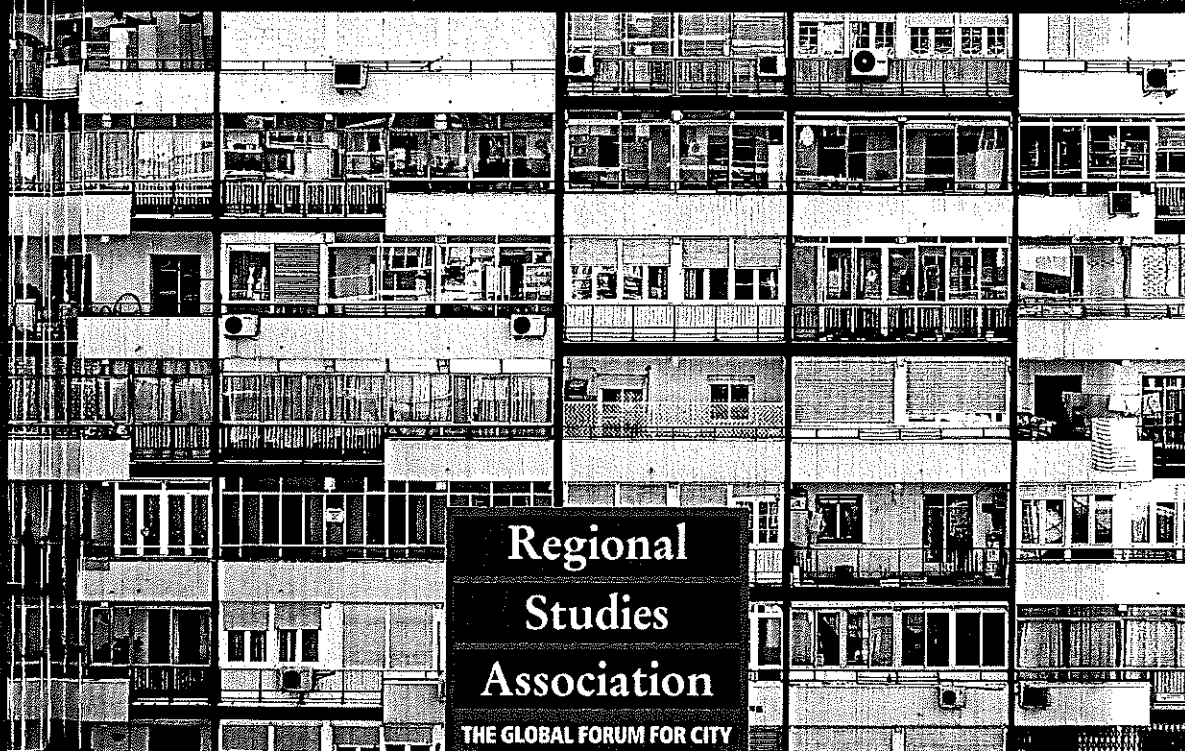


CITIES IN CRISIS

SOCIO-SPATIAL IMPACTS OF THE ECONOMIC
CRISIS IN SOUTHERN EUROPEAN CITIES



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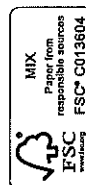
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5 The neoliberal model of the city in Southern Europe

A comparative approach to Valencia and Madrid

Juan Romero, Carme Melo, and Dolores Brandis

Introduction

Since 2007 the Spanish economy has faced the worst financial and economic crisis of the past 50 years. The effects of such a deep recession are well known: growth in unemployment, intensification of public debts, an increase of poverty and inequality, the rise of socio-economic divides, loss of trust in institutions, and political discontent. These consequences become dramatically visible in cities.

The turmoil generated by the global financial system, limitless and unregulated since the 1980s, alongside the specific deficits of the Spanish institutional framework, such as its support of a growth model based on residential construction (Romero, Jiménez, & Villoria, 2012), ineffective accountability mechanisms, low-quality local and regional government institutions (Lapuente, 2009), flexible and discretionary land-use legislation (Iglesias, 2007), and a growing need for revenue at the local and regional levels of government (Fernández, 2008), have led to an unparalleled crisis. Following the trend in other parts of the world, such as Latin America and the United States, where financial markets had also been deregulated three decades earlier, Spain joined the group of countries that received a huge amount of financial capital injected into the home building industry in a scenario of abundant global liquidity.

The socialist government of Rodríguez Zapatero (2004–2011) was unable to pave the ground for a way out of the crisis, based on a different and distinctive model. When the situation seriously deteriorated, he was compelled to accept a series of social cuts following the neoliberal paradigm. This led to the worst electoral defeat of the socialist party in the democratic era, and to the absolute majority of the conservative party in the 2011 elections. National, regional, and local conservative governments have thereafter backed a series of measures responding to a clearly defined political strategy: a great reduction in social public spending, privatisation of the welfare state, and a major boost for political recentralisation processes.

In this chapter, the scope and the outcomes of these measures are analysed. Particular attention is paid to the effects they have had on the Spanish urban and metropolitan regions of Madrid and Valencia, where the conservative

governments have been hegemonic for two decades at both the local and regional levels. Although there are other soft versions of the neoliberal city, namely Barcelona and Bilbao (Capel, 2003; Borja, 2010; Cucó, 2013b), there is consensus among academics that Madrid and Valencia represent paradigmatic examples of neoliberal thought applied to city administration (Rodríguez, García, & Muñoz, 2013).

The chapter proceeds as follows. First, the 'neoliberal turn' in Spanish city policy is explained, with a focus on its implications for urban development and the social divide in Spain and in both case studies, Madrid and Valencia. The application of the neoliberal model of urbanism is illustrated through an analysis of these two urban and Metropolitan Areas. The consequences that neoliberal strategies have had for these cities are assessed. Finally, recommendations that could be further developed into an agenda for both studied cases are summarised.

The neoliberal model of production and reproduction of the city

The 'neoliberal turn' in city policies took place in Spain in the second half of the twentieth century and has served the interests of the elite thereafter. Although there are specific local contexts, the basic characteristics of this model can be summarised along these lines: (a) consolidation of the real estate business as the driving force of economic activity, a process favoured by the adoption of the euro; (b) significant changes in both state and regional urban development legislation, resulting in intense and dispersed urbanisation and large residential developments; (c) mortgage law reform, which led to the financialisation of land and its inclusion in global capital circuits; (d) promotion of 'entrepreneurial urbanism' through solid coalitions between financial societies, land developers, and local and regional authorities; (e) public investment in mega events, great projects, and immense infrastructures (Díaz, 2013; Vives & Rullán, 2014).

The cases of Madrid and Valencia, among others, exemplify the implementation of the described model, which is at odds with the right to the city and good government of the territory claimed for metropolitan regions. Here urban development is not a vehicle for the improvement of the economic and demographic situation of the city, nor is it a means to channel the spatial effects of urbanisation (Pinson, 2011), rather, it is orientated towards unconditional growth and the privatisation of services and public space (Méndez, 2013).

In this approach, analysed among others by the scholars José Manuel Naredo and Fernando Gaja, territorial planning falls into the realm of the responsibilities of local governments. These, in turn, transfer the definition and implementation of urban development policies to the elite. Consequently, regulatory planning is rejected, metropolitan forms of governing the territory are absent, public-private partnerships are privileged, the role of the public sphere in the provision of public services is reduced, public space is gradually privatised, and participatory democratic processes are undermined. In addition, there is a tendency to favour singular

urban projects and mega events. Planning is thus no longer conceived as a means for territorial coherence and protection of the general interest. It becomes, instead, a tool in the hands of partisan economic interests (Naredo, 2010; Gaja, 2013).

Conceptualising urbanism in the above way means providing the consolidated city with a series of urban transformations that seek to reproduce given spaces. This is achieved through strategic planning and executed by means of individual projects and author architectures, addressing the challenges of globalisation and international interurban competitiveness. In this sense, Madrid has attempted to attract investors with projects such as the 'Cuatro Torres Business Area', which has been built on the foundations of the former Real Madrid Sport City and is already a hallmark of the new city skyline, or the 'Operación Chamartín', located along rail land in the north of the city and paralysed by the real estate crisis. The case of Valencia has proved to be even more striking and unfortunate. Political leaders promoted great iconic urban projects and sport events such as 'The City of Arts and Sciences', 'The America's Cup', and 'Formula 1 Street Circuit'. The result has been enormous public sector investment in infrastructures of doubtful profitability and sometimes even failed projects.

As will be illustrated later in the chapter, proposals fostering urban growth in the city outskirts abound in the neoliberal urbanism model, with peripheral areas being valued as potential building land and subjugated to the logics of the real estate market. Territory is conceived as supporting infrastructure, encouraging any economic activity, while private agents obtain huge gains from land reclassification, urbanisation, and construction. The 1998 reform of the Urban Planning Legislation accomplished by the conservative government allowed the redefinition of the use of all the land that had previously been excluded from development. In fact, one of the basic tenets of neoliberal policy in Madrid and Valencia has been the liberalisation of land. Such a position is justified on the grounds that freedom of building will regulate the housing market. The truth is, however, that liberalisation aims at bringing the housing sector to the core of the economy, employment, and the municipal finances.

This process has been the result of a well-orchestrated strategy, embracing the financial system, urban developers, and political representatives, and applied in a deregulated and uncontrolled context that favoured a gigantic speculative real estate bubble. This created an optimal situation for new construction instead of rehabilitation, for housing conceived as investment and not as a product to be used, for market rate housing rather than social housing, for home-ownership to be prioritised over home-rental, and for surplus accumulation.

The reality of the speculative bubble proves that regional governments have promoted the reclassification of land that is not suitable for development. This has quickly made great amounts of land available in the market, and a variety of legislative and regulatory mechanisms approved by the Spanish parliament and the parliaments of the Autonomous Regions have been adopted to facilitate the management of new construction by private developers. Local administrations have benefitted greatly from this system, as wild urbanisation has become their main source of income.

This model, favoured due to growing cash flows in big cities and real estate investments, fuelled the Spanish speculative bubble, which was then inflated by the 2008 international economic and financial crisis. The crisis brought an end to the expansive phase of the Spanish economy and marked the beginning of a period of recession that is still ongoing. Needless to say, the real estate bubble and the subsequent economic crisis produced, partly, by its bursting, cannot be circumscribed to Spain and to the cities of Madrid and Valencia analysed in this contribution. Obvious differences in the time and magnitude of these two phenomena, the real estate boom, and the economic crisis, can be seen across the most economically developed parts of the world. In this respect, there is some evidence that the Spanish speculative bubble should not be compared with those of any other country in terms of the increase in housing prices, the number of affected units, and the growth of the real estate credit. Spain is among the nations that lead the world rankings in each of these different dimensions, and, if they are considered together, it is the most cited example of an unprecedented housing bubble in an economically advanced country (Campos, 2008).

Development abuses and the real estate bubble have had manifold impacts.¹ The stock of unsold new homes in Spain in June 2012 was 1.3 million, with Madrid, Barcelona, and Valencia accounting for 20.4 per cent of the total. There were unfinished developments, thousands of works brought to a halt due to a lack of funds, and scarce sales expectations. In the region of Valencia, for instance, these amounted to 8,467 hectares in 2012 (16 per cent of the residential land for development) (Burriel, 2014).

Two examples of the same process: housing developments in the residential outskirts of Madrid and government failure in the Metropolitan Area of Valencia

Housing developments in the residential outskirts of Madrid

The implementation of the neoliberal concept of urbanism described above and its consequences can be recognised, at different scales, in the production process that has taken place in several parts of the country. A focus will be placed here on the outskirts of Madrid. Reference to the production of residential outskirts is needed because the large amount of land for development brought into the market between 1991 and 1997 in the city of Madrid was used for housing. This played a key role in the quest for economic growth during the real estate boom, but it is now having a reverse effect since the first symptoms of the economic crisis became manifest in 2008 (Brandis & Río, 2007; Brandis, 2012a, 2012b). Today eroded land, empty plots, unfinished buildings, homes for sale, and an absence of infrastructure can be found in the periphery of Madrid.

The 1991 conservative local government undertook a revision of planning in order to establish a new urbanistic philosophy. As a result enough land was mobilised to guarantee a considerable number of houses. It was argued that land scarcity had generated a speculative spiral and thus expelled the citizens of

Madrid towards the metropolitan outskirts. In this way, the biggest unvalued urban development programme aside of planning began (Brandis, 2014).

The process was backed by the regional conservative government. The 1996 *Regional Plan of Territorial Strategy* actively contributed to urbanisation by investing in infrastructure in the Metropolitan Area (Díaz, 2013). This complemented investments made by the central government, so new communication arteries were built and connected through ring roads to facilitate urbanisation. Most local governments in the Autonomous Region of Madrid approved urban planning measures to guarantee the expansion of land suitable for development and thus encouraged construction activity. This was crucial for increasing their revenues.

The Regional Plan was a gigantic project of residential extension and development grounded on big territorial reticulation intertwined with infrastructure, where productive activity became secondary. The regional *Land Law* (17 July 2001) openly approved the model of real estate hegemony, whose main pillars were logistics and housing, in other words, the control of trade flows and the construction of residential complexes, each one in its own place, according to their position in the social geography of conurbation and the status of their addresses (Roch, 2002).

The same growth-based patterns characterised the *Madrid Urban Development Plan* designed by the conservative government in 1997. The plan gave continuity to the expansive concept of urbanism initiated in 1991. Even greater amounts of land for development were brought into the market while the physical capacity of the city of Madrid was pushed towards its limits. The main reason given to justify this initiative was still price reduction, as high costs were said to be the main cause of housing scarcity. The reality revealed, however, that prices had increased notably since 1991. There was a substantial reclassification of undeveloped land that the former 1985 Plan had protected, mainly focused on the M-50 ring road, the expansion of radial motorways 2, 3, 5, and the M-45 ring road, all initiated from 1999 onwards. The aim was to build over 100,000 houses in 5,000 hectares (Brandis, 2014).

The above land development process, originated amidst the real estate boom, triggered excessive surface development, 2.5 times larger than that which had been established in the *Urban Development Plans* of 1991 and 1997, and almost doubled the number of houses. The housing needs of Madrid, which were around 5,000 homes annually, did not account for the number of planned new houses (Vinueza & De la Riva, 2013). On top of it, over-supply did not result in a price drop because housing was seen as an enduring financial asset.

Negotiating practices were institutionalised to allow economic agents to participate safely. The aim was to facilitate the land development approved by the 1991 Urban Development Plans and the subsequent 1997 real estate developments. Buildability indices were defined and landowners were given considerable freedom to design partial plans. These measures were intended to accelerate arrangements and reduce the time frame between the elaboration of plans and the construction of houses, while restricting the participation of public administrations in the planning process.

Building contractors and real estate companies were the main urban development agents. They mobilised huge amounts of land to build new houses. Financial agencies provided abundant and cheap credit that fed the speculative bubble. Apartments and houses were sold 'off-plan', while construction was still in progress or even in those cases when it had not yet begun. Development projects were finalised, albeit individual units remained unsold. And prices did not stop rising.

It is important to note that the key features of these residential projects were oversimplification and a lack of complexity of urban forms. As a result, they have given rise to a stereotypical conglomerate that could be situated anywhere across the territory. Insularity is one of their central elements: they are located next to highways and arterial roads, and thus a connection with nearby urban areas is almost impossible. Other aspects of the finalised Urban Development Plans worth mentioning are zoning, the non-integration of uses, over-dimension of roads (a strong deterrent to pedestrian traffic), and the introversion of residential blocks with private facilities. When combined, these factors result in banal exercises of urban composition.

There are few squares and parks, and children playgrounds can be seen amidst shrubs, weeds, and an occasional dead tree (Brandis, 2013); nevertheless, the absence of public spaces as meeting places for neighbours is partly offset by private facilities, such as swimming pools, children's playgrounds, and benches. Buildings are surrounded by walls and railings so there is no place for the shops at street level that would revitalise neighbourhood life. Furthermore, the model of construction followed in Madrid has produced a new space of public use for Spanish cities: large malls. These are a central aspect of the neoliberal notion of the city as well as non-negotiable elements of planning.

The execution process of designed projects has been affected by the economic crisis. The level of completion of planned houses and the degree of occupancy provides evidence of the standstill of the sector in the middle of the economic crisis. Unfinished units and buildings not yet begun can be seen in those 7,000 hectares of periphery agreed for development from the 1990s, once designated to sustain over 200,000 dwellings. The current picture shows less than 80,000, that is 38 per cent of estimations. The profound real estate crisis and the economic difficulties faced by Spanish society point to a delayed and complicated execution of projects, especially those already behind schedule (Brandis, 2014).

The main problem concerning urbanisation in the outskirts of Madrid was not the lack of houses and land suitable for development, but, on the contrary, the excess of both land and building units, and the fact that these were underused. To this, the absence of political will by engaged actors to design coherent, balanced, and sustainable public policy should be added. The institutional framework was favourable for the housing industry, which became the national industry par excellence. The price to be paid for this was too high: unoccupied houses, unmet housing needs, thousands of mortgages throughout the country, and a vast amount of construction work, which had a negative impact on people's quality of life, the urban heritage, and the surrounding ecosystems.

Research by the Madrid Metropolitan Observatory (Rodríguez, García, & Muñoz, 2013) shows that the real estate cycle reached spectacular dimensions: 50,000 hectares were compromised for housing development between 1993 and 2003 in the Autonomous Region of Madrid. A total of 180,000 new houses were planned in emerging Madrid city neighbourhoods, while in the Autonomous Region of Madrid 800,000 dwellings were built between 1995 and 2008. These facts were shaped by a number of large urban planning operations, as mentioned earlier, and important sums of public investment in infrastructure (for example, kilometres of motorways and other high capacity roads doubled in the region).

Government failure in the urban and metropolitan region of Valencia

The case of Valencia has basic similarities with that of Madrid. Policies of identical orientation were implemented here as well; however, the Valencia model was not centred on intensive urbanisation of the Metropolitan Area. The local and regional governments focused instead on large real estate developments, mega-events, and investment in individualised big city projects through ad hoc *Partial Plans* and *Integrated Action Plans*. For more than 20 years conservative governments have enforced a model of city disguised as false modernity and based on the irresponsible abuse of public spending. Such a model rests upon well-defined elements: the construction industry as a key economic activity (which has brought debts to households and companies), big projects, and mega events (costly and ill-considered).

Recent work assesses public expenditure in big projects in the city of Valencia: 'The America's Cup' (€2,064 million), 'The City of Arts and Sciences' (€1,300 million approx.), and 'Formula 1 Street Circuit' (€235 million approx.) (Gaja, 2013). Despite the large sums of money invested in them, projects and events like these have been reduced in the aftermath to what Sánchez Ferlosio (1999) has termed 'empty boxes'. Such enterprises were sometimes prioritised over urban policies that would benefit the entire city. This has led to a risk of a split between the different areas that coexist within the city, insofar as there is general perception among the citizenry that there is one city to be visited and another, less glamorous, neglected city to live in. The failed attempt to consolidate a permanent 'Formula 1 Street Circuit' illustrates the ephemeral and ultra-modern ideology inspiring the project of neoliberal Valencia over the last two decades (Ruiz & Santamarina, 2013).

The frustrated project of a 'spectacularised neoliberal city' has had consequences in the 'hidden city' which now become visible: the privatisation of urban space, an increase in regional and municipal public debt, material and symbolic relegation of some neighbourhoods, and unfinished, abandoned, or underused buildings and infrastructures (Hernández & Torres, 2013). The contrast between the two cities has been sharpened by two circumstances: the local government's decision to reduce the number of public services, and increasing fragmentation, inequality, and precariousness (Torres & García, 2013a).

The unsustainable model applied in Valencia in recent years has placed the city and the region in a very difficult situation. It could be argued that the Autonomous Region of Valencia is now a sort of *failed region* in which the capital, Valencia, faces a precarious economic situation and a high level of public debt (€968 million in 2013, according to data facilitated by the Bank of Spain in December 2013) that compromises the potential for good city government. This is the outcome of 15 years of the speculative housing bubble and erratic political management since the boom in 2007. According to Eugenio Burriel, there was a formidable residential and industrial land bubble, with rates over those of other Autonomous Regions, such as the Basque Country or Catalonia. Unlike Valencia, these regions 'implemented measures to set limits on land reclassification and low-density urbanization, and adopted a very rigorous supramunicipal territorial planning' (Burriel, 2014: p. 119).

The neoliberal model of city government has neglected to lead new forms of coordination at the metropolitan scale. In this sense, the metropolitan region of Valencia has a particular feature worth mentioning in this context. In addition to the 'real city', it has one of the five biggest *Huertas*² of the western Mediterranean area (Stanners & Bourdeau, 1995). Few European cities have such a privileged and valuable environment; however, nobody ensures its protection. Political actors in both the autonomous region and local government have proven unable to develop a meaningful policy for sustainable planning and management, and to devise coordination strategies at the metropolitan scale (Romero & Farinós, 2013). The periurban *Huerta* thus remains vulnerable to abuse.

The *Huerta* of Valencia was confronted with the same processes of dispersion of economic and residential activity faced by any Spanish large Metropolitan Area in recent years. Tremendous and chaotic development expansion, the disorganised localisation of industrial activities and services, land speculation, and environmental degradation are the effects of the lack of planning at the metropolitan scale and the passivity of the public administrations involved. Governments have not fulfilled their territorial planning responsibilities and failed to establish supra-local frameworks of planning and management. The neglect of farmers' needs must also be mentioned here. They should have been the key agents in the definition of a different system of production and consumption, one that is more sustainable and centred on localised agriculture (Romero & Francés, 2012).

No single democratic government has effectively attempted to overcome the lack of territorial management at the metropolitan level, to redress the rapid deterioration of one of the most amazing cultural landscapes of the Mediterranean basin, or to advance an agro-ecological model based on sustainable production, quality of life, and a conception of the agricultural space as a strategic reserve. The unfinished *Territorial Action Plan for the Protection of the Huerta of Valencia* (subjected to a public consultation process in 2010 and later abandoned by the regional government) is the last failure.

The neoliberal strategy of city government: austerity, public expenditure cuts, and privatisation policies

The *Stability Programme Update* sets the target of reducing public expenditure, from 45.2 per cent of GDP in 2010 to 39.7 per cent in 2017 (MINHAP, 2013). Such a decrease places Spain almost 25 per cent below the European average in the relative size of the public sector and, thus, in the welfare state's scope and provision. Table 5.1 shows the public expenditure breakdown.

Most cuts in social policy accepted by the Spanish government in the *Stability Programme*, vis-à-vis the EU, correspond to the Autonomous Regions and local governments. These are the levels of government responsible for most public social policy (education, health, and social services) (Romero, Collado, & Rodríguez, 2014). It is also important to highlight the existence of enormous asymmetries in the distribution of territorialised public spending in Spain, and the differences in funding per inhabitant to deal with public services, which fall under the competence of Autonomous Regions and materialise in cities. In this sense, the latest reports indicate that the Autonomous Region of Valencia is the most damaged, while the Region of Madrid has a better level of revenue due to being the country's capital and fiscal residence of large corporations (De la Fuente, Barberán, & Uriel, 2014).

Given that these policies take shape in cities, it is obvious that their impacts are also rendered more visible in cities. Several studies demonstrate the profound social consequences of these processes, for both the cases of Madrid (Canosa & García, 2014) and Valencia (Torres & García, 2013b; Cucó, 2013a).

Table 5.1 Expenditure breakdown: Stability Programme Spain, 2011–2016

Public expenditure	2011 (% of GDP)	2016 (% of GDP)	% variation of expenditure in the GDP
1 Public general services	5.7	6.1	7.2
2 Defence	1.1	0.8	-20.6
3 Public order and security	2.2	1.7	-22.4
4 Economic affairs	5.3	3.3	-38.0
5 Environmental protection	0.9	0.6	-30.6
6 Housing and community services	0.6	0.4	-42.4
7 Health	6.3	5.4	-15.6
8 Recreational activities, culture and religion	1.5	1.0	-36.1
9 Education	4.7	4.0	-15.7
10 Social production	16.9	16.6	-1.8
Total expenditure	45.2	39.7	-12.0

Source: authors' visualisation based on data from the Ministry of the Finance and Public Administrations, Stability Programme Update Spain 2013–2016, 26 April 2013.

Rise of poverty and social inequality

Available data is conclusive in pointing to the consequences of 'governing for the elite' (Oxfam Intermón, 2014). The recession has triggered a notable increase in poverty since 2008 in Spain, with alarming levels in some Autonomous Regions (Herrero, Soler, & Villar, 2012) and social segments. Analyses also reveal 'an increase in inequality slightly higher than average in the EU countries' (Ayala, Martínez, & Ruiz-Huerta, 2013: p. 52).³ Experts agree on the most important trends: (a) the crisis has had a worst effect on employment in Spain than average in the EU territory; (b) inequality has risen more than ever, as revealed since information on annual household income was made available; (c) low-income households have reduced their income most considerably, whereas high-income family units have seen their resources decrease to a lesser extent; (d) Spain has shown limited capacity to tackle rising inequality through its tax and benefits system, while the processes of economic impoverishment and descendant social mobility are worsened by cuts in social protection; this affects income and equality of opportunities, and has a remarkable impact on vulnerable groups such as young people, migrants, women, and the long-term unemployed (Ayala, Martínez, & Ruiz-Huerta, 2013; Davia, 2013; Gradin & Del Rio, 2013; FOESSA, 2014; Schraad-Tischler & Kroll, 2014).

These statements are supported by empirical evidence, which renders Spain a peculiar case:

- a The social divide has increased considerably between 2007 and 2013. In 2007, 16.3 per cent of the population faced 'severe and moderate exclusion', whereas in 2013 the percentage was over 25 per cent (FOESSA, 2014). The recent report 'Social justice in the EU' also states that:

Developments in Italy and Spain suggest a similar trajectory for poverty as that seen in Greece. In both Italy and Spain, the crisis has facilitated a significant increase in the numbers of those at risk of poverty and social exclusion. In 2007, a total of 23.3 percent of Spain's population was already affected; by 2013, this rate had risen to 27.3 percent. In Italy, meanwhile, about 28.4 percent of people in 2013 were at risk of poverty and social exclusion. The rate of serious material deprivation increased there from 6.8 percent to 12.4 percent between 2007 and 2013.

(Schraad-Tischler & Kroll, 2014: p. 24)

- b Exclusion from work is the most important dimension of social exclusion, evolving from 16.9 per cent in 2007 to 41.5 per cent in 2013. Although it is the most important, however, this is not the only type of exclusion. Young people to age 29 are the most vulnerable group. The exclusion process intensifies amongst migrants and youth affected by early school-leaving in the absence of compulsory studies. In fact, premature school dropouts are a negative element, a point to which we will return later. What is more, as indicated

in the *Social Justice Index*, Spain is second-highest of all 28 EU member states in almost all categories analysed, namely unemployment, long-term unemployment, temporary jobs, and poor workers. Expert opinion is clear:

Of course, the crisis-stricken countries of southern Europe in particular can only dream of having the investment flexibility to enable this degree of support for active labor market policies. The drastic austerity policies there have led to massive financial cuts in nearly all policy areas.

(Schraad-Tischler & Kroll, 2014: p. 54)

- c The recession has had a stronger impact on low-income households. Transition from medium to low income has risen, yet bottom-up progress (more frequent prior to the crisis) has decreased. A total of 10 per cent of higher income units have remained stable or even increased, whilst 10 per cent of lower income units are still falling (FOESSA, 2014).
- d Inequality in wealth distribution has been largely produced by factors such as wage inequality, income instability, and the Spanish occupational structure, characterised by a high proportion of manual occupations (in 2007, the volume of employment in the construction sector was the highest in Europe). Spain has been dependent on productive sectors closely related to economic cycles, and, therefore, the crisis has destroyed many more jobs in Spain than elsewhere (FOESSA, 2014). Consequently:

It is little surprise that Spain and Greece, each of which suffered considerably during the recent crisis years, fall clearly at the tail end of the rankings. Youth unemployment rates in both countries now stand well above 50 percent; given the lack of prospects for young people in these countries, this must be regarded as a lost generation.

(Schraad-Tischler & Kroll, 2014: p. 42)

- e Public policies have lost redistributive capacities since the beginning of the crisis. The amount of households receiving social aid was 29.9 per cent in 2007, 23.1 per cent in 2009, and 17.8 per cent in 2013. Nevertheless, 'mutual aid' and 'refamiliarisation' processes have become significant (43.4 per cent in 2007, 50.1 per cent in 2009, and 52.6 per cent in 2013) (FOESSA, 2014). This type of aid softens the negative impact of insufficient public policies and increased social exclusion.

Neoliberal city policies have deepened urban segregation, and recession has accentuated the housing problem; however, governments have not made enough effort to ameliorate the social emergency situation in Spain. The regional government of Madrid provides a good example: in 2003 it decided to sell state-subsidised houses to the Goldman-Sachs investment fund. This means that subsidised houses now belong to a private investor, a situation that is creating many tensions and conflicts with the occupants. Eviction processes have already started.

Differences at the regional level become significant in the Spanish case (Méndez, 2013). Regions where the urban development process generated a great deal of activity and employment in the building sector have been struck harder by the real estate crisis. Unemployment, urban poverty growth, and social exclusion are therefore higher in certain urban and metropolitan regions, like Madrid, and coastal areas such as Valencia.

The urban area of Valencia deserves special attention, as it is where unemployment indicators have worsened rapidly since 2008 (Pitarch, 2014; Salom & Albertos, 2014). These declining processes have had an impact on the central city and its historical centres, as well as on industrial metropolitan belts. For example, households in the Autonomous Region of Valencia are more exposed to vulnerabilities than the Spanish average, with 26 per cent of them facing social exclusion processes (69.8 per cent more than in 2007); one out of three people live in a state of social exclusion; child poverty is around 25 per cent; 49.5 per cent of citizens are suffering work-related exclusion; the unemployment amongst under-25-year-olds was 57.84 per cent in the second trimester of 2014; one out of three people are affected by residential exclusion; and 13 per cent of households are dealing with problems in securing a balanced diet (Lluch, Esteve, & Gimeno, 2014). A similar process of growing polarisation, deprivation, and social fragmentation characterised by a transition towards 'hourglass-shape' social structures is taking place in the city of Madrid (Rodríguez, García, & Muñoz, 2013).

Educational inequality and segregation: the great social divide

The real estate bubble and the economic crisis further aggravated the already delicate state of education and training in Spain, particularly among the thousands of youths who abandoned the education system too early. In recent studies, Spain features last of all 28 EU member states:

'Spain, with an early school-leaving rate of 23.6 percent, is currently the farthest from the overall low rates in Croatia and Slovenia, even though a reduction in early school-leaving figures has been observed here in recent years; in 2008, the early leaving rate of 18 to 24-year-olds was 31.7 percent. The SGI country experts describe a mixed picture in terms of developments and prospects in the Spanish educational system, in large part due to the current austerity policies' (Schraad-Tischler & Kroll, 2014: p. 42). As a result, today many people are trapped in the vicious circle of unemployment, precarious work, low income and lack of social mobility. The cutting of education expenditure will exacerbate this situation.

(Fundación I^o de Mayo, 2013)

These facts all explain why the commitment with Brussels undertaken by the current government breeds rejection, a commitment to reduce 15.7 per cent of public spending in education by 2017, a decrease from 4.7 to 4.0 per cent of the GDP. A target like this was established by the *Stability Programme Update of*

Spain 2013–2016, mentioned earlier in the text, but the cuts are even higher when compared to levels in 2007. This is a dangerous reduction of public expenditure in education for a country that is far from the EU average.

The insufficient number of teachers, forced retirement, and the prohibition on replacing retired teachers, the frozen system of promotion, the rise in the number of students in a classroom, the increase of academic fees while cutting the number of scholarships, the lower budget for public schools and universities, and the attacks on the public system of scientific and technological research, are among the factors that will have negative and lasting consequences on Spanish society as a whole. There will be a reduction in spending of €200 million in comparison to the 2012–2013 academic year, and the recent announcement made by the government indicating that scholarships will be partially replaced by a loan system similar to the Anglo-North-American one, should not be underestimated. All these circumstances undermine society's capacity for innovation and adaptation to changes in the productive system.

Some of the consequences of these measures are already visible: brain drain, non-completion of higher education, difficulties in affording postgraduate studies for children in families with modest income, the suppression of teaching positions in the public education system, a decrease in the number of schools (especially in rural areas), overcrowded classrooms in urban centres, and a lack of teachers for students with special needs.

Madrid and Valencia were at the forefront of the 'conservative revolution' in Spain (Jativa, 2013). As well as cuts in public expenditure, the conservative regional and local governments in both Autonomous Regions implemented their own ideological agenda. Initiatives adopted, and described above, did not respond to recession, but aimed to undermine public education while funding private education institutions with public funds.

The right to health under attack

The Spanish government has assumed a 15.6 per cent reduction of public expenditure in health between 2011 and 2017, that is, from 6.3 to 5.4 per cent of the GDP (MINHAP, 2013). This implies a decrease of nearly €10,000, although cuts are more intense if the 2007–2017 period is considered (Table 5.1). At the same time, the conservative government has long been accomplishing a series of privatisations of the public health system in some Autonomous Regions (well before the recession started), for ideological reasons unrelated to efficient management. Privatisation started in the Autonomous Region of Valencia. This was the first region to introduce different mechanisms for the private management of public hospitals and the externalisation of services, starting at the Metropolitan Hospital of Alzira and later implemented in other public health centres.

The *2004–2007 Plan of Health Infrastructures* applied the model adopted in Valencia to the Autonomous Region of Madrid. Eight new hospitals were built with public money, although construction, maintenance, and operation were assigned to private companies for a period of up to 30 years and in exchange for

tax. Similarly, the provision of certain basic services was privatised (Rodríguez, García, & Muñoz, 2013). Since the beginning of the recession, the Autonomous Region of Madrid has attempted to hand over several regional hospitals, virtually under an oligopoly regime, to investment groups made up of banks, service businesses, and national as well as international investment funds. Notwithstanding, this effort has partially failed due to the active mobilisation of social movements against privatisation. Another significant step backwards for the health system has been the violation of the rights of dependent people and their families. In suppressing these rights, the new 2012 legislation has destroyed a crucial sector of social services that served to complement and improve the health system (Observatorio de la Dependencia, 2013).

Cuts to the health budget affect staff, maintenance, investment, and pharmacy. Although there is not enough, or complete data yet, it is nonetheless possible to draw some conclusions about the impacts: (a) reduction of the number of health care centres and closure of the evening service (affecting, above all, citizens in rural areas); (b) long waiting lists (the number of patients on the waiting list as well as the waiting time reached record levels in 2013 and will presumably continue to grow); (c) congestion of emergency units; (d) a decrease in the number and scope of services offered and an obligation to pay for services provided free of charge in the past, such as non-urgent ambulance transportation and prostheses; (e) the introduction of co-payment; (f) fewer professionals (compulsory retirement, vacancies unfilled, reduction of replacements); (g) prohibition to provide health care to undocumented migrant people; and (h) deterioration of health centres. These measures are undermining the Spanish health system, which was once among the world's top ten and is nonetheless still placed in a good position within the EU (Schraad-Tischler & Kroll, 2014). Citizens therefore distrust these reforms and claim a public health regime, as made evident by the 2012 *Health Barometer* (CIS & MSSSI, 2013).

Most social public policies in Spain, including both legislation development and funding, are competencies of the Autonomous Regions. Local governments also have some competencies, especially with regards to social services. For this reason, the evolution of social public spending in the city of Madrid, the only one for which there is available data, has been included (Table 5.2) in order to reflect on whether the evolution of social public expenditure has been paralleled by an increase in social needs triggered by the crisis. The table illustrates that the local government's approach, based on cuts in public spending, is coherent with the regional position.

Political disaffection and new social movements

Urban discontent has emerged out of the crisis. A variety of reasons can be put forward to explain such disappointment: an increase in material difficulties; reduction, deterioration, or suppression of public services; deprivation, insecurity, and uncertainty; low-quality democracy, corruption, discredit of politics and institutions, and political party endogamy.

Table 5.2 Evolution of social expenditure by Madrid City Council, Family and Social Services Area, 2008, 2010, 2011, and 2013 – final budgets on 31 December (in € millions)

	2008	2010	2011	2013*
Direction and management	9,207,287	9,820,186	9,011,183	9,309,221
Cooperation to development	20,480,051	15,965,651	1,652,432	1,652,432
Family, childhood, and voluntary service	25,702,300	27,314,476	28,430,053	33,601,315
Care for homeless people	14,100,560	16,813,589	13,257,397	13,257,397
Social emergency	5,878,024	7,297,339	5,920,473	5,920,473
Immigration	14,544,160	12,170,925	10,239,096	10,239,096
Social services	18,622,058	20,121,939	9,319,774	9,319,774
Equality, women, and conciliation	18,860,376	17,994,000	12,590,912	12,590,912
Care for the elderly	31,167,802	39,556,914	34,015,753	34,015,753
Centres for elderly people	40,559,600	60,432,018	41,917,665	41,917,665
Education centres	31,081,270	42,693,546	36,125,335	36,125,335
Education services	7,335,215	7,231,654	5,060,328	5,060,328
Youth	3,770,062	2,820,277	1,665,734	1,665,734
Family and social services	701,663	740,707	956,826	956,826
Total family and social services area	242,010,421	280,969,221	210,162,961	198,725,061

Source: authors' visualisation based on data from Madrid City Hall, Technical General Secretary, various years.
Note
* Criteria are different for 2013 since Madrid City Hall regrouped some of the former sections.

It could be argued that Spain is facing a gradual crisis of large traditional political parties and the emergence of new urban social movements, like the *Indignados* movement or the massive citizen protests in favour of public health and education (best known as 'citizen tides' and especially present in Madrid). These phenomena respond to a different conception of reality, politics, democracy, and civic engagement. They point to a break from the traditional politics that should not be read as a generational issue. Movements such as *Podemos* ('We can') have been able to channel some of the urban disappointment. The unexpected electoral result of *Podemos* in the recent European elections (1.2 million votes and five MEPs) highlights the existence of citizen concerns, which have been ignored so far. These movements have a political dimension (Castells, 2011). It is interesting to note that in Southern Europe general discontent is manifested through left-wing groupings, while in Eastern and Northern Europe citizens have turned to right-wing populism and new xenophobic political parties to express their disappointment, insecurity, and growing feelings of retreat.

Important political changes have taken place in the local and regional elections, held in May 2015. Some regions and cities, like those studied in this chapter, have been a privileged laboratory for testing neoliberal policies over more than two decades. Now these regions are facing a situation of institutional, political, social, and economic emergency. Today, 25 years later, Madrid and Valencia could also be a privileged laboratory for new political actors to develop an alternative agenda based on a new narrative.

Conclusion

The profound changes that have taken place in the last decades have struck at the foundations of the welfare state in Europe. Today's European society is more unequal and the so-called *Social Question* has re-entered the political agenda in Europe, especially in cities. Austerity measures have been tested before, and with negative results in many parts of the world (Oxfam Intermón, 2013), however, they are dominant in Europe. If these policies persist, an increase in poverty and instability can be expected.

Mediterranean countries joined the welfare state very late and they did so in a different context. Despite the progress achieved, the welfare state in Southern Europe should not be compared with the *Scandinavian*, *Anglo-Saxon* and *Continental* models. EU-27 public expenditure statistics comparing education, health, and social protection spending across countries prove this (Eurostat, 2013). In the case of Spain, we consider that this is the context in which the effects of the economic crisis of the late 2000s and the applied neoliberal policies must be placed.

Economic, cultural, and social transformation in a milieu of growing 'possessive individualism' (Moreno, 2013: p. 36) and the deregulation and mercantilisation of social policy have prompted instability, segmentation, insecurity, loss of cultural referents, and fear for the future. Polarisation and social tension are the

outcome of these changes. The *old European periphery* (Ireland, Portugal, Greece, and Spain) is trapped between, on the one hand, structural deficit and welfare state underdevelopment and, on the other hand, new demands against a background of change. Moreover, Spain finds itself in a complex position within Europe. It cannot compete with countries in the *European Backbone*. Eastern Europe and the emergent economies are serious competitors, as these countries can offer cheaper and better-qualified workers.

The trend in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries points at growing inequality if current public policy is maintained (OECD, 2008, 2011a, 2011b), as inequality can coexist with economic growth. It is thus imperative to reverse this trend and introduce policies targeting the social divide. This is paramount in urban and metropolitan cities and regions, above all in places like Valencia and Madrid where the neoliberal agenda has been implemented over a long period of time.

Cities and citizens should be better 'equipped'. In this sense, Jordi Borja's (2012, 2013) suggestive and comprehensive proposal, which considers four arenas, could be a good starting point. The first arena is the institutional terrain. There is a growing awareness of the importance of institutional deficits and the role 'extractive elites' play in hindering the progress of nations and the health of democratic systems (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012).

The second area of action relates to fighting the 'social divide' to overcome poverty, inequality, fragmentation, and urban segregation. It is necessary to bring back the true meaning of the 'right to the city'. Research done on Valencia and Madrid (Cucó, 2013a; Observatorio Metropolitano de Madrid, 2013) shows that this may be the most difficult, yet the most pressing, challenge of today; that is addressing unemployment, fragmentation processes, reproduction of segregation, diversity, and target social groups at risk.

'Thinking together' as a metropolitan region is the third suggested field. It is a basic condition to better 'equip' metropolitan and urban regions, and enhance coordination and cooperation among political agents and among public and private actors. Nevertheless, failure in government experiences at the metropolitan level is one of the most notable features of the analysed case studies of Valencia and Madrid (Romero & Farinós, 2013). In contrast, there are many examples of good practices and imaginative forms of flexible collaboration (Pinson, 2011), as well as ambitious political proposals that seek to develop an agenda for the good government of the territory in metropolitan regions (Borja, 2013).

Finally, the 'political divide' between citizens and political parties must be reduced. Democratic innovations should be tested in cities and metropolitan regions. A new generation of initiatives based on information, participation, and public consultation, such as participatory budgeting, *e-democracy*, *e-transparency*, and *e-participation* abound in European and North American cities (Smith, 2009; Gutiérrez-Rubi, 2013). They represent a way to transcend traditional representative and electoral forms of democracy.

Notes

- 1 For a detailed discussion of these impacts, see Fernández (2008), Burriel (2008, 2014), Campos (2008), Naredo & Montiel (2011), Romero, Jiménez, & Villoria (2012), and Vinuesa (2013).
- 2 Arancha Muñoz (2009: p. 3) defines the *Huerta* of Valencia as:
a historical structure consisting of a dense network of water channels, a system of rural roads, and traditional buildings like the 'alquerías' or 'barraques'. It is also the agricultural activity for the production of traditional crops... [and] the land irrigated by the Tribunal de las Aguas, the oldest active jury in Europe and the responsible of sorting out any dispute among the farmers concerning the distribution of water.
- 3 See also OECD (2014).

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