development of suburbs into post-suburbs; the development of post-suburbs into cities and; the decline of suburbs into something, somehow less than suburban. For the purposes of this paper we later concentrate on the empirical cases of Badalona as an example of the first, and Getafe as an example of the second and third of these four scenarios.

More specifically, the value of studying the politics of collective consumption through studying different, though ostensibly suburban, settlements within heavily urbanised regions is also apparent. Hamel, Lustiger-Thaler and Mayer (2000: 15) argue that collective action cannot be understood solely from a movement centred analytical perspective, but that rather there is also a need to consider the context in which movements operate. As we have argued, those contexts – although ostensibly suburban - are actually quite differentiated across today's heavily urbanised regions. Many of the instances of grassroots politics of collective consumption Castells documented were evident in the suburbs. Lowe (1986) suggests there were at least five different urban social movements apparent in Castells' writings on Madrid alone, and of these we might suggest that three – mobilisations around shanty towns, public housing estates and privately developed housing estates - were predominantly suburban in location given the focus on the late Fordist industrialisation effort on the Madrid suburbs. Moreover, a politics of collective consumption appears to endure within suburbs. Mayer (2000: 142), for example, notes the increasing heterogeneity of urban social movements with the protests surrounding corporate-led urban renewal in major metropolitan centres being rather different to the enduring demands for investment in collective consumption goods found in small towns and cities and, dare we suggest, suburbs. Indeed, given the difficulty of defining suburbs adequately, it may be that the very tendency for *suburbs* of most complexions to lack services and amenities has been and continues to be a focus of politics in those settlements.

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### **The transformation of the suburbs and transformations in the politics of collective consumption**

One tendency apparent in the literature is to treat suburbs as largely static in development terms. And while some residential suburbs do indeed change very slowly as a product of any number of small scale improvements to individual buildings (Whitehand and Carr, 2001), questions of the evolution of suburbs are perhaps more profound and unclear than we have given them credit for. Processes of suburbanisation in 'old' Europe reveal developments that can be every bit as novel and rapid as those found elsewhere in the world. Here analysis of urban social movements and the politics of collective consumption could usefully engage with literature on the urbanisation of suburbia (Masotti, 1973) and the politics of economic development (Cox and Jonas, 1993), post-suburbia (Phelps and Wood, 2011; Teaford, 1997) and in-between spaces (Young and Keil, 2010) which beg yet more fundamental questions of the evolving relationship and degrees of separation of consumption and production within advanced capitalist societies.<sup>1</sup>

As Mayer has noted, a local politics of collective consumption arose and to large degree was sheltered within the Keynesian welfare state model but with the rise of neoliberal policies there has been a transformation of the sorts of foci for protest politics, away from traditional issues of collective consumption to protests against corporate-led urban projects and the dismantling of the local welfare state. For Mayer, 'while the neoliberalisation of the city has in many ways created a more hostile environment for progressive urban movements, it has also allowed for a more global articulation of urban protest' (Mayer, 2010: 29) brought together under the label of the 'right to the city' movement. Indeed one case she highlights is that of Barcelona which has been prominent in hosting international 'rights to the city' events. Elsewhere Barcelona has

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<sup>1</sup> At this point the limits of conjoining a largely European literature on collective consumption and urban social movements with other bodies of writing speaking primarily to the North American context ought also to be acknowledged.

been credited as a metropolitan space in which politics has managed to balance entrepreneurialism with pre-existing concerns over the quality of life (Calavita and Ferrer, 2004). These quite sanguine conclusions regarding the opportunities for broader based progressive alliances among social movements presented by neoliberalisation are however open to question. As we shall see from the case of Badalona, such opportunities have coexisted with important losses in the sense of purpose among grass roots movements even in the face of the emergence of reactionary politics). In southern European municipalities in particular, issues of collective consumption formed an important focal point for political leaders to build support and legitimacy locally to the point where those same leaders had little appeal outside of their local constituencies (Borraz and John, 2006). Furthermore, the tendency for urban social movements to become co-opted into formal representative municipal politics, has led to the slightly ironic situation whereby left-wing politicians critical of growth politics emerging from these movements have gone on to adopt quite pragmatic and even entrepreneurial strategies of economic development and coalition-building (Harding, 1997: 303). This primarily *local* orientation coupled with the pragmatic and even entrepreneurial politics have tended to produce the sort of competitive local politics stressed by Saunders (1981).

Saunders' (1981) inclusion of competitive local politics as an important focus for a reformulated urban sociology was prescient in light of the later pervasiveness of inter-urban competition under neoliberalism but was also, we might argue, latent in earlier transformations in politics in some suburbs. In one of the earliest accounts of the urbanisation of suburbs,

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Massotti (1973: 17) was able to suggest that 'The most significant change in the definition of contemporary suburbia may be its growing economic independence of the central city ... It is becoming increasingly less suburban and more urban'. Teaford (1997) and Massotti trace this urbanisation of suburbs in the US to the 1960s and 1970s if not before, although Beauregard (2006: 36) has since argued that only a very few suburbs were in fact becoming urban places at this time. By the time Fishman was able to return to this theme in the 1980s evidence of the changing character of suburbia seemed incontrovertible. He argued that 'decentralization had so dispersed the core functions of the old central cities that many sprawling regions acquired the critical mass of population, jobs, and specialized services to function as "new cities"' (Fishman, 1991: 234).

Perhaps the most notable feature in the evolution of different settlements within heavily urbanised regions relates to the implications of the evolving division of labour for the balance between employment and residence to be found there. This also incidentally tends to recast the urban question as one of production as well as consumption and indeed the interrelation between production and consumption (Cox and Jonas, 1993) (though such questions are beyond the scope of this paper). A degree of reintegration, or perhaps more accurately intertwining, of employment with residence had become apparent by the 1970s with Massotti arguing that 'While many of the older, established, and affluent suburbs are able to maintain their "residential only" character ... some of the older, and all of the new "frontier" suburbs have tried to provide for industrial parks, office complexes, major retail (shopping) centers, or some combination of the three' (Massotti, 1973: 16-17).<sup>2</sup> Somewhat later, Fishman also pointed to this

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<sup>2</sup> Care is needed when discussing the employment residential balance of suburbs since there is a long history of industrial suburbs and of employment leading residential development within

when suggesting that 'If there is a single basic principle in the structure of the technoburb, it is the renewed linkage of work and residence' (Fishman, 1987: 190). Later still, O'Mara's (2005) history confirmed that the dispersal of high-technology industry and scientific research activity in the form of campus style developments across the suburbs of the United States amounted to no less than the construction of a new urbanity.

While accepting that economic development and consumption are internally but not necessarily related at the scale of local jurisdictions (Cox and Jonas, 1993), all of this implies a generalised transformation of local politics in the expanses outside the historic cores of heavily urbanised regions away from issues of collective consumption solely to those of collective production expenditures and the competitive localism of place shaping. And it is to these concerns that we now turn when examining the recent history of two suburbs notable in the recent history of urban social movements in Spain.

### **Research methods**

This paper draws upon findings from separate but related pieces of research covering two suburban case study municipalities in Spain. Specifically we draw upon materials collected and interviews undertaken on location in Getafe in the south of the Comunidad de Madrid (CAM) region and Badalona to the north of Barcelona metropolitan area (BMA) in Catalunya. The paper compares and contrasts the history of politics surrounding collective consumption in the two localities (see figures 1 and 2). As such, the two case study municipalities sit in different regional-metropolitan institutional settings. In Spain, the regional level –

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the autonomous communities – has assumed responsibilities for dealing with metropolitan governance after metropolitan governance bodies were abolished in the 1980s (although reinstated in Barcelona in 2011). However, regional structures co-exist with one or more forms of local government depending on the Autonomous community.

The Autonomous Community of Madrid, in contrast to other Spanish capitals such as Barcelona and Valencia, coincides geographically with the Madrid province and therefore there is not a provincial government (Diputación). This fact has been considered positive in the sense that institutional complexity is reduced, and the regional government – a strong institution – takes the functions of an actual metropolitan government (Lefèvre, 2003; Salet and Thornley, 2007). Therefore, Madrid has been presented as an example of unitary metropolitan governance where the functional urban region and the administrative region practically coincide and where the existing local governments are very weak (Salet and Thornley, 2007). However, the functional urban region of Madrid has grown significantly and has meant that the number of administrations involved in its governance and the need for coordination among different tiers and different sectors has significantly increased (Lefèvre, 2003; Valenzuela (2010).

In Barcelona, although there is some suggestion that a politics of collective consumption has been linked to integrating the whole metropolitan space, including the peripheral suburbs, after the resumption of democracy (Calavita and Ferrer, 2004), such developments have also been interpreted primarily as a means of valorizing urban space (Jonas and While, 2007: 131-132). Moreover, the city's strategy which allied entrepreneurial ambitions, on the

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polycentric or nodal patterns of urban expansion (Harris and Larkham, 1999; Walker and Lewis, 2001) implying a variety of trajectories apparent historically in the evolution of suburbs.

one hand, with an emphasis on democratization and sustainability of the urban space through provision for collective consumption, on the other hand, has nevertheless been felt unevenly with the suburbs often being the subject of the former without the latter and with unease being felt over the city's growing influence being felt within the region (Jonas and While 2007: 135 and 141). These tensions have spilled over into the relationship between the region and the metropolis is more problematic as shown by the different views on territorial strategy often held by both of them (Salet and Thornley, 2007). In this case, not only is there a provincial government but also recently other authorities with geographically overlapping competencies have appeared. With the aim of facilitating the governance of a territory which had undergone often unplanned and unbalanced growth (Arroyo, 2010), on 21 July 2011, the creation of a new institutional administration formed by 36 municipalities - the Metropolitan area of Barcelona - was approved. It has competencies over administration and territory, economic promotion, environment, strategic planning, and, transport and mobility (Pla strategic Metropolità de Barcelona website: [www.pemb.cat](http://www.pemb.cat)). In addition, on 27 December 2011 the regional government approved the establishment of another institution, the Territorial Commission of Urbanism of Barcelona's Metropolitan Area, with a geographical area of responsibility including 35 municipalities of the Barcelona Metropolitan area and excluding the city of Barcelona. The period of validity of this commission was to be until the Urban Plan of the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona is approved, when it will be substituted by the Urban Planning commission of the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona, which will also include the city of Barcelona (Generalitat de Catalunya website: [www.gencat.cat](http://www.gencat.cat)).

### Figures 1 and 2 here

In the case of research on Badalona a total of 12 semi-structured interviews were conducted during September 2012. In the case of Getafe 15 interviews were conducted during July 2008-January 2009 and we were also able to draw on a further 12 interviews dating back to 2002 and 2004 conducted as part of a previous study of the planning and politics of capital city regions (Phelps et al, 2006). Interviews were conducted with planners, economic development officials, local politicians, business and residents associations and civic interest representative groups, individual businesses and property consulting companies in each of these locations. Interview sources are contained within square brackets in the text below. In addition, we naturally draw upon documentary evidence such as local plan documents, analytical reports and studies and newspaper coverage of salient issues.

We present Getafe and Badalona as two contrasting examples of the politics of collective consumption in suburbs. Getafe has evolved from a dormitory suburb to Madrid into a city in its own right while Badalona – a long-established and formerly industrial city – has been struggling to resist becoming a dormitory to Barcelona. In both cases a grassroots 'micro' politics centred on basic collective consumption needs has broadened and formalised into party political agendas aimed at place-making involving some 'big ticket' items of collective consumption and production expenditure.

### From dormitory to regional capital: mayoral politics in getafe

As an accessible point en route to Madrid, Getafe grew from a population of 12,500 in 1950 to 150,432 in 2001 170,115 in 2011. It was one of several small towns and villages that were inundated by rural migrants during the 1960s and 1970s as a result of Spain's late-Fordist drive



toward industrialization under the Franco regime (Phelps et al, 2006). As a large municipal territory of 78.74 square kilometers it emerged as a dormitory for Madrid, but also a centre for domestic and multinational manufacturing industries.

In 1960 houses lacked potable water (introduced a year later) and there were only a few paved streets. By the end of the 1960s, access to housing, education and the expense of public transport remained problems (Sánchez del Pozo, 2007). It was the style of development in places like Getafe - the rapid and exploitative development of housing without associated amenities – that promoted the strong socialist grass-roots politics of collective consumption which Castells (1983) made famous in *The city and the grassroots*. Getafe was one of the most important cities for the organised political resistance during the 1960s and 1970s. Workers were members of the Spanish Communist Party (*Partido Comunista Español –PCE*), the Workers' Brotherhood of Catholic Action (*Hermandad Obrera de Acción Católica*), later known as Workers' Christian Youth (*Juventudes Obreras Cristianas*) (Sánchez Pérez, 2007). Other associations, like the Getafe Housewives Association (*Asociación de Amas de Casa de Getafe*) and the Residents Association of the Alhóndiga (*Asociación de Vecinos de la Alhóndiga*) also gained an important role in the fight for better living conditions, services and infrastructure in the city.

### **The grass-roots and the socialist politics of retro-fit**

Following a pattern witnessed more generally in European cities (Mayer, 2002), the successful informal grassroots movements of the 1960s and 1970s provided a ready source of politicians and officials, evolving to become part of the formal political machinery of local government by the 1980s in several of the southern towns (Maldonado, 2002: 366). In this respect, perhaps the most important contribution of grass-roots movements was to add a 'social' conception of the Spanish city to sit alongside the bureaucratic and capitalistic conceptions hitherto promoted exclusively under the Franco regime (Castells, 1983: 262). It is this political legacy that arguably is most evident in a politics of 'retrofit' in Getafe. *La política del ladrillo* ('the politics of the bricks') persists in Getafe's 'participatory budgeting'

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through which control of a fraction of the municipal budget has been delegated to nine local communities [Asociación Iniciativas Cultura y Jóvenes Staff Member, Getafe. 29 July 2008]. In comparison to the often basic improvements gained during the 1960s and 1970s, from the 1980s onwards the politics of collective consumption has also revolved around larger projects designed to complete the city and promote it within the wider regional political space.

Getafe has been governed by PSOE (*Partido Socialista Obrero Español*) since the return to democracy in 1979, during which time there have been only three mayors: Jesus Prieto, Pedro Castro and Juan Soler. In fact, the development of Getafe since this time, and in particular its rounding-out into a city and 'the capital of the south' rather than just a dormitory settlement for Madrid, is almost completely associated with mayor Pedro Castro who held office from 1983 until 2011.<sup>3</sup> Borraz and John (2004: 118) have described the highly locally dependent nature of political leaders at municipal level in Europe whereby 'there is often little future for them outside

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<sup>3</sup> Before entering politics in 1979 as a municipal councillor, Pedro Castro was employed by the Unión Generale de Trabajadores (UGT) union closely linked to PSOE (Quesada, 2011). Against a background of having been charged with alleged corruption in the award of municipal construction contracts, Pedro Castro lost his position as mayor in 2011 to Juan Soler, the first conservative mayor elected in Getafe (Pedro Blasco, 2012; Tono Calleja, 2012).



their communities'. In the case of Mayor Pedro Castro, however, local socialist credentials in championing the development of Getafe have been reinforced by an altogether more pragmatic politics in dealings with the regional and central governments more often than not of different political parties [Subdirector, Regional Planning Agency, Environment and Urban Planning Direction, Comunidad Autónoma de Madrid, 29 July 2008]. Some measure of his success in this respect is signaled by the lack of concern among the local business community over changes in political control of national and regional governments and any repercussions they may have locally (Phelps et al, 2006).<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile organizational innovation in the form of new private arms of the municipal government such as the creation of GISA ensure a degree of organizational presence, continuity and resourcing within the pragmatic attempt to secure funding from central and regional governments.

Over the years, a series of local plans have reiterated the need for a better balance in the municipality in terms of land-uses, in terms of housing and employment and in terms of the supply of services and amenities. This was true even of plans such as the 1979 *Plan General de Ordenación Urbana*, written by COPLACO (*Comisión de Planeamiento y Coordinación del Área Metropolitana de Madrid*) with local input under the Franco regime (which otherwise proved unrealistic regarding future population growth of Getafe and in its designations of development areas including a new city centre). Later plans augmented this emphasis, with the draft plan of 1985 (adopted in 1986) stressing the need to create a sense of place identity (Ayuntamiento de Getafe, 1985). The current local plan of 2002 is more outward looking and focuses on efforts to sustain Getafe's competitive position and engage in the likes of city marketing (Ayuntamiento de Getafe, 2002b).

There have been several important developments in Getafe during the 1990s. The most notable of these have been the hospital and the university. The 650 bed hospital was built in 1990 and opened in 1991. The Universidad Carlos III was created in 1991 with sizeable campuses in Getafe and Leganes. Sports and cultural facilities have also been improved, which include: the stadium for the professional football club in 1998 built on land owned by the municipality, an 'aquatic centre', a theatre (*Teatro Auditorio Federico García Lorca*) built in a refurbished

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flour factory and opened in 1998, and a major music conservatory serving the whole of the south of Madrid.

In terms of transport infrastructure, there have been two major projects over recent years. First, there was the burial of the suburban railway line that connects Madrid to Parla completed in 2000. This was funded by the Municipality of Getafe and the CAM and included the construction of the new train station but, significantly, was important to unifying Getafe as a place, since it had previously been divided into west and east by the line (Ayuntamiento de Getafe, 2002a; Pedro Castro, 1999). Second, there was the construction of Metro-Sur, which is an underground train service that connects five municipalities of the south (with 28 stops, eight in Getafe) with the underground train service of Madrid. The project started in 2000 and was completed in 2003 and was funded by CAM (Sánchez González, 2007). This new line of the underground train

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<sup>4</sup> Although there was some suggestion that relations with the president of the CAM had been a source of some concern, notably over the privatization agenda of the CAM (Interview, Officer and Adviser, GISA –Getafe Iniciativas S.A.-, Ayuntamiento de Getafe, 24 July 2008).

system not only improves the communication of the municipalities of the south with Madrid, but also among them (see figure 3).

### **Figure 3 Getafe centro metro station here**

These developments represent both a rounding-out of the settlement in terms of the facilities, amenities and functions associated with a city proper but also have served to aggrandise Getafe among the southern towns. At the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, the Direction of Territorial Policy (from CAM) promoted the development of the area Arroyo Culebro (common area of several municipalities of the south of Madrid) for a mix of uses: residential, industrial, recreational and tertiary activities. This was part of the “Great South” project promoted and developed by Arpegio<sup>5</sup> since 1991 (Arpegio, 1993). In this respect,

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developments in Getafe are part of a broader pattern evident in this string of settlements to the south of Madrid, as the Mayor of Getafe elaborated:

‘if you go to any big European metropolis, they expel towards the periphery the marginal, which means cheap housing, less services, less infrastructure. Here it is the opposite. Municipalities like Leganés, Alcorcón and Getafe have more educational, cultural and health services than the south of the City of Madrid. We have broken that dynamic of metropolitan areas having less infrastructure and services than the big city. [Mayor, Ayuntamiento de Getafe, 28 July 2008].

Notwithstanding the degree of unity among the settlements fashioned through the ‘Great South’ initiative, its timing was also propitious given the advances made by Getafe, resulting in the city emerging as ‘the capital of the South’. As an interviewee described, ‘because of the mayor, Getafe could be seen as the pole of reference of the southern area of Madrid and it is in fact called the capital of the south. This irritates the other mayors and their residents but it is the reality – Getafe leads progress in the southern area. The most advanced initiatives come from Getafe and it leads as it were that special understanding with the Comunidad de Madrid. That is the reality’. [Planning Officer, Planning Department, Municipality of Getafe, 6 November 2003].

Getafe’s vanguard position has been an important source of pride and place identity for local residents with another interviewee claiming that it was unique among the settlements of the South in no longer being considered a dormitory [Asociación Iniciativas Cultura y Jóvenes Staff Member, 29 July 2008 and Officer and Adviser, GISA, Ayuntamiento de Getafe, 24 July 2008 respectively]. Here a left wing politics of place-making nevertheless also relates to processes of inter-settlement competition and these more pragmatic politics played out at the inter-locality and inter-governmental spheres with a measure of coordination coming from CAM [Planning Officer, Planning Department, Municipality of Getafe, 6 November 2003, and Head of Urban Planning, Ayuntamiento de Leganes 28 July 2008].

### **From capital of the South to the Madrid regional capital?**

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<sup>5</sup> Arpegio (*Áreas de Promoción Empresarial con Gestión Industrial Organizada S.A.* – Business Promotion with Industrial Organised Management Areas) is a public company created in 1988 and owned by CAM. Its main activities are land and service management for industrial and residential uses.

In 2000 Getafe started developing its strategic plan for the year 2010. The main aim of the plan was “to make Getafe a territory of opportunities where urban, social, economic, territorial and environmental policies come together and allow for using available resources through innovative actions aiming at the strengthening and involvement of the community and its environment” (Ayuntamiento de Getafe, 2002a: 10). Such a vision statement would not be out of place in many national contexts though the emphasis on defending and encouraging welfare state principles as one of three key objectives is undoubtedly more specific.<sup>6</sup> The welfare state principles espoused in the strategic plan to 2010 are perhaps most apparent in relation to the issue of housing. The municipality’s ambitious housing plan, underpinned by 60% funding from Arpegio (CAM) consists of the construction of fully 19,000 subsidized housing units in several major projects (Arpegio, 2006; Ayuntamiento de Getafe website. [www.getafe.es](http://www.getafe.es)).

Other priority projects entail further development of the civic and employment base of the city. There is the development of the new La Carpetania industrial estate by Arpegio – at 5m square meters, one of the largest in Spain and Europe. Originally, this was part of a larger ‘Aeropolis’ project master-planned by Norman Foster and Partners. Development along the lines envisaged in this larger concept has not materialized but a new aviation museum designed by Foster and Partners will be completed as part of the industrial estate. There is also

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the *Area Tecnológica del Sur* - a centre of technology development and research located in the south of Getafe. The latter is a 20m Euros project of 100,000 square metres that brings together the Engineering Schools of the *Universidad Politécnica de Madrid*, research centres and companies working on technology development (Getafe website).

The project of burying four kilometres of the A-42 motorway from Madrid to Toledo will mean further physical integration of the city of Getafe and provide new public parkland with the area being converted into 166,000 square metres of public green space. Another transport project is the extension of the Line 3 of the metro from Madrid to El Casar in a first stage and to Perales del Río in a second stage, so improving the accessibility of Getafe to Madrid for local residents and indeed businesses looking to decentralize from Madrid.

In all of this, again, something of the curious amalgam of long-standing local socialist roots and ideals and the pragmatic politics needed in inter-governmental relations in order to achieve some of those ends come face-to-face, in the Mayor’s own descriptions of Getafe’s transformation:

‘It is a city that has passed in 20 years from being a dormitory city, where for instance I had to take my kids to the doctor in Madrid because ... the specialised doctors were in Madrid, to having one of the best hospitals in Spain. ... It has passed from nearly not having schools, to having two universities, and the most important training centres of this country and the most important research centres of aviation and space of the country. Then it has passed from a dormitory city to be a city in the vanguard at the European level’. [Mayor, Ayuntamiento de Getafe, 27 July 2008].

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<sup>6</sup> The other two key objectives are: to encourage policies that attract investments and job opportunities, and to encourage community participation to achieve a sustainable quality of life for the citizens (Ayuntamiento de Getafe, 2002a).

Between 2007 and 2011, Pedro Castro was president of the *Federación Española de Municipios* (the national association of municipalities) which presented a platform from which to promote an agenda of Getafe becoming the capital for the Madrid region as one interviewee described:

'The latest thing that has come to our minds is to ask for being the capital of Madrid. Madrid will continue to be the capital of Spain and we want to be the capital of the CAM. We have asked this to the national government. And the CAM would say they don't agree. ... Being the capital will lead to the incorporation of more administrative functions and more services to Getafe and that would be good' [Director, Strategic Planning, Ayuntamiento de Getafe, 24 July 2008].

Although compatible with the Spanish tradition, others believe this to be irrational in the context of the capital city region while others stress the limits to the further development of the city because of the lack of prestige associated with its distinctly southern, working-class, image [Head of Urban Planning, Ayuntamiento de Leganes, 28 July 2008 and Subdirector, Regional Planning Agency, Environment and Urban Planning Direction, Comunidad Autónoma de Madrid, 29 July 2008, respectively].

### **From historic city to dormitory: the suburb divided and the decline of grass-roots politics**

Having been founded in Roman times, Badalona has been a separate city in its own right but has become something of a suburb within the metropolitan sphere of Barcelona. Perhaps as a result of its older historic status and of topographical constraints, Badalona has a relatively small municipal territory covering 22.17km squared. It grew as a major centre for industries – glass, metal and textiles - connected to the construction of the first railway line in the Iberian peninsula during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, growing from nearly 6,000 population in mid 1800s to 21,000 by the early 1900s (Baeza, 1998). However, population expansion in Badalona has been more significant during the twentieth century. During this time the hilly interior of the municipal territory was developed and with this the balance of employment to residences

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has shifted decisively – from 92,000 in 1960 to around 219,000 in 2010 - towards that of a suburb. Notably, between the 1950s and the 1970s the city received several waves of immigrants from rural Spain which were housed in entirely new neighbourhoods. Being within Barcelona's metropolitan area (BMA) it also accommodated the growth and social problems which Barcelona expelled, particularly during the dictatorship [Secretary General of the Business Federation of Badalona 20 September 2012 and Manager of the Department of Territory at Badalona city council 26 September 2012]. Most recently, since 2000, another further and diverse set of migrants from the Maghreb, Eastern Europe, Pakistan and Latin America have arrived in Badalona creating major schisms in the identity and social solidarity within Badalona and creating a more complicated picture of grass roots collective consumption politics.

### **The decline of the city, urban entrepreneurialism and the rise and fall of the grassroots**

The rapid un-planned and chaotic urban growth this period resulted in very dense neighbourhoods which lacked basic amenities such as schools, clinics, parks, etc. and even sewage systems, water supply or road surfacing. Most of the urban growth was generated by speculative construction and self-construction in rural land which was later legalised. The poor conditions of the new urban areas brought about the birth of the first neighbourhood associations which gained strength over the years and formed the Federation of Neighbourhood Associations (Baeza, 1998) in the mid-1970s including two or three of the oldest neighbourhood

associations in Spain [President of ICV-EUiA political party at Badalona council 26 September 2012]. The remit of the neighbourhood movement was to demand facilities for the neighbourhoods, to protect them from real estate speculation and to protest against the dictatorship (Baeza, 1998). The residents' associations' activity and continuous protest was essential for the improvement and retro-fitting of the neighbourhoods with urban amenities.

The decline of the neighbourhood movement, which had been very active in the 1960s, 70s and 80s can be attributed to different processes (see also Calavita and Ferrer, 2004). The most important is the formalisation of grassroots politics, which absorbed the energies of the movement (Baeza, 1998).

... from this activist movement of the Francoist era, with the onset of the democratic city councils, the top party officials of the new local political parties come from the neighbourhood movement. Then, what happens? ... the movement starts to be orphaned and somehow its leaders end up being at the other side of the negotiating table. ... Certainly, there are a lot of dynamics and probably the dynamics evolved with time. ... it wouldn't be possible to explain the support the political parties have had along the years, if it weren't for the almost structural connection between the political parties and the neighbourhood movement. But, it is true ... there is talk about the crisis of the neighbourhood movement [Head of the Department of Citizen Participation at Badalona city council, 27 September 2012].

The co-option of grassroots political movements goes well beyond figure-head politicians but is more pervasive in that positions such as 'Neighbourhood delegates', directly appointed by the local government, were created to 'tame' grassroots politics [Head of the Office of Urban transformation at the County council of the Barcelonès 20 September 2012].

... many people who were presidents of a neighbourhood association or something started to work in the city council ... And then, all the neighbourhood movement that there was in Badalona loses strength with the years, it loses sense and starts to be an instrument in many cases. I am speaking generally but part of the movement's weight went on to be controlled from the city council itself ... Thus, much of its independence is lost [President of ICV-EUiA political party at Badalona council, 26 September 2012].

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Over the years the situation of the neighbourhoods had improved, many of the citizens involved with earlier protests had aged and become used to deferring to the city council [Architect, Partner at Jornet Llop Pastor Architects, 21 September 2012; Director of the Consortium (council-regional government) to manage the Strategic Residential Area of Sant Crist (Badalona), 24 September 2012; Board member of urbanism at the Federation of Neighbourhood Associations of Badalona 24 September 2012; and Vicar of the La Salut parish (Badalona). Member of the working class pastoral team of Badalona and Sant Adrià, 26 September 2012]. As one interviewee noted bluntly; 'Look, people have become careless. We have started to earn more, to live better and people have started to stay at home ...' [Board member of urbanism at the Federation of Neighbourhood Associations of Badalona, 24 September 2012]. The same interviewee noted that where the protests of the past might involve several thousands of residents, a large protest of the present might involve just 50 people. Another interviewee was more specific about the increasing irrelevance of the neighbourhood movement.

[The neighbourhood movement] is obsolete because, of course, first, it has aged a lot. In the 1960s and 70s, is then when the neighbourhood movement was born and defended all this and also is the final years of the Francoist era and there urbanism, social and political activism are mixed. When democracy arrives it has the role of giving content to all this and to condition a city for a welfare society. ... When the current migratory movement arrives I think that they don't know how to react. In the same way that they have never had the ability to incorporate young people and to substitute the old, neither have they been able to incorporate the new people who were arriving [Head of the Department of Citizen Participation at Badalona city council , 27 September 2012].

The grass-roots in the form of neighbourhood associations was ill-equipped to react to the impacts of new migration and the consequent further fracturing of the identities of populations in Badalona as will be discussed shortly.

The co-option and formalization of grass roots politics has also seen its mutation away from 'micro' issues of collective consumption in terms of basic amenities and services in the peripheral neighbourhoods to 'macro' projects designed to enhance the marketing and competitive position of the municipality focused largely on the central, old Badalona. Some of this derives from the very success of urban social movements in driving the planned provision of such basic amenities across the metropolitan space as a whole in the years after the fall of Franco (Calavita and Ferrer, 2004). In Badalona, as in many other Spanish cities, entrepreneurial politics inevitably seem to be linked to deindustrialization. Business representative bodies have been active though largely unsuccessful in halting industrial decline locally in the face of a boom of the construction and real estate sectors (which have also filled the newspapers with infamous cases of corruption) [Secretary General of the Business Federation of Badalona 20 September 2012]. As is illustrated in the case of the remodeling of the seafront (where old factories have been substituted by expensive residential developments), recent developments in Badalona highlight the possibly latency of Saunders' (1981) competitive local politics within a politics of collective consumption, severed from an active grassroots (see figure 4).

#### **Figure 4 the remodeled seafront here**

A new waterfront promenade, the arrival of the underground to the city centre and even a new harbour – a fishermen's harbor, rather than a marina - were old citizen aspirations [Board member of urbanism at the Federation of Neighbourhood Associations of Badalona, 24 September 2012] but the neighbourhood movement do not recognise the projects as theirs. The general public has not been integrated in extensive participatory projects [Head of the Department of Citizen Participation at Badalona City Council, 27 September 2012; Architect, Partner of Espinàs i Tarrasó, Architecture, Design and Landscape. Coordinator

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of the Badalona Maritime Promenade Project, 25 September 2012] and the way in which things have been done have often lead residents of the other side of the motorway to perceive the initiatives as 'a project of the council' [Board member of urbanism at the Federation of Neighbourhood Associations of Badalona, 24 September 2012] or something done for the people of the centre. Nevertheless, the council's projects have been accepted with little or no contestation [Board member of urbanism at the Federation of Neighbourhood Associations of Badalona, 24 September 2012; Member of the Neighbourhood association of Sant Crist de Can Cabanyes 24 September 2012; Head of the Department of Planning, Badalona City Council, 27 September 2012 and Architect, Partner of Espinàs i Tarrasó, Architecture, Design and

Landscape. Coordinator of the Badalona Maritime Promenade Project, 25 September 2012]. The mayors have been described as “enlightened absolutists” [President of ICV-EUiA political party at Badalona council 26 September 2012], and in the end projects such as Illa Fradera and the waterfront promenade have been well received.

The projects however do not seem to call for a shift in the economic base of the city. Badalona has not been able to attract production but rather residential development. Tourism, after the recovering of the seafront, has not been considered an option either according to the former mayor who went on to elaborate how.

Badalona cannot have tourism because it competes with Barcelona, which is a monster that eats all ... Expecting Badalona to be a tourist city is utopian. ... Badalona is a city which is what it is, which has tourist attractions but which is not a tourist city. I think that the transformation, if I had to define it, the objective is social rather than anything else, that is, it is a debt you have with the city and the population. [Former Mayor of Badalona (2007-2011), 25 September 2012]. Entrepreneurial suburban politics in Badalona have focused on place making but also on inter-urban competition for metropolitan scale amenities, for instance the Comic museum.

In short, this project of the comic and illustration [museum] was awarded like the Olympics, we were competing with S. Feliu, Sitges, Hospitalet, and I don't know who else.

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Then, everyone was showing their project ... and you had to sell yourself: here there will be a tram, here there will be a promenade (the construction works had already started), this and that and, well, we convinced them [Former Mayor of Badalona (2007-2011), 25 September 2012].

Even in a structural project such as the extension of the underground line to Badalona's centre there is an intention of place marketing. There was an expectation that a global architect (for instance Perrault or Foster) would be interested in the project of the 30,000 square meters building envisaged in the architectural competition and would bring an investor with them. However this did not materialise [Head of the department of planning at Badalona city council, 27 September 2012].

Therefore, while Badalona - due to deindustrialization processes and transport connections - seems to be somehow dissolving within the BMA and becoming less independent economically, the council initiatives are striving to preserve a distinct identity in competition with other municipalities. As one interviewee, a former urbanism councilor in Badalona from 2003-2011 highlighted 'all the big projects we are talking about, the seafront, industrial estates, Illa fradera, and many more I could put on the table, had the intention of positioning us better in the metropolitan context' [Director of the Consortium (council-regional government) to manage the Strategic Residential Area of Sant Crist (Badalona), 24 September 2012].

Elected politicians have been involved in 'place-making' endeavours without the participation of the population, who have observed the processes with scepticism. Also business groups have been withdrawn from the council initiatives although many have been benefited from the sale of their old factories to the development and real estate sectors.

... all this transformation which has been carried out, all the residential development, all the harbour has been done under the sceptical look of the great majority of the city. That is ... first the doubt that it would be achieved, second an excessive and absurd politicization. ...



Recovering the seafront was a citizens' demand but when drawings are made of how to do it there is ... a questioning of the appropriateness of all that but with no concrete proposals. ... I think that in the last period of time, I mean the last year, an important evolution, an important transformation, namely, for the first time, when the maritime promenade has been finished, now it can be seen what this is. ... Until now only a political party has supported it and for the majority of people it was as if it did not exist. [Director of the Consortium (council-regional government) to manage the Strategic Residential Area of Sant Crist (Badalona), 24 September 2012].

### **The suburb divided and the crisis of the grassroots**

According to one informant, Badalona ran the risk of becoming exclusively a dormitory for Barcelona in the 1980s though while it has managed to position itself as an historical industrial city, there are, however, other problems to overcome [Director of the Consortium (council-regional government) to manage the Strategic Residential Area of Sant Crist (Badalona), 24 September 2012].

The case of Badalona presents interesting questions from the perspective of place identity and its relationship to the sorts of social solidarity that urban social movements have been thought to be predicated on. This is because of its history and sense of urban identity and contrasts with other important municipalities of the BMA, for instance Hospitalet de Llobregat which was a scrapyard in Barcelona's periphery and now is Catalonia's second biggest city. Badalona, the ancient Baetulo, of Roman foundation was at one time more important than Barcino (present day Barcelona). However, the rapid growth of the city during the 20<sup>th</sup> has created what Badalona's residents commonly describe as "the two Badalonas" to differentiate the Badalona of the centre - bounded by the sea to the east, two dry river beds to north and south and a motorway

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to the west - where residents are considered "lifelong from Badalona" from the Badalona subject to several phases of migrations. In particular, the motorway physically divides the two Badalonas, psychologically the sense of belonging and the relationship with Badalona and the rest of the metropolitan area are different each side of it, despite the fact that most of the residents of the other side of the motorway are second generation of migrants and have been born in Badalona. The sense of the two Badalonas is no doubt reinforced by the fact that all Badalona's mayors, except the present one, have been born within the narrow limits of central Badalona [Director of the Consortium (council-regional government) to manage the Strategic Residential Area of Sant Crist (Badalona), 24 September 2012].

It needs to be mentioned that the regional government through the "Neighbourhood Act" has distributed grant funds for the public space remodelling of different neighbourhoods in need in Catalonia. Badalona's council has benefited from these funds for some of its neighbourhoods and implemented participatory processes (expressly requested by the regional government as a condition). However, these projects are of lower level (public scale and small scale facilities) and scale (neighbourhood rather than structural scale) [Head of the Office of Urban transformation at the County council of the Barcelonès, 20 September 2012 and Head of the Department of Citizen Participation at Badalona city council, 27 September 2012]. Badalona's shift to something of a dormitory to Barcelona is mirrored, in comparison to Getafe, in the lack of organizational innovation by the municipal government which has relied on funding agendas driven primarily by the regional government.

Moreover, during the first decade of the 21st century new waves of migrants arrived mainly from Maghreb, Eastern Europe, Pakistan and Latin America. Between 2000 and 2010 there was an increase of foreign population of 29,148 people. While there were 3,055 foreign residents in 2000, in 2010 there were 32,203, which represented a percentage of the total population of 1.46% in 2000 and of 14.1% in 2010 (Statistical Institute of Catalonia website [www.idescat.cat](http://www.idescat.cat) and Observatori d'Empresa i Ocupació de la Generalitat de Catalunya website [www20.gencat.cat/portal/site/observatoritrebll](http://www20.gencat.cat/portal/site/observatoritrebll)). These migrants from overseas could be considered the third Badalona since, although some civic groups (such as the Badalona *som tots* platform, Fundació del Ateneu St. Roc or Fundació de la Salut Alta) have sought to integrate the newly arrived, the task has not as yet been accomplished [Vicar of the La Salut parish (Badalona). Member of the working class pastoral team of Badalona and Sant Adrià, 26 September 2012].

In Badalona political leaders firstly obtained their legitimacy and support from the grassroots movements. As in the rest of the 'red belt' of the BMA, there has been a long tradition of socialist mayors in Badalona. However, the focus on structural and place-making urban projects (punctuated with corruption cases on the other hand) and the disregard of the citizen's priority worries caused a rift between the socialist governors and the grassroots. Thus, for the first time in Badalona - and as an exception in the 'red belt' - a conservative mayor was elected in 2011. The political campaign - conducted mainly in the working class quarters - has capitalised on the new concerns of the people of Badalona. The newly arrived overseas migrants have been perceived as a menace to the hard-won amenities, services and rights. The "xenophobic" politics of the new mayor, who has coined the term "preventive urbanism", has earned him to be indicted on discrimination charges (*La Vanguardia*, 3 September 2012).

In contrast to the previous Spanish migrants to Badalona, the new overseas migrants do not protest to the same extent. As one interviewee noted, this may be a function of fear of losing municipal benefits, though in a climate of a degree of retrenchment in municipal

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welfare at present these benefits have been lost in any case for migrants new and old alike [Interview: Board member of urbanism at the Federation of Neighbourhood Associations of Badalona, 24 September 2012].

A new grassroots politics has not emerged in Badalona. On the one hand, it may simply be too early for new migrants to have settled and become organised. On the other hand, the failure of new migrants to become integrated into the old grassroots movements which, in addition, are in need of rejuvenation tends to negate long-standing hopes (Castells, 1983) for a progressive, less parochial and more generalized set of urban social movements to emerge.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has stressed the *suburban* and processes of suburbanisation as important objects of analysis for studying *urban* social movements and urban politics. There is a certain sense of completeness of the city when compared to the evolution and, by definition, incompleteness of suburban communities and the suburbanisation process. However, evolution in the variety of, ostensibly suburban, settlements found in heavily urbanised regions is far from a unidirectional process and here we have been able to elaborate on two contrasting cases presenting perhaps rather different prognoses for urban social movements under urban neoliberalism.

In titling this paper 'the suburban question' we have not intended to imply that there is anything especially unique about suburbs. After all, the genuine difficulties of extracting anything unique about urban economic, political, social or ideological processes is by now well-rehearsed in the literature. Nevertheless, this is not quite the same thing as saying that one shouldn't seek to elaborate empirically the differential nature of the urban question as it reveals itself across what are by now complex heavily urbanised regions as part of the development of theory. Some time ago Gottmann (1961) saw these megalopolitan regions as 'hinges' whose complex economic, social, political divisions of labour bridged between local, national and international scales of organisation. As the two cases here illustrate, much of interest remains to be done to adequately differentiate the urban question within emerging heavily urbanised regions as an object of empirical and theoretical analysis.

Here a number of important questions for further research emerge. First is the question of where a politics of collective consumption ends and where urban entrepreneurialism begins. However this is a boundary - between of informal and formal politics, between basic needs and 'big-ticket' collective consumption items that might better be regarded as the focus of inter-urban competition, indeed, between collective consumption and production expenditures - that is difficult to locate within fragmenting metropolitan systems (Cox and Jonas, 1993). It is a question that reflects some of the ambiguities in Castells' own writing when attempting to define urban social movements and their place in urban politics. Some sense of the latent properties of urban social movements is implied in what Lowe (1986) depicts as three phases in Castells' writing which moved from viewing them as a product of structural contradictions in capitalism, to their displaying a degree of autonomy, to their being open to a more plural interpretation in which a politics of *consumption* sat alongside that of the *communication* of cultural identities and the acquisition of formal representative political *power*.

Second, is the question of the role and implications of political parties in formalising grassroots politics (Low, 2007). There is enough in the case of Getafe presented in this paper to suggest a sense of something gained in such formalisation – of the greater organisational capacities of political parties to be productive of a sense of place – a sense of urbanity fashioned in places that would otherwise remain suburban. There is also a sense of something lost – of vital and progressive grassroots organisational capacity left to wither.

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Finally, there is the question of visionary political leadership in ... yes, the suburbs! This is an important, as yet largely untold, and variable story of suburbs transformed into post-suburbs or cities (as the Getafe case also indicates), and of places conceived from the outset as post-suburban (as has happened in the US). In the US, for example, such transformations have given rise to the sorts of new, regional scale, urbanity celebrated in much of the US literature. In Europe, some of the same desire on the part of suburban political visionaries to contest city-suburb relations of dependency is apparent yet without quite the same effects on metropolitan urban form or the same implications for socio-economic and fiscal inequalities among local governments and challenges for infrastructure provision and land-use and spatial planning. Hinterland suburbs and towns are as much a source of important political strategies centred on economic development, sustainability and collective consumption expenditures as the established cities that form the core of major city-regions (Jonas and While, 2007: 146). The cases recounted here present a tale of differing outcomes from contests between established city and suburban political strategies – such contests being one ingredient in an increasingly variegated political landscape across the settlements that comprise major city-regions as a subject (Phelps and Wood, 2011).

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