

Municipalism in Spain

Sunday 1 April 2018, by [RUBIO-PUEYO Vicente](#) (Date first published: 1 December 2017).

In Spain's municipal elections of May 2015, a constellation of new political forces emerged. For the first time in almost 40 years of Spanish democracy, the country's major cities would no longer be ruled by either the Partido Popular (PP) or the Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE), or any of the other long established political forces, but by new "Municipalist Confluences" such as Ahora Madrid, Barcelona en Comú, and Cadiz Si Se Puede, to name just a few.

While each of these Municipalist Confluences is the product of specific local contexts, with its own languages, traditions, and cultures, together they represent the possibility of a sea change in the politics of Spain and beyond. Especially in light of the existence of a strong, post-Francoist right, which has committed itself to the "culture war" of Spanish nationalism, these confluences point toward the possibility of creating a new political subject capable of breaking the impasse that has characterized so much of national politics in the age of austerity.

Bringing together political parties new and old, nationwide movements and hyper-local social initiatives, and a mass of disaffected voters with long-organized neighborhood groups, these confluences are a sort of radical experiment conducted at the municipal level. They have not only restructured established political processes and practices, but also shifted notions of power in order to grant traditionally underrepresented groups, including women, access to the political domain. The election of Ada Colau is a case in point. As the first woman to hold the office of Mayor of Barcelona, Colau's political work highlights the connections between gender equality and other forms of social, political, and economic justice.

Author Vicente Rubio-Pueyo is a professor at Fordham University. He has written extensively, both in academic contexts and in the press, on the current social and political conjuncture in Spain, and on political forces including Podemos and the Municipalist Confluences. A Spaniard living in the US for more than ten years now, Vicente has also been active in building connections and mutual understanding between these forces and their counterparts in North America.

In this excellent study he analyzes the Municipalist Confluences, how they came to be, and where they can take politics in Spain and beyond. Drawing on a deep knowledge of history, combined with astute theoretical and political analysis, Rubio-Pueyo provides an international audience with everything it needs to know about municipalism in Spain. His work brings us up to the minute, and is sure to have value for years to come.

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