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Spanish state

Catalonia: Barcelona, epicentre of the change

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This “yes we can” that has for months rumbled in the squares and streets after the indignant spring of 2011 has now come as an earthquake to the institutions, something unimaginable then. The victory of ComÃ© in Barcelona, with Ada Colau at the forefront, has overturned the political chessboard.

For a long time we heard the 15M movement accused of being radical and, anti-systemic, and were told “if you want to practice politics form a party”, as if politics can be limited to party politics, understanding absolutely nothing of what the “popular uprising” of the indignant meant - now, the worst nightmares of the establishment have become a reality. The counter-hegemonic discourse erected at that time in multiple places, able to draw a new collective imagination, that showed clearly the link between economic crisis and political hijacking and that connected, as never before, with a social majority beaten down by three long years of cuts assailing the institutions today, overflowing the boundaries of what is possible that had been imposed.

It was not about standardizing the heterogeneity of the movement in a single party but building new political instruments, methodologies, confluences, processes that would move the indignation of the street into the institutions. To convert the social majority hit by the social crisis into a political majority. Without forgetting that the whole process of real change will come from collective awareness, popular self-organization and sustained mobilization. In short, to occupy the institutions, as before they had occupied the plazas, to put them at the service of the “nobodies”. And that is what has happened now.

The explosive impact of Podemos a year ago, in May 2014, unexpectedly winning 1.2 million votes and 5 MEPS in the European elections, was the best example. A roadmap had been drawn up earlier, in April 2013, by the Proceso Constituyente in Catalonia, led by the Benedictine nun Teresa Forcades and the economist Arcadi Oliveres, appealing for the construction from below of a new political-social majority. An example followed by Guanyem Barcelona and Ahora Madrid in these elections. An experience that has been extended to numerous municipalities and communities, with the emergence of new political forces, the result of the social confluence, able to reach the hardest hit sectors, who have been mobilized and have voted on this occasion.

The result of this election breaks the mould of politics as we have known it since the transition from Francoism. The table is no longer set for just two. And the entry of the “voiceless”, of the precarious, the terminally ill, unemployed, in the final analysis of the “outsiders”, into the town hall of Barcelona shows that we can win, and that everything is possible. But, the path of change will not be easy. The pressure of the establishment, from their economic lobbies to its media machinery, will not relent. The obstacles and the disqualifications will be many. The responsibility, as well as the opportunity is enormous.

Today, we live in a historic moment. Four years have passed since the plazas shouted: “They do not represent us”. After the political earthquake of these elections a new slogan imposes itself: “Yes, they represent us”. In Catalonia, the elections to the Parliament are the next line of assault. In Madrid, it's the Congress of Deputies. As Ada Colau said on this historic election night: “This is a revolution which is unstoppable”.