

Building Environmental Citizenship in Spain: Urban Movements and Ecologist Protest in Las Palmas De Gran Canaria, 1970-1983

Authors : Juan Manuel Brito-Diaz

Abstract : The emergence of urban environmentalism in Spain is related to the processes of economic transformation and growing urbanization that occurred during the end of the Franco regime and the democratic transition. This paper analyzes the urban environmental mobilizations and their impacts as relevant democratizing agents in the processes of political change in cities. It's an under-researched topic and studies on environmental movements in Spain have paid little attention to it. This research takes as its starting point the close link between democratization and environmentalism, since it considers that environmental conflicts are largely a consequence of democratic problems, and that the impacts of environmental movements are directly linked to the democratization. The study argues that the environmental movements that emerged in Spain at the end of the dictatorship and the democratic transition are an important part of the broad and complex associative fabric that promoted the democratization process. The research focuses on investigating the environmental protest in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria—the most important city in the Canary Islands—between 1970 and 1983, concurrently with the last local governments of the dictatorship and the first democratic city councils. As it is a case study, it opens up the possibility to ask multiple specific questions and assess each of the responses obtained. Although several research methodologies have been applied, such as the analysis of historical archives documentation or oral history interviews, mainly a very widespread methodology in the sociology of social movements, although very little used by social historians, has been used: the Protest Event Analysis (PEA). This methodology, which consists of generating a catalog of protest events by coding data around previously established variables, has allowed me to map, analyze and interpret the occurrence of protests over time and space, and associated factors, through content analysis. For data collection, news from local newspapers have provided a large enough sample to analyze the properties of social protest -frequency, size, demands, forms, organizers, etc.—and relate them to another type of information related to political structures and mobilization repertoires, encouraging the establishment of connections between the protest and the political impacts of urban movements. Finally, the study argues that the environmental movements of this period were essential to the construction of the new democratic city in Spain, not only because they established the issues of sustainability and urban environmental justice on the public agenda, but also because they proposed that conflicts derived from such matters should ultimately be resolved through public deliberation and citizen participation.

Keywords : democratization, environmental movements, political impacts, social movements

Conference Title : ICSMS 2021 : International Conference on Social Movement Studies

Conference Location : New York, United States

Conference Dates : October 07-08, 2021