

# **The Barcelona Interview Series Part 1 – Oca Gracia: „Without the feminist perspective there will be no revolution,,**

By Enough is Enough, <https://enoughisenough14.org/>



*This the first interview of our „Barcelona Interview Series“. On November 17, 2017, we spoke with anarchist comrades Jordi and Maria (both names changed) of the Oca Gracia collective in Barcelona, about the so-called Catalan process.*

- What were the main reasons for you to get involved, if you are involved, in the process of the independence movement?

*Maria:* The independence movement has a long history in Catalonia. The thing is... for so many years the idea of independence was linked with leaving the Spanish state. To break with the fascist characteristics of the Spanish state. It was mostly linked with leftwing ideas. In 2011 the conservative party *Convergència i Unió* (CiU) started to put independence as an important point on their agenda. As something attractive to get votes. The independence issue started to get mainstream.

For us the thing of being kind of involved in this, is mostly to get back those original ideas. We are involved because we think it's powerful to use this phase that Catalonia is leaving (Spain) to promote ideas like breaking the power of the state, empowering people to self-organization and to bring-in anarchist ideas; like questioning the law, questioning what is legitimate and what is legal. This is something that a lot of people are questioning nowadays. We like to promote these ideas. Not the idea of creating a new republic, a new capitalistic state, but the idea of breaking Spain. Breaking this big political and economic force that Spain is and all the fascist ideals it has held for so many years.

*Jordi:* I think it's also interesting to know that when the right took the independence into their program in 2011, in the same year, in May, there was the 15m movement. For a lot of people the political and economical institutions were not legitimate anymore. In June 2011 there was a big 15m demonstration to surround Catalan parliament because there was a vote on tax cuts that day. The president, Artur Mas, had to come to parliament with a helicopter. There was a lot of police violence and the institutions were really between the sword and the wall. Especially the capitalist and oligarchist way. So they said if we take the flag of independence we can distract people and hide the social and material living conditions and the effects of our neoliberal policies.

- There are many different groups, initiatives and parties who are part of the independence movement. Can you tell us something about your views on these different groups?

*Jordi:* The whole political spectrum is inside the independence movement. From anarchists to fascists. There are also Catalan fascists, but this is a very small part (We saw that a few people with a fascist identity-group flag were thrown out of an independence demo, EIE).

But there are neoliberals, communists, social-democrats, conservatives, all the ideologies are represented in Catalonia. Obviously a liberal (capitalist) republic, the state that the right and the center left want to create, is different from what the radical left like CUP (a far left grassroots party in Catalonia) want, they want a republic of councils.

- There are also anarchists who are not involved at all in the independence process. Can you tell us something about their positions and how do you think about these positions?

*Maria:* We kind of understand their position but we see ourselves in a situation where we cannot ignore the amount of repression and we cannot ignore the opportunity of this political situation for anarchists to promote ideas like self-organization. We support this cause in a strategic way. We also believe that solidarity is not something that should be used as a coin. Like okay, we give solidarity because you gave solidarity to us. We don't believe in that. We give solidarity to this cause, because we believe its legitimate. We don't believe in any kind of repression. Not even this one. The repression against the independence movement. So, we understand their position but we believe it's kind of dogmatic and it has a lack of strategic view.

- What are the main reasons why you think it's important for Catalonia to leave Spain?

*Jordi:* To break Spain is a huge opportunity in history. Spain is one of the worst states. We have one of the worst colonial pasts. One of the most right wing structures. One of the most repressive, with a lot of military power and a capitalist oligarchy. Breaking that is a big chance in history. As anarchists we don't want any state. We don't want a Catalan republic, but the scenario of breaking Spain is so amazing and is important.

*Maria:* It opens a lot of opportunities. It brings a lot of debate.

*Jordi:* Its better to think about breaking a state that is existing, than to worry about a state that doesn't exist. We believe that breaking Spain has beneficial effects for other peoples in Spain. For the working class in Spain, who are also oppressed by the state. They can take advantage of the situation, to benefit their own fights and struggles.

- What should change if Catalonia becomes independent in comparison to the situation now?

*Maria:* Because the independence movement is mostly led by right wing parties it would be a neoliberal state. Which is nothing good. At the same time it would be little and more fragile and easier to fight. There would be less forces like the church (which has a lot of influence in Spain, but far less in Catalonia), like the military. All these things would stop existing in our everyday political life as Catalans. The negative part would be that because of all the repression and the romanticization of the independence movement all the Catalan institutions would be considered as legitimate for many people. They would have a lot of support and that could be something negative. Because when the institutions are considered as legitimate, the ones who are fighting these institutions will be criminalized more easy. So it would have both positive and negative aspects, but we hold onto the positive ones. That's why we support it.

- Many people in Europe, but also in the USA and other parts of the world don't know what's meant with the regime of '78. Can you explain what the regime of 78 is?

*Jordi:* The regime of 78 is the political and social pact the Spanish establishment and the big powers made after Franco's death to maintain power and to survive in the new international scenario. They realized that the old-style fascist dictatorship was not acceptable in Europe anymore. The big economic powers realized themselves that they have to start some kind of democratization process to adapt to Europe. So there was a pact that said we are not going to speak about the civil war and the republic. We will not clean the state apparatus, so there was no process of denazification like in Germany. All the police, all the judges, all the powers are still the same. And there is the king with his position. Basicly the process was there to maintain power. Today the heritage of the Franco dictatorship is the regime of 78.

- The Spanish government suspended catalan autonomy with article 155. What do you think could be an effective way to resist this kind of repression?

*Maria:* We believe that the better strategie we could use is the indefinite general strike. The problem is that the independence movement is a mainstream movement. Most of the people that are involved in the independence struggle are middle class and we don't think that the middle class is prepared for something like this. We don't believe they have this level of implication. We don't believe they have enough consience... on how much you have to give for some changes to happen. So there is a real problem.

*Jordi:* If you are not hungry, you are not going to do a revolution.

- How can people outside of Catalonia support the struggle here?

*Maria:* Probably there should be a boycott of Spain. Generating international pressure, denouncing the situation. There is not a lot you can do from outside, but yes the boycott is a good idea.

*Jordi:* Like the anti-apartheid movement did, with the people of grassroots movements in other countries. Stop buying Spanish products or do demonstrations in front of the (Spanish) embassy and denounce the Spanish government as a fascist dictatorship.

*Maria:* Comrades in Greece have already done this (They occupied the Spanish embassy in Athens last month). We believe it's a good strategy to point out that something really oppressive is happening here.

*Jordi:* And maybe don't come as a tourist. Boycott tourism. You would really do us a favor, because we have a lot of gentrification problems here in Barcelona and in the rest of Spain because of the tourism industry.

- Can you tell us something about the rise of fascism in Spain and Catalonia?

*Maria:* Basically when the middle class was finally doing something about the political situation, they started to notice that fascists exist. Fascists have always existed in Spain and Catalonia. We have a fascist past, we had a dictatorship and that brings a lot of heritage in society. So fascism has always existed, mostly it effected migrants, anarchists, LGTB, all kinds of minorities. Now finally its effecting the middle class and that's why people are so aware now. People are now saying "Oh my god, fascism is rising," but in fact it has always been there. Maybe the difference is that they (the fascists) are more empowered because they are being legitimized by the Spanish central government. They are mobilizing a lot now because they see a threat in the whole independence thing and that's why we see them more. It's effecting more people now and that's the thing. But we believe it has always been there, it's not something new.

*Jordi:* It's the same thing as police repression. When people that were never active before go to a demonstration and get beaten by police, they say: "Wow, what is this? This is a dictatorship." It's the same with political prisoners. We are being repressed for many years by police and courts. There have been political prisoners in Spain during the whole history of the regime of 78. But people didn't know because it didn't effect them.

*Maria:* When you lose your privileges you get aware of all these things.

- What do you think about the pacifist strategy of large parts of the independence movement?

*Jordi:* I think they are making a mistake. For example... I think it was important to resist peacefully at the first of October (The day of the referendum about Catalan independence) to show the world people just want to vote and the other side (Spanish state) are beating people. There are people who believe "Europe will save us". But Europe is letting tens of thousands of people die in the Mediterranean sea. The European Union is only interested in money, in capitalist interests and doesn't care about repression. They say it clear: They are with the Spanish state, with the establishment. I think when the Spanish state will use violence on a big scale at some point in this conflict, the other side have the right to defend themselves. Not to be violent because they want to, but if we are being attacked we have the right to defend ourselves.

*Maria:* There is a lobby of pacifists and accommodated activists who want to control the way people demonstrate. For us that's pretty violent. How can you tell someone at what point they have the right to defend themselves? How can you repress people when they are trying to avoid the repression against them? Its really not coherent. There are economic interests behind this. There is an interest to control and make it a mainstream revolution with no class content.

*Jordi:* Maybe they think that a more pacifist movement attracts more people, allows more people to be in the streets, but this works only till a certain point. Because if they attack you and there is no defense, they win! But until now the Spanish state did everything they could to support the independence movement; repressing it on a high level which mobilized more and more people. But our side is making the mistake not to defend ourselves as much as the situation demands.

*Maria:* Between the middle class supporters of independence there is sense that there is a bigger strategy. A lot of shit is happening and now Puigdemont, the Catalan president is leaving to Belgium, everything is falling apart. The situation is obviously failing and not everybody is mobilizing because they believe there is a bigger strategy. It's really specific how people don't see themselves as protagonists of this revolution; "Okay trust the politicians, be calm, don't fall into provocations, they have a strategy, we have to trust the politicians." So we say: "Common you are part of this revolution, take a chance, decide for yourself how you want to defend." Don't just follow the indications, but they follow the

indications because they think it's part of a bigger strategy, done by people who are smarter and better than them. This is disempowering people and we are trying to create the opposite. To take advantage of the situation and to empower people but it's difficult because the whole mainstream process is about disempowering people and making them trust the big sharks.

*Jordi:* Obviously pacifism is still a tool used to control people from above. The right wing establishment is really afraid for the riot tradition of Barcelona. They know that when riots start people will not only focus on the Spanish government, but also on the capitalist powers and they (the right wing establishment) don't want that.

- How did the independence movement start?

*Jordi:* Well... let's get back to the 18th century. Catalonia was one of the first states that had a parliament in the middle ages in Europe. Catalonia has a tradition of being... maybe more democratic. More decentralized and with certain values like individual freedom and also liberal values in general. Spain was always a state that was retral in history. The Spanish state remained an absolutist monarchy for many years after the French revolution. In 1714 Catalonia lost a war between two contenders for the Spanish throne. The centralists won, the French Bourbon prince Philip. At that point they repressed the cultural institutions and all of the decentralized powers in Catalonia, but also in the rest of Spain. The Spanish state always treated Catalonia like a colony. There always has been a sense of resistance in Catalonia. Not necessary nationalist, but against the oppressive power from Madrid, against the king, the throne, the military.

*Maria:* The language was also playing an important role. The Catalan language has been historically persecuted and drowned.

*Jordi:* Historically there has always been resistance against the Spanish military. There is a long history of revolts by Catalan youths who didn't want to go to Spanish wars. The resistance came primarily from the working class, but it has expressions from both the working class and the bourgeoisie. The left wing or working class in Catalonia have a long and rich history of struggle and accomplishments and of revolutions, but since the 19th century the bourgeoisie also focussed on writing, poetry and things like that for the recuperation of the Catalan language. Because both the working class and the bourgeoisie have issues and trouble with the Spanish state. The independence movement that want a state started in the 20's or 30's of the 20th century. With Esquerra Republicana, the party that still exists, it has a left wing, not radical left, but a left wing character. In the 1930's it

was one of the most powerful actors in Catalonia. But the most powerful were the anarcho-syndicalists of the CNT.

The current independence radical left wing, like the CUP was founded in the seventies and eighties. Between anarchists and the CUP there is communication. There are ideas that we share, others that we don't share. In the eighties and nineties the independence movement was solely left wing. Like we said before in 2011 the right took the flag of the independence with another objective and agenda. Like hiding the social inequality and capitalizing the rest of the content. The people are willing to change.

- We visited an Asambleia and it reminded me of Asambleas of 15M we visited a few years ago. Do you think some parts of the independence movement came out of the 15M movement?

*Maria:* In the 15m movement something really beautiful happened. Finally the whole asamblea-ism became very visible. Basically I think what 15m brought to Catalonia and to Spain in general. Because it was not only a Catalan or Spanish thing, but basically what it brought was a lot of methodology. So after 15m a lot of assemblies were being created. So yes a large part of the independence movement use methodology from 15m.

- What do you think about the importance of the internet for mobilization and organization for the independence movement?

*Maria:* The internet and the networks are important but they also bring some problems. The first problem is that information is being tricked and some of the information is false and it's harder to distinguish which information is valid and which is not. Also there is so much information that it's hard to be aware of everything and to distinguish the different conflicts or even to link the different conflicts. It's hard to organize this amount of information. Another problem is that internet activism is something, it's okay and we are not against it, but it gives a sense of fake reality. All the revolutionary information that is being distributed to everyone. You see how many people are reposting and sharing calls for demonstrations and mobilizations and you get the sense like "wow this demonstration is going to be massive." In the end you go there and there are not many people. So it gives a sense of fake reality. It's really easy to share, to like, to write, to support things in the internet, but it's necessary to fill the streets with people who are willing to give their strength to a revolution. So on one hand it's good because information comes to everyone and people who don't have the capacity to go on the streets have other ways to support revolutions, but on the other hand information gets falsified. There is a big difference

between the reality of revolution and how you can see it in the internet.

*Jordi:* We also shouldn't forget that all this information is out but big corporations do business with our data and it allows the police to know all we are talking about. That's another big issue.

- Can you tell me something about your ideas how to deal with people that are working for the state now, like Mossos for example?

*Maria:* We believe that anarchism is a process. It's not going to come from one day to the other. During this process alternatives will be made and this will bring people who work for the institutions, including some of us... because there are a lot of people having state jobs... it's normal, you need to eat, you work. So in this process that anarchism is, alternatives will be born. A lot of people with certain ideologies will start being part of this alternatives and living them. But at the same time there will be people resisting in the institutions and will be helpful with deportations, helpful with repression, helpful with all these kind of things because they believe in them, not because of the money. At some point there will have to be a conflict with these people. It's not something that we can prevent from happening.

It's true that capitalism letting a lot of people do things they don't believe in because of money, but there are also people who do these things because they want and they believe in it and we will have a problem with these people. That's a fact.

*Jordi:* Thinking that there will be a revolution without a confrontation with the core of the state is naive. A revolution, whether we like it or not, will have a lot of violence. That's a fact.

- The more liberal ANC is dominating solidarity actions in foreign countries. Do you know about international groups that are organized in grassroots movements?

*Jordi:* The problem is that the grassroots groups don't have the media power of the ANC or other big organizations and it's more difficult for these grassroots groups to be heard in other countries. But it's important to speak with groups like yours and alternative media, media made by grassroots collectives to solve this. As anarchists and activists we maybe know a little bit more about grassroots movements, but the mainstream people don't. I think the solution for that is more media work by ourselves.

- Do you want to install a republic of councils like some other groups that support the independence movement? If yes, how do you want to create it?

*Jordi:* Well republic is not the word we prefer... but councils yes its the main goal of the revolutionary left. Anarchists and communists want a decentralized political organisation based on the municipality or the city. We are inspired by the democratic confederalism like in Kurdistan and Chiapas, but also our own experiences of political organization during the revolution and the civil war here. Yes, both anarchists and revolutionary left wing parties want this but a council can also berate us as a Soviet and then it is a party. And when there is a party there is hierarchy and authorianism. Here in the CDR's (The city district defence committees), the councils working for independence are working more with direct democracy, equality and assemblies, but there are also people who want to control it as a ruling left party. But at the moment the CDR's are only focussed on the independent struggle, they are not creating a real network..

*Maria:* The thing is that there is a lack of building networks that will satisfy people's needs and that will take into account the class problems, the economic problems, because it's all really based on the goal; which is independence. It's very based on the what, but there is a lack of work on how. We need to work on how. How do we build these networks, how do we satisfy the needs of people. Tha'ts the problem.

- Do you think that the support for this idea is big enough?

*Jordi:* No it's a minority. Most people in the independence movement are liberals and want to create a state like Denmark, the Netherlands or Norway. A more democratic state, not as authoritarian like the Turkish-style (Erdogan) Spanish state. They want a liberal social-democratic state but not a republic of councils.

- Let's talk about economy and consume. Can you tell us some economic models that you would propose for a catalan republic?

*Jordi:* As anarchists we want an economic model inspired by anarchist-syndikalist and Kropotkin's ways.

*Maria:* Everyone would give what they can and get what they need. Tha'ts the main basic thing that we should inspire when we build our economy. In this libertarian communism, in municipalism, not organized in a centralist way, but organized in little territories. So people can participate in decisions and decision-making that will effect them and will effect their

community and their land. We don't trust centralist power or a bigger thing.

*Jordi:* Housing, education and healthcare should be free for everybody. We don't believe in property and we are anti-capitalistic. We believe in an economy based on equality without greed. You can give something to the community through work, but not to a boss. We don't want nay bosses and any owners.

*Maria:* There is also the concept of feminist economy where caring is in the center. The basic thing to cover for everyone are basic needs but also caring. Like Xavis already said: healthcare, but also raising children. A priority should be raising children and caring of people who are depending. It's a really nice to think that everybody is capable of feeding themselves but it's not a reality. Not everybody have the same capacities, so we have to put people in the center who are not able to get their necessities themselves. That's really important. But we also have to put emotional caring in the center. Minorities caring. The most vulnerable people should be in the center of the economy.

*Jordi:* In fact most of the jobs nowadays are nonsense. In this phase of late-capitalism there are a lot of jobs in for instance the service sector where there is no need for at all. These jobs are created to maintain us in slavery and alienation. In our view economy should be more about talking with each other and decide together what we need. It should be about how we build or create what we need. There is a lot of work that is meaningful and in a better organized economy we will have to work less. Half or even less and we would have a better life. We would have time for other things. Things that are not exchangeable in money but that are also important, like caring.

- What do you think about the feminism fight in Catalonia?

*Maria:* As a woman I think that is a good point. It's reaching a lot of people. Even in a liberal way, if you like it or not, you see it in the media here, you see it in the agenda of mainstream political parties. So feminism is visible and it's starting to be respected as an ideology and a way of life. Here in Catalonia for example it's reaching a lot of spaces. Spaces of political parties. Like parties that are organized by grassroots movements. They have protocols for kicking out aggressors, sexual harassers. This is something everybody is approving. There used to be a lot of criticism of non-mixed groups that excluded hetero men, but this is changing. People start to understand that the people who are leading this struggle, are the people who are mainly effected by this oppression. But on the other hand a lot of work needs to be done in the mixed spaces that women are sharing with men. We need to gain a lot of empowerment in the mixed spaces. For example almost everybody

respect the actions of the non-mixed groups, but if you go to an anti-fascist demonstration you hear a lot of chants from what I call menarchists, saying insults to the police like son of a bitch, which is a misogynistic insult. You hear people insulting female politicians by calling them bitches. You see a lot of these things and they show that the idea has not yet conceived. The practices are starting to be conceived but not the basic idea. When you are insulting police with misogynistic insults that shows a lot. So as women that are participating in mixed spaces, we need to be in the front. We need to get the microphone on demonstrations. We need to be in the frontline and really put limits to our comrades. We also need to feminize the spaces. There is a lot of masculine thought on grassroots movements and the anti-fascist movement. We have to question a lot of procedures on decision-making. The feminization of the mixed spaces should lead to intersectionalities. I think nowadays that's the most important thing on the agenda of feminism. Yes we have feminism, but for who is this feminism? Is it only for white women? Is it only for his women? Is it only for women with capacities society wants you to have? For me the feminization of mixed spaces should turn these spaces into spaces for everyone. Because revolution needs spaces for everyone. At the moment these spaces, are spaces for people with accepted capacities, accepted race, accepted social conditions. I believe feminism is the key for every revolution. The Kurdish struggle has it on their agenda. They realize that without a feminist perspective there will be no revolution.