

## Presentation of the monograph. Other transitions: forgotten alternative stories and experiences of resistance to the hegemonic narratives of the transition to democracy

Coordinated by

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Faced with the univocal nature of the hegemonic discourse on the Spanish transition, the articles in this monograph show us the rich and often contradictory complexity of this process from a critical viewpoint. The content we have included is encompassed under the label *the other transitions*. That is, it is intended to build a different narrative about the transition, far from (and in opposition to) the Spanish state's dominant discourse of the past forty years, in the period from the end of the dictatorship to the victory of the *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (PSOE; the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party) in the 1982 general elections. During these years and until the eruption of the 2008 crisis and its effects as a political crisis in 2012, this discourse has become part of the dominant ideology in the sense that Pierre Bourdieu describes it: as normalised concepts that have even become cognitive structures that have prevented rethinking about any possible deficiencies, errors, renunciations, or alternatives to the second monarchical restoration of 1978 (Bourdieu and Boltanski, 1976). From this perspective, the regime was transformed into what is called the *transition culture*, that is, a presentist cognitive perspective that reinterpreted the past in terms of the legitimacy of the present and *forgot*, for example, its commitments to the right to self-determination or the continuity between the Franco regime and the reign of Juan Carlos I. At the same time, this transition culture generated an extensive supposed consensus in every layer of power in society, from the deep-state level of high officials and judges to pop singers, while simultaneously passing through the hands of writers, journalists, and historians; therefore, an almost absolute consensus was generated on this aforementioned dominant narrative (Martínez, 2012).

During these years a crack emerged in the academic fields and politics related to the Spanish state between those who supported the transition [narrative] and those who criticised it. The former considered it as a model (if not a model of an ideal, quality democracy, at least as a peaceful pathway to democracy), while the latter, see it as a lost opportunity, or worse, as a betrayal of popular hopes by its leaders. The debate, however, was unbalanced, because those in favour of the transition had powerful representatives in the media or occupied central positions in intellectual and cultural fields, such as in magazines, publishers, or cultural institutions (Pecourt, 2008). The result of this hegemony was the reification of a discourse that cited the transition as a successful pact between elites (with different nuances regarding the role of the anti-Franco movement)—a transition into law without breaking the law. This discourse produced a consensus on both the right and the left regarding the pact: the monarchy was enthusiastically praised as a modernising element which provided continuity to idealistic extremes and which brought overall balance to the process, having achieved—at least in appearance—a move from an authoritarian regime in crisis to a democratic system comparable in every way to advanced Western democracies. Finally, as a corollary to the arguments in favour of the new regime of 1978, there was a deafening silence regarding the crimes of Francoism and the repression and violence of this period (Casals, 2016).

At the same time, the triumph of the new status quo and the discourse that legitimised it led to the exclusion of other political tendencies that advocated a rupture; in fact, all the positions to the left of PSOE and the *Partido Comunista de España* (PCE; the Communist Party of Spain) were banished to the catacombs of political and cultural life. Thus, the discourse of the revolutionary left, of anarchism or of anti-capitalist social movements, which criticised the new regime as oligarchic and for disappointing the expectations of a large part of the popular sectors and national minorities of the state, was silenced because, to a large extent, they were disappointed by the development of this new autonomic regime that, very soon, closed off any expectations of a democratising change or of greater decentralisation (Bagur and Diez, 2005; Cucó, 2002).

However, even though it was far from the best model among the possible processes for democratisation, the transition into the Spanish state went forward, starting with the absence of a legal, political, or cultural break with the previous regime. The hegemonic stories about this change of regime have obviated the way in which the elitist and strongly oligarchic regime transitioned into the Spanish state, as compared to Portugal, whose transition involved a rupture and a deeper democratisation (Fishman and Lizardo, 2013). We would have to wait until the year 2000 for the return of critics willing to widen the scope of their analysis, so that they could again occupy a more central space in social and academic debates and leave behind the ostracism to which they had been confined for the last 30 years. With this change, several books about the struggles of the political forces trying to break away from the dictatorship and monarchical continuity emerged (Wilhelmi, Soto, Blanco, et al., 2016), there were conferences and meetings about the other protagonists of the transition (Fundación Salvador Seguí, 2017), and documentaries aimed at recovering this historical memory, including other periods of repression and popular response, such as the murder of Valentín González in Valencia during a strike

(*Confederación General del Trabajo*; General Confederation of Labour, 2017). Thus, the role the other leftists, the revolutionary trade union movement, or the social, ecological, feminist, and LGBT movements played in the transition has now been recovered and is valued, while town squares have again started to fill up, converging the previous generations of activists with the new guard (Antentas, 2016).

Therefore, this monograph endeavours to correct these deficits in the analysis of the transition and to give a voice to the dimensions that, despite their historical importance, have remained muffled or silenced since because they were not coherent with the consensual, elitist, and rose-tinted idea of the transition and were thus subject to the exercise of ideological power during this period. This is also why we would like to recover the history of the parties and social movements on the far left who made agreements with the regime; this allows the emergence of the incipient new social movements to be analysed, shedding light on the police-enforced repression and ideological silence that the sectors who were proposing a democratic break with the previous regime—and an alternative social system—were subjected to. Simultaneously, we also aim to give a voice to critical narratives about the transition and take stock of the interruptions or continuities with current political parties and movements including the anti-globalisation and urban movements, the wave of mobilisation that started on 15 May 2011 that we now refer to as the 15M Movement (or simply, 15-M), and those of the territorial crises or the so-called new 21st century policy, that are all now fighting for social and political change.

The work of Jordi Borja and Jaime Pastor offer us converging panoramic views that link two critical moments of unrest in Spanish society: the past—represented by the democratic transition—and the present. However, their positions and visions are separate and different from each other; their divergences are evident both in their differential treatment of the PCE and the *Partit Socialista Unificat de Catalunya* (PSUC; the Unified Socialist Party of Catalonia), and in the emphases and silences present in their respective narratives. Thus, while Borja alludes to the role of the PSOE, Pastor does not mention it; some positions are inverted with regard to the revolutionary left, while intriguingly, they are absent from Borja's essay.

The article by Jordi Borja presents the transition as a process which was impregnated, from the beginning, with strong restrictions and ambiguities, but which, nevertheless, had the virtue of unlocking the path to democracy. Therefore, despite the limited and frustrated character [of the transition] and even though a political culture steeped in reactionism still persists, he considers it erroneous to establish a continuity between the transition and Francoism. The myths and counter-myths woven around them both serve Borja to link the political past and present and to reflect on a possible horizon that brings us closer to utopia. The transition's 'winners' generated a narrative (the myth of an 'angelic' transition) that spread all over the world and helped to affirm the 'exemplary character' of this new democracy. But qualifying this, in Borja's words, "irritating historical falsification" myth does not lead the author to extol the supposed successes of the counter-myth. Initially generated by the anti-Franco activists' frustration at not seeing the major political and social changes they had expected from the transition, their current incarnations which—

according to Borja—are more ideological, primal, and based on prejudice rather than knowledge, have been forged by new generations (e.g., *Comuns*, *Podemos*, *En Marea*, and *Compromis*) who are struggling from different platforms to comprehensively renew Spanish democracy—challenges the author weighs up in his work.

Jaime Pastor's work offers us a synthetic and carefully thought out version of the democratic transition. The narrative adopts a cyclical structure: it begins and ends with the current sociopolitical crisis and the new cycle of protests that accompanied it. Considering both these issues (the crisis and protests), leads him to critically investigate the roots of the current regime (the transition) and the myths surrounding them. First it describes the phases which helped create some of the basic consensus established between the majority of the forces at the time (the 'de facto powers', the reforming elite, and the moderate opposition): agreements with significant effects on the past, present, and future of Spain. These consensus crystallised into three key milestones: the Amnesty Law (1977), the Moncloa Pacts (1977), and the Constitution (1978), to which the text devotes special attention, mentioning their weaknesses and inconsistencies. Pastor then reveals his thesis on the transition: it was an asymmetric transaction with very serious consequences, among which he highlights the rapid process of transformation which the main opposition parties experienced in order to adapt to the limits of change marked by the de facto powers and to be able to present themselves as alternatives to the government of the right-wing parties—mainly the *Unión de Centro Democrático* (UCD; the Union of the Democratic Centre) and the *Alianza Popular* (AP; People's Alliance).

Next, the articles by Pilar Toboso and Josepa Cucó refer, respectively, to two important actors in the transition—the feminist movement and the revolutionary left—which were excluded from the official discourse and which academia has, in general, paid insufficient attention. Both movements started from a similar base—premises and claims shared with their European homonyms and the development of certain characteristics because of the pressure of the Francoist context—but the course of the Transition affected them in very different ways. Thus, the Toboso's essay shows the notoriety of post-Franco feminism, which in the long term came to alter the dominant social and family model, and simultaneously contributed to the consolidation of the democratic culture. Three important factors were at the base of its success. First, although it was very active it was still a minority movement; despite this, the feminist movement's objectives and campaigns managed to get them visibility and grab media attention, which was very important in gaining them an audience. Second, in parallel, feminists created their own meeting spaces (bookstores, magazines, publishing houses, etc., the "subaltern counterpublics" which Nancy Fraser refers to), where they formulated counter-narratives and interpretations, outlined interests and needs, and started circulating them (Fraser, 1999). Third, despite their internal disagreements, Spanish feminism managed to create a unified space (the Platform of Feminist Organisations), from which common objectives and actions were built. Upon this backdrop, thanks to the work of their 21 members in the Spanish Parliament, who were elected in the 1977 elections, and the pressure of the movement in the streets, a new stage was set that forced the modification of the law to make it more egalitarian.

As shown by the evidence presented by Cucó, the revolutionary left's fortunes were almost the opposite. Formed towards the end of the 1960s, these different groups experienced a brief but intense period of growth towards the middle of the 1970s when they played a decisive role in the conflicts of certain sectors of production and in the rallies that, at that time, shook the core of Spanish society, especially in terms of grassroots, student, and feminist movements. During this period, and in the midst of a marked fragmentation, these different revolutionary organisations developed considerable activism in factories, streets, universities, and neighbourhoods. They also actively worked in favour of a democratic rupture, downplaying the extent of their revolutionary discourse in order to claim the aforementioned strategy as their own. But their progression was limited by the particular dynamics of the political change after Franco's death. They were excluded from the negotiations and pacts between the Francoist government and the moderate opposition, and so they suffered important defeats in the successive electoral elections held before 1980. Among other reasons, this succession of defeats led to a rapid decline in support from the groups they led, and shortly after this resulted in a generalised process of extinction which very few survived.

Although, like the essay by Cucó, the article by Benjamín Tejerina also recognises a certain appeasement and disenchantment in the two decades after the transition, it also highlights the exceptional breadth of the mobilisation during the 1970s and its capacity to create and consolidate the student, worker, neighbourhood, anti-nuclear, feminist, and nationalist movements that characterised the initial stages of the regime of 1978 and simultaneously sewed the seed of successive waves of mobilisation until the present day. Tejerina enhances the traces of these events to make them visible; he puts an end to the silencing of the Franco regime, describes how the active citizenship took to the streets, and details the collectivisation of generations of activists. At the same time, he also emphasises their institutionalisation during the democratic period and their ability to detect social problems and achieve legal reforms, not so much from the consensus recorded in the official historiography of the transition, but more from the point of a deep ideological conflict that, for the large part, is still present, as we can see in the new upsurge in mobilisation during 15-M.

Finally, two articles prepared by Arnaud Dolidier and Pere Beneyto coincide by highlighting the role the unions played in the transition, although their evaluations of the result of such participation partially differ. On the one hand, Beneyto criticises the elitist vision of the transition and characterises it as a collective work in which the labour movement played a prominent role. Based on his analysis of the great strikes of 1976 to 1979, he proposes that the labour and union movement subsequently played a proactive role in the construction of a new model of dominant relations, a dimension little recognised by the preponderant accounts of the transition. On the other hand, focusing on the grassroots trade union movement, Dolidier analyses the workers' social movements during the Spanish democratic transition, specifically between 1976 and 1978. According to Dolidier, in this period we can observe the transformation of the discourses and representations of the workers' assemblies which had played a large part in the struggle against the Franco regime and that had threatened to overwhelm the transition agreed by the old Francoist

elites and some of the leaders of the PCE and PSOE-controlled workers' movements. Thus, as the transition progressed, these leaders, who had become a centrepiece of the pacts that allowed the creation of the 1978 regime, begin to operate in conjunction with the intellectual and journalistic media to construct "a new conceptual sphere accompanied by speeches discrediting the assembly practices" accused of "*destabilising the political process underway*". This discursive change was also operated in cognitive terms, so that break away struggles were stigmatised as 'wild strikes' and the new terms of social democracy were introduced with concepts such as *moderation, negotiation, or reform* to [help people] conceptualise social and labour relations; this in turn influenced the course of collective action to the point of blocking the pathway leading towards political break.

