

Interview with Marisol García (26 June, 2024)

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M.M. We are interested in finding out about the academic, personal, social and political careers of different people who have been linked to the RC21 over the years. For the time being, the interviews will be accessible from our website, but we may decide to publish a book later on. So, shall we start with the first steps of your career?

M.G. I encountered sociology for the first time as a student at the University of Barcelona in the academic year 1972-73 in an introductory course to the discipline by Jordi Borja, a political and urban sociologist, friend of Manuel Castells. Both were participant observers of the left political and social movements of Paris and Santiago de Chile. The Marxist perspective was accordingly dominant in the *Sociology* course. We were in the last years of the Franco

dictatorship and the Faculty of Humanities, where I took a degree in History and Geography with a Major in Anthropology, was a fertile ground for debates opposing the regime. In the *Social Anthropology* course, I learned the importance of field work analysis and read the works of authors like Bronislaw Malinowski and Claude Lévi-Strauss. Fortunately for me I could participate in a seminar on Karl Polanyi organised by a group of young social anthropology professors. In those sessions I became aware of the political economy perspective.

I was motivated to study sociology by my personal experience. My original project when I arrived in Barcelona the year before was to study architecture. But I changed my mind, partly because I went to live in a working-class neighbourhood near Santa Coloma de Gramanet, a Metropolitan town next to Barcelona, where I met people with strong class consciousness and engaged in social mobilisation. Santa Coloma had grown in a rather disorganised way, with a precarious type of housing and shortage of public services. The contrasts of these peripheral areas with the well-planned bourgeois centre of Barcelona (the *Cerdà Eixample*, with its modernist buildings) were striking for a provincial middle-class young girl like me. Therefore, the new concerns that were emerging in me led me to sociology.

As I mentioned before, my first encounter with sociology was partly through the sociology professor's account on social action. This was complemented with a my own theoretical background and with the seminars some students attended outside the classroom. At the University of Barcelona there were 'discussion groups' among students and often assemblies in the courtyards. We are talking about the years 1972-1976. There was a tremendous agitation among students and some of the professors. Students were very engaged, partly because of the repressive character of the Francoist regime. One example was the forced closure of the University premises for weeks during the academic year.

The next and more determinant step in my embrace of sociology happened when I enrolled first as a Master (and then PhD) student in the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology at the University of Hull in 1977. There I followed courses on *Urban Sociology* and *Sociology of Development* as well as postgraduate seminars. In the *Urban Sociology* syllabus we studied the Chicago School and the new critical urban sociology. Particularly didactic and stimulating were the weekly seminars for professors and post-graduates. These

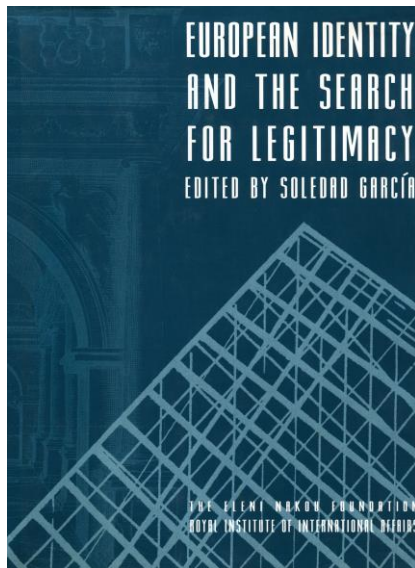
were great spaces for learning. The Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology invited world prominent sociologists and anthropologists to present their work. Those were the years before Margaret Thatcher cut resources to universities, particularly sociology departments.

In 1980, when my scholarship ran out after three years, the director of the Department invited me to help with the tutorials in the *Introduction to Sociology* course first and later in *History of Social Thought*. As tutors we had groups of about 7 students, we discussed the reading material and the lectures. We also graded the exams and essays. English academic life was my main school. Looking back, after tutoring undergraduate students of sociology while finishing my doctoral thesis I realised that what I wanted was a life of teaching and research. This aspiration came true after I got a position in the Department of Sociology at the Faculty of Economics of the University of Barcelona in 1984.

In England, I learned about the RC21. I remember going to Canterbury to meet Chris Pickvance to talk about urban social movements. It was through him that I joined RC21, first as an affiliate. I joined the Research Committee at the *Urban Change and Conflict Conference* at the University of Sussex in 1985. I particularly remember the *Sixth Urban Change and Conflict Conference* in 1987 in the University of Kent for a brilliant discussion between Ray Pahl and David Harvey, two leading theorists of critical urban theory ever since their influential publications in the 1970s. Pahl's book *Whose City* was a revelation for me for his analysis of the power of urban managers allocating urban resources. His sociological insights into urban power distribution in the city have remained with me and helped me to reflect on my later interest on urban governance and local politics in my research. His work and that of other British urban sociologists, particularly Chris Pickvance and Michael Harloe helped me grow as a researcher and as a lecturer on urban sociology.

My years In England were fundamental in exposing me to the influence of the Weberian strand of political economy. In urban sociology the works of Ray Pahl, John Rex and Chris Pickvance were crucial. In addition, in London I met Elizabeth Lebas, who was a significant member of RC21, who had done research on politics and urban living and had also translated some of the main works of Henry Lefebvre and Manuel Castells from French into English. I cannot stress

enough the privilege RC21 offers to a young researcher to have the opportunity to interact with senior academics in the international friendly environment the committee provides.



M.M. Where did you grow up before Barcelona? What did your family do for a living?

M.G. I was born in Palencia, a provincial city of about 80,000 inhabitants located in Old Castile, northern Spain. My father, originally from Madrid, owned a café first and later a discotheque in the main street of the city. These were places of sociability where to meet people from different social backgrounds. My friends were middle class, we focused on music outside school, listening and singing. We were a group that liked to read a lot, mostly literature that expressed ideas critical to the status quo, and to hold discussions. Our political orientation was leftist and we were eager to read books that were prohibited, such as the Communist Manifesto.

M.M. And how did these books reach you because I imagine that many of them would have been banned?

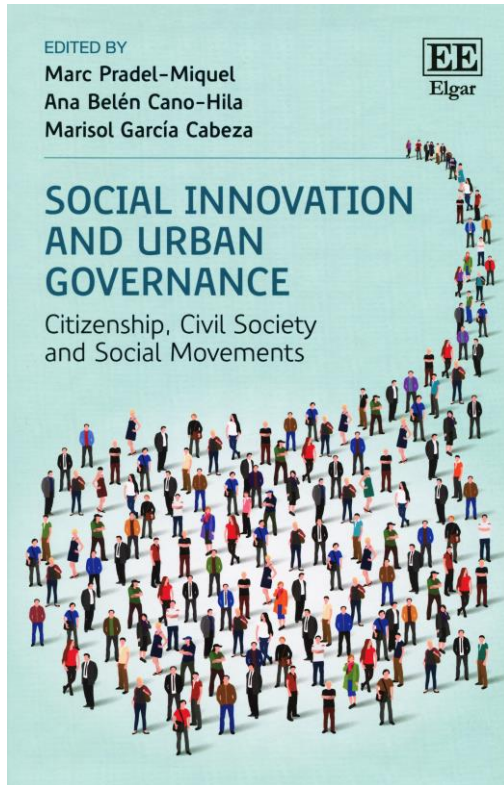
M.G. Yes, but there was always someone who went to France, to Perpignan or Paris, especially older brothers or cousins who travelled and brought us books. At that time, I was quite fond

of critical thought and psychology. I remember reading works of Erich Fromm and afterwards Sigmund Freud and Karl Marx. All this before moving to Barcelona. In Palencia I was very lucky to have very good teachers who encouraged reading, with whom you could talk and who took you seriously. I am particularly grateful to the Philosophy teacher who help me to make a determinant connection with good teachers in Barcelona.

M.M. What was the subject of your doctoral thesis and to what extent did you focus on urban issues and did urban sociology become important in your career?

M.G. The subject of the doctoral thesis was urbanisation and working-class organisation, including political movements in Barcelona. As a matter of fact, I started the research a year before I enrolled at the University of Hull. In 1976, while still a student at the University of Barcelona I joined a research team directed by Bryan Roberts. Bryan was a professor of Sociology at Manchester University at the time before moving to the University of Austin, Texas. This was my first and determining experience for working on comparative international research. The project was titled "*A comparative study of social organization and state planning: Manchester and Barcelona*". Within the research project, I studied the social characteristics of the workers of one local prominent nineteenth century factory in Barcelona, *La Maquinista Terrestre y Marítima*, with most of the workers migrated to Barcelona from other regions of Spain, and the impact of the relocation of the factory premises from the original inner-city to the newly developed working-class areas towards the periphery of the city. Bryan was a real mentor for me in doing urban empirical research. Together we did participant observation for several weeks, systematically collecting historical records of all the factory workers, their working careers inside the factory from 1900 to 1976 and the housing trajectories for many of them. The data was rich. There were some gaps because during the Civil War some of them had been destroyed, but there was a lot of continuity from the 1920s to the present day, the 1970s. Each file of these workers included their origins, and where they lived in Barcelona, whether they had bought or rented their flat, whether the company had given them a loan to buy the flat, how they had progressed in the company, how they had moved up the company ladder, etc. From this we established the change that had occurred

over the years regarding the characteristics of these workers. The company had had a vocational school and promoted internal upward mobility.



There was also the question of which neighbourhoods the workers lived in and how the company had impacted on these neighbourhoods. The premises of the company left *La Barceloneta* (inner-city) for San Andreu (periphery). The company cleverly offered to leave the company with good pensions to the older workers in order not to move from the centre and helped the younger workers to find flats where to live in other neighbourhoods, or started recruiting new workers in these neighbourhoods. Overall, this research led me to urban sociology with a perspective quite close to human ecology. I was interested to see how these neighbourhoods had developed, the connections between them and how workers were establishing their community and organisational links in these neighbourhoods. Up to that point I was following Robert Park's model of 'how to do', but in the dialogues with Bryan and

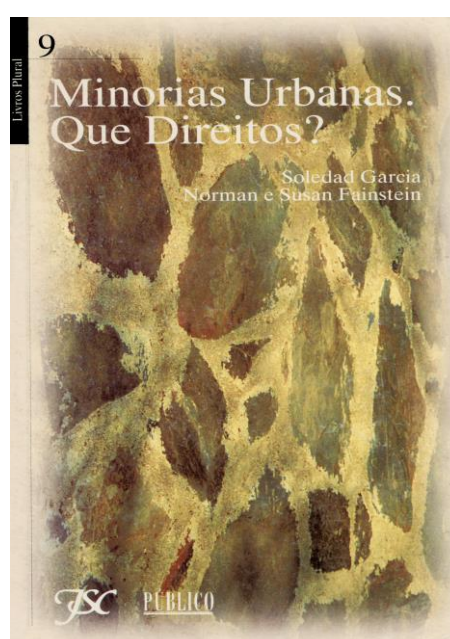
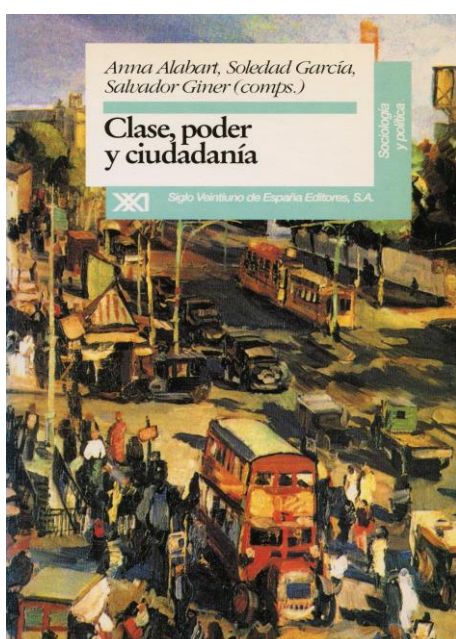
later in the analysis while at Hull University it became clear that it was not cultural integration of the kind theorised by the Chicago School. Workers who arrived in Barcelona were integrating into the social organisation of the city, such as the trade unions, which were not legalised.

Many of these workers that I met in other neighbourhoods like *Ciudad Meridiana* and included in my thesis worked at Seat (in car manufacturing), which was a school of socialisation. I saw how there were two schools of urban socialisation for the workers who had migrated from rural Spain: the company and the trade union organisation (official and unofficial) within the company, on the one hand, and the incipient urban social movements that were emerging first underground and then openly. Among the organisations that were forming in the neighbourhoods and that were allowed by Franco's regime were the parents' organisations in schools, for example.

The research materialised in my B.A. thesis. Looking back, I now realise that I was only partly aware of the privilege I enjoyed in learning about the research of Robert Park and other members of the Chicago School while I was engaged in doing research myself. With Bryan's encouragement and support I applied for a scholarship to do my PhD at the University of Hull. I remain grateful to him for his generosity and for his friendship.

At the University of Hull, my doctoral thesis evolved into a critique of the Chicago School from a political economy perspective. It made more sense to incorporate the Marxist perspective of workers' resistance, organisation, etc. I concentrated on the social movements that had emerged from the neighbourhoods and that were so important for the democratisation of Barcelona. The analysis of my research led me to sustain that Castells' conceptual analysis based on the state's contradictions concerning collective consumption was not enough to explain the changing life conditions and the type of organisation and mobilization of workers in the city of Barcelona. The workers I met in my study were all homeowners. Most of them opted for investment in education paying for private schooling because they aspired to upward social mobility. This required a complementary analysis of the changing individual consumption patterns of workers and their families over time, which was better explained by the work of Maurice Halbwachs (1933) in France. He stressed the sphere of consumption as

the most salient aspect of class formation. I integrated a Durkheimian perspective to partly explain why the political organisation of workers in Barcelona changed from the radicalism of the anarchist movement to a position that had a moderate social citizenship agenda. By taking on the citizenship agenda, workers' organisations and representatives assumed the legitimacy of economic inequality while being able to enjoy emerging social rights (an expanding national social security system and an equally expanding universal health care).



M.M. And from there, how were you evolving academically? What other research work were you doing?

M.G. After finishing my thesis at the University of Hull, and my return to Barcelona there is a small parenthesis in academic research. During that time, I worked with architects and other professionals in urban planning.

In 1990 I got involved in comparative research on *Urbanisation and the Functioning of Cities in the European Community*. Scholars of 27 cities were coordinated by Michael Parkinson at the Centre for Urban Studies, University of Liverpool. I recall a meeting of the research network in



Paris hosted by Edmond Preteceille, who had recently been President of RC21, and Patrick Le Galès. The objective of this study was to assess the contribution that cities had made and could make to the changing Europe. We examined socio-economic and governance patterns. I analysed the case of Barcelona. The final report included policy implications. This research was a steppingstone to future research on local political autonomy, the metropolitan governance of Barcelona and the democratisation of the city from above and from below (grassroots), and to publications on Barcelona's political economy and local autonomy (in *Sociologie du Travail*, *The Annals*, etc.).

Barcelona has been like my laboratory of sociological research for forty years in which I studied issues of poverty, social exclusion and social citizenship as well as issues of local governance and local democracy. In the years 1995-1997 I coordinated a Spanish project on "*Democracy and Local Governability in Spain*" linked to an international network on Democracy and Local Governance (with 30 national teams) and directed by Henry Tune, University of Pennsylvania. This project familiarised me with the empirical studies guided by the work of Alexis De Tocqueville. The main thesis was the unlikely democratisation in countries without local democracy. The hypothesis of the project invited optimism because formal democracy was expanding in Europe as well as in other parts of the world with the (re) establishment of political institutions and democratic political practices. This research took me and other members of the team to interview local leaders in 30 Spanish municipalities. Fernando Díaz Orueta joined the project, and we have ever since collaborated in academic activities, mostly within RC21, where he has been actively contributing to the Board.

M. M. I understand that besides Barcelona, comparative studies or being in projects where international comparisons with other cities were established, have also been some of the pillars of your work, haven't they?

M. G. Yes, very much so. From 1996 onwards I had the good fortune to be invited to coordinate research groups in Spain as part of a European consortia. Thanks to Enzo Mingione I joined the excellent research team involved in the project ESPOPO led internationally by Chiara Saraceno.

In this project we investigated local social assistance programmes dealing with poverty and social exclusion in 13 European cities in 6 countries (two cities in each country, 3 in Italy). This project was an excellent combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies. We found relevant differences among countries and among cities of the same country which pointed to the salience of the importance of local welfare mixes. In Sweden local variabilities were small in contrast with the high variability of programmes and financial support in southern European countries. Alberta Andreotti with Enzo Mingione have published extensively on this thesis. Among the members of the team was Yuri Kazepov and together we wrote a chapter of the final publication (*Social assistance dynamics in Europe: National and local poverty regimes*). Thanks to this research project several good PhD theses were produced by students who later became university professors.

ESOPO was the first of a series of European comparative projects and metanalyses reinforcing research networks. Some members of these networks were also members of RC21, like Maurice Roche, Enzo Mingione and Frank Moulaert. These research projects were the opportunity for promising young researchers like Yuri Kazepov and Alberta Andreotti to demonstrate their academic capacities. Both are outstanding RC21 scholars. Thematically, these projects analysed issues related to social citizenship and local practices. For example, Inclusion through job activation (INPART); Citizenship and the European Social Model (SEDEC); Social Innovation to overcome social exclusion (KATARSIS); Social Cohesion (Social Polis); Social Services, Welfare State and Places (COST-Action). My participation in these projects helped me to consolidate my interest on citizenship issues, a line of research I began to develop during my visiting academic year at Saint Antony's College, Oxford in 1990-1991. During that year, thanks to Ralf Dahrendorf, who was the Warden of the College, and the highly stimulating academic environment he promoted, I reflected on the work of T.H.Marshall on social citizenship and started to focus on the question of cities and citizenship.

I realize now that I was always involved in collective projects or working with other people organising seminars and conferences. First mainly with mentors and peers; at later stage, with peers and young researchers. And I must say that collective creativity has given me a lot of satisfaction and pleasure. I have always combined research with teaching undergraduates and

post-graduates. From teaching I have also learned a lot. I have always been in this dynamic of working collectively.



M.M. You said earlier that you had a small hiatus since you came back from England where you worked with architects and that interests me because I also had a similar trajectory.

M.G. In the second half of the 1980s, at my return from England I got involved in three planning projects initiated by the City Council of Barcelona with Joan Busquets, head of the Urban Planning Department of the Barcelona City Council, when the city used the opportunity of the upcoming celebration of the Olympic Games. Two of the projects I worked on had the objective of upgrading neighbourhoods informally built at the margins of the city in the 1950s to host internal migrants from other Spanish regions. The objective was to improve the quality of life of the residents by providing property rights and improving housing and infrastructures as well as collective services. The official designation was Special Plans for Interior Reform. In both cases I enjoyed doing ethnographic research and having discussions with the teams' members led by architects. That was an added value for me, seeing the positive outcomes years later.

After 1986, Barcelona's City Council was fully involved in the organisation of the Olympic Games. This meant that new governance and planning instruments were created. One example was to modify planning guidelines; another, to institutionalise citizen's participation. The third project involved the study of part of the old industrial neighbourhood of Poble Nou, which later became the largest operation of urban regeneration and gentrification of Barcelona. Looking back, the 1989 discussions of our team with the City Council planners and managers were naïve. Gentrification was not discussed. Our team's proposal was basically social democratic and redistributive to house working- and middle-class residents. But the City did not have the financial resources to develop such a model. In fact, a very different urban model was established (1998-2004) known today as Diagonal-Mar, a neighbourhood with exclusive new housing designed for high-income consumers, promoted by private developers.

I enjoyed working in the interdisciplinary planning field. These planning experiences gave me the opportunity to talk with the heads of planning departments, who were transforming the city. And at the same time, I talked with neighbourhood activists and observed the ways in which the local authorities "listened" to or "negotiated" with neighbourhood activists. As a member of the team in the early stages of the planning process, I experienced the changing culture of participation in planning of the City Council. In the early 1980s the comprehensive planning programme of upgrading neighbourhoods' infrastructures had the full involvement of residents' representatives, known also as "democratic planning". But with the mega project of the Olympic Games, the urban regeneration perspective changed. The bottom-up participation was formalised and smoothly substituted by a top-down engineered participation. The professionals involved in the planning process were discouraged from consulting representatives of the neighbourhood associations at the earlier stages. There is a wide literature about this process including my article in the IJURR.

M.M. In relation to urban sociology in Spain, apart from some significant cases such as yourself, Mario Gaviria, Jesús Leal, Ana Alabart or Fernando Díaz, it seems that it never really took off. How do you see the evolution of urban sociology in Spain and to what extent do you think that your work and that of other colleagues have contributed to this development?

M.G. Spanish Members of RC21, Jesús Leal, Victor Urrutia, Fernando Diaz-Orueta and I decided in the First ISA Forum celebrated in Barcelona in 2008 to lay the groundwork of the future Spanish Network of Urban Sociology (RESU). We felt the need to institutionalise our expanding informal network of senior urban sociologists by integrating young researchers, who presented some good urban research at Spanish conferences.

It took a series of meetings among us and with a few of our PhD students to get going. One meeting in Seville was organised by Clemente Navarro and another in Bilbao was organised by Victor Urrutia. At the Spanish congress of sociology held in Pamplona in 2010, the constitution of a Committee on Urban Sociology was openly discussed. Finally, in 2015 the FES (Spanish Federation of Sociology) accepted to establish urban sociology as a new research committee. Institutionalisation was the only way to move forward.

As far as I know there has been an expansion of comparative research among the new generation of Spanish urban sociologists. Previously there had been research collaboration, particularly comparing urban issues in Madrid and Barcelona, but also Bilbao and Seville. Jesús Leal was a pioneer in this. Other urban sociologists I mentioned and I did our bit. Now, for example, Marc Pradel and Santi Izaguirre are coordinating a project in which María Ángeles Huete from Seville is involved.

But going back to your question: why did urban sociology not organised itself before in Spain in a network like RC21? Perhaps because there was not enough research comparing Spanish cities to create that cement. In my case, for many years I was doing research with teams from other countries within the European Union, although this research involved relatively small Spanish teams in two cities. Jesús Leal was also working with Edmond Preteceille and Tomas Maloutas on issues of social segregation. Clemente Navarro and Fernando Díaz were also working with international teams with colleagues from the Americas. We all had our interests outside; we didn't aim to get together in Spain and do a big project. The Spanish universities didn't help those dynamics. There was no generous financial support from the Spanish institutions, neither academic exchange nor mobility. There weren't enough resources, nor scholarships. Things have improved in recent years in these respects. The Spanish urban sociology committee within the FES has now 94 members and it is expanding. Marc Pradel,

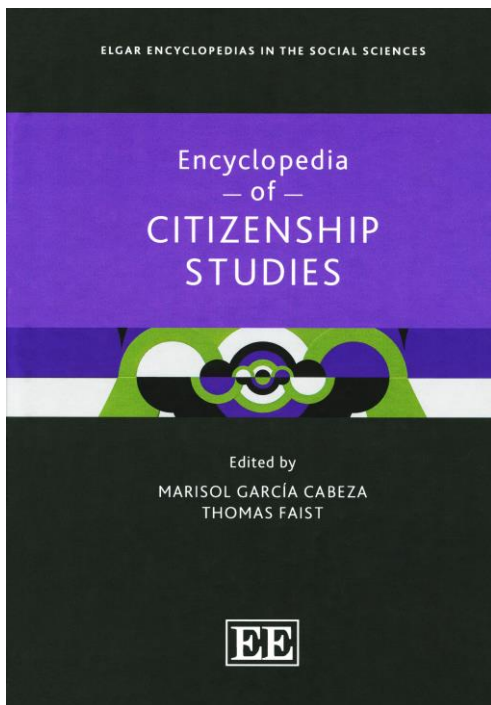
who was the previous president stimulated an increase in membership and Ana Belén Cano is now a very promising president, she is very active.

What do you think? What has been your experience?

M.M. I left Spain in 2013 and I experienced these final initiatives in the years I was at the Complutense, from 2007, although I was mostly working with Tomás Villasante, who is a very special urban sociologist because his Latin American orientation has led him in other directions and to the question of participatory methodologies. He knew a lot about urban sociology but was hardly ever at urban sociology events. At the Complutense there was a moment when more relationships began to be established. With Joan Subirats, Fernando Díaz and Rosa de la Fuente, for example, I worked on a project on comparative urban policies in which there were also political scientists and geographers. Víctor Urrutia also invited me to a seminar series in Bilbao and Fernando invited me to similar events he was organising in Alicante. Apart from my work in Vigo and Porto, I also had the opportunity to do an interesting study on urban densities with Jesús Leal in Madrid, and both became engaged in the European 4Cities Master. So, there was an informal network, but it was a bit frayed, as you said before.

Then I think it got better and better. At the last FES congress I attended, in Murcia (2022), I did see a quite significant activity, with many people and a renewal of age, ideas and projects. The group I am now involved with is called GECU (*Grupo de Estudios Críticos Urbanos*) and is coordinated by Jorge Sequera from the UNED, with many interdisciplinary contributions as well. In general, I think that now, it is a good time and the networks of academic collaboration in Spain have improved a lot in recent years.

M.G. I want to emphasise the importance of the institutionalisation of urban sociology in Spanish universities. One good thing that Ana Alabart and I did was to institutionalise urban sociology at the University of Barcelona. Around 1990 we convinced the academic authorities to get urban sociology rolling and then to make it compulsory in the newly established Sociology undergraduate programme. In the 1980s, we taught urban sociology under the official title of *Sociology applied to Economics* in the Faculty of Economics. And we also taught *Urban Sociology* in the Faculty of Geography.



M.M. Can you tell more about your career in RC21 and what it meant to you?

M.G. For me the Research Committee has been more than a research network. It has been a community of mind and a source of inspiration in general and a community of friends in particular. I have the feeling that I was not the only one who experienced a sense of community. My participation in the RC21 over the years has been academically stimulating and personally rewarding. My far-flung colleagues Enzo Mingione, Licia Valladares, Edmond Preteceille, Patrick Le Galès, Dina Vaiou, Hartmut Häussermann, Sophy Body-Gendrot, Frank Moolaert, Serena Vicari and Susan and Norman Fainstein as well as Dennis Judd have all been more than inspirational as well as dear friends. Within the RC21, members have not only engaged in academic exchanges, but we have also developed research projects and organised seminars and conferences of different kinds. I would like to stress that we (my generation) were lucky to live in good academic times in the sense that we had stable jobs and the RC21 was a “social place” for sharing, for common interests, not for competing. In any case I strongly recommend young scholars to appreciate the benefits of being a member of RC21, to

internationalise their work as much as possible since this constitutes a constant source of professional renewal and satisfaction.

As for my trajectory in the RC21, in 1990 I was invited by Chris Pickvance (elected President) to join the Board as Secretary. The following four years I had the opportunity to interact intensively with the members of RC21. This was partly because at the time communications concerning membership renewal were done by postal letters. Some members opted for yearly renewal, and they often added information on academic activities. This gave me a direct information of who was doing what and helped me to interact with each of them in conferences. The RC21 had less than 300 members then. In between World Congresses there were conferences organised by members in which to reinforce existing networks. The positive aspect of the relatively small membership was that, in conferences, the common sessions predominated. Only in the World Congress we had to make choices of parallel sessions. In the printed newsletters that were sent to members, apart from information on future conferences and seminars in cities, we included the names and affiliation of new members.

Besides the large conference, RC21 active members had organised small size workshops all over the world. Some of us cherished the Aegean Seminars in Greece organised by Dina Vaiou and Costis Hadjimichalis, during the 1990s, for example. These were great occasions for critically debating in-depth key issues.





Marisol García and other RC21 members at the conference in Moscow, 1989.

At the ISA World Congress celebrated in Bielefeld in 1994 I became one of the Vice-presidents of the RC21. The task of Vice-presidents, as you know, is to organise conferences and invite new members. These occasions are particularly valuable for the exchanges not only among peers, but also between senior and junior scholars attracted by the topics and by their institutional relations. In the European region we had the benefit of the role of some senior scholars in EU programs. For example, in 1995 I was the President organiser of the international Conference "*Urban Restructuring in Europe. Citizenship and New Patterns of Social Integration in Wider Europe*". This meeting was part of a series of conferences on the *Future of European Cities* chaired by Guido Martinotti. This program was institutionally supported by the European Science Foundation. This meeting took place in Acqua Freda di Maratea (Italy), a beautiful resort. It was a great meeting with the active participation of scholars from the USA and ample participation of RC21 members. There was continuity in this line of debates in other European cities with organisers, such as Anne Haila. Another prominent and active member of RC21.

At the 1998 World Congress of ISA I was elected President of the RC21. Perhaps I should highlight in my memory two instances of the period 1998-2002. In the 1998 World Congress in Montreal after the election of the new Board, we held an informal discussion about the intellectual perspective and thematic diversification. The most substantial issue in the discussion concerned the diversification from the political economy perspective towards other choices. At the time, the “cultural turn”, with emphasis on cultural issues and post-modernism was occupying an increasing attention in urban studies debates. We also considered the impact of the European Union policy orientation in many research projects. European Union financed projects that favoured concepts such as social cohesion in which the relevance of conflict and the problem of social justice was hardly mentioned. The focus on social cohesion in cities led to the emphasis on neighbourhoods’ challenges with social integration. The questioning of power relations in the city and social justice suffered from those types of analysis. In that sense, the critical essence of the political economy identity of the RC21 was becoming more diffused. Some voices called for the integration of the cultural turn into the tradition of political economy.

In 2001 Leon Deben and I organised a large RC21 conference at the University of Amsterdam with the theme “*Social inequality, redistributed justice and the city*”. There we had very good papers, some published in the IJURR. Leon also organised a wonderful field trip through the Canals. It is important to mention the important contribution of field trips in the cities where the Committee members organised conferences in which we learned so much about some social neighbourhoods, for example. I have great memories from Rio de Janeiro, Moscow, Berlin, São Paulo, Shanghai, to mention just a few. It would be great to produce a book on these experiences by continents. Perhaps this is already in progress.

In the Brisbane 2002 World Congress the session themes did not alter the research trajectory of RC21. Working with Pat Mullins was a pleasure to produce, thanks to his dynamism, two Newsletters a year with good information on local conferences, research developments and new publications. From then RC21 membership changed scale with the presidency of Hartmut Haussermann and the highly efficient secretariat of Yuri Kazepov, who later took on the role of President. He developed the more updated system for managing membership communication

that we now have, with some 1,500 members, I believe. A very positive side of this development is that we now have many more young members.



Marisol García and other RC21 members at the ISA Forum Barcelona, 2008.

My last big contribution to RC21 was to organise the Committee participation in the First ISA Forum in Barcelona, 2008, with the RC21 President at the time Kuniko Fujita. I particularly want to mention this conference because it served to engage some of my doctoral students in the Research Committee, particularly Marc Pradel, who helped me in various ways in the technical organization. He became Secretary of the RC21 in Toronto in 2018 with Talja Blokland as the president. Talja and the two current presidents, Claire Colomb and Alberta Andreotti are good examples of a new generation of excellent female urban sociologists leading the activities of the Research Committee with others like yourself. So, there is continuity! Perhaps no longer a closely-knit community in the sense my generation experienced, but a large association with networks and different types of diverse intellectual communities.