
Introduction
Emerging Social Practices in Urban Space: The Case of Madrid

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Not long ago, urban scholars predicted the end of the city as we knew it. A radical transformation fuelled by the new ICT (Information and Communication Technology), delocalization and the increasing interconnectedness of the world was eroding the old urban cores of the cities. Scholars and pundits claimed that we would be able to work wherever we wanted. The nation state had entered its final demise. We lived at the end of history. These somehow exaggerated depictions of the future, as imagined in the Western hemisphere, were later replaced by a more dramatic and less positive view of the world. The nation state is not only in good health, but it seems to be thriving everywhere. It is the skeleton of globalization as Saskia Sassen (1991) aptly pointed out. The city is now the answer, the good one, to our future.

Dense cities are sustainable and articulate the globalised world. Actually, the world population is already mostly urban. However, the global world, the increasing interconnectedness we live in, maintains a disorienting diversity. Cities and the people that inhabit them show specific identities and dynamics. In spite of this diversity, there are two urban processes and configurations that seem to be paramount in the current, urban, global transformation: the informal city and the processes of metropolization.

This monographic Special Issue of *Urbanities*¹ deals mostly — though not only — with metropolization in the case-study of Madrid. By choosing Madrid we both intend to delve in the specificities of place-making and transformation in a city which is subjected to a major metropolization process and to show how one in-depth series of micro-case studies helps explain world trends of urbanization.

Over the last few years Madrid, the political capital of Spain, has become a place of metropolization, a major urban agglomeration characterized both by the growth of a polycentric metropolitan space — the province of Madrid has become Metropolitan Madrid — and by a substantial transformation of the old centre. Demographically, Madrid is the third largest urban agglomeration in Europe (behind Ile de France, and Greater London). Madrid is a services-oriented city (86.7 per cent of its GDP); its total GDP accounts to 11.8 per cent of the Spanish GDP and its more prominent activities are transportation, communication, housing and financial services. Tourism is also an important activity of the city, both in terms of employment and economic output (Observatorio Metropolitano 2007, 2009, 2014).

¹ The idea of editing this Special Issue of *Urbanities* took shape during the 2014 Annual Conference of the Commission on Urban Anthropology (CUA-IUAES) on *Dreamed/Planned Cities and Experienced Cities* held at the Université Jean Monnet, St. Etienne, France (8-10 July 2014).

In this Special Issue we propose a collaborative approach to Madrid as an interesting case of metropolization and urban agglomeration, and as a place where emerging social and cultural practices are transforming the old core of the city. Metropolis are nodes of globalization; yet they are also places of diversification and innovation, as defined not just by the political economy of global dynamics but by emerging practices that transform and create places with specific identities and by thematic areas of urban leisure and services. Through anthropological research in Madrid we intend to add to the general theoretical urban debate discussing ethnographic evidence on the ways in which global processes of urbanization are experienced by people in their daily life.

These articles are a selection of the work done by the Urban Culture Group (García Canclini and Cruces 2012).² This Group is an international research team composed by anthropologists, historians, art historians, ethnomusicologists and sociologist from the Spanish Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED), the Universidad Complutense de Madrid, the Mexican Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana-Iztapalapa and the Uruguayan Universidad de la República. The contributors have been working for four years in Madrid with the research goals of developing an ethnographic observatory of urban practices focused on the emergence of a ‘new urban common sense’ related to the process of metropolization. Our approach is empirical. We have investigated emerging practices in Madrid also from a historical perspective, the production of meaning and the political economy of the metropolis. It may seem obvious that such an approach should be based on multi-sited ethnography (Marcus 1995), yet this collaborative proposal is not a ‘canonical’ or first-generation multi-sited ethnography. As Pardo and Prato indicate with reference to Seligmann’s study of street vendors in Peru (2012), our fieldwork is interested in a multi-sited approach ‘that at once offers an in-depth understanding of how people relate to their wider system beyond their neighbourhood and workplace and links nicely the analysis of micro-processes to the complexity of macro-level influences’ (Pardo and Prato 2013: 96). Our in-depth field research has been organized in specific *ethnographic windows*. Each window is a monographic research that contributes to building a composite image of Madrid and its processes of metropolization. This methodology allows different sets of comparisons, theoretical understanding and uses, beyond Madrid and our specific perspective.

We have chosen Madrid to deal with emerging social and cultural practices in urban spaces for various reasons. We see Madrid as an excellent example of accelerated transformation. It craves to be a city as important as any of those few, first rated metropolis, such as New York, London or Tokyo. It is clearly becoming a world city, a nodal point in the fluxes and processes that defines urban metropolization and globalization. Madrid metropolis is both provincial and cosmopolitan; it is a space of globalization and a place signified by a strong local identity — particularly in some of the older areas. No matter how cosmopolitan

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Madrid aspires to be, to those who live here its trademarks remain *Madrid me mata* (Madrid kills me) or *De Madrid al cielo* (From Madrid to heaven).

This Special Issue could be read either as a series of articles dealing with a specific case study or as a theoretical contribution. In both cases, the topics that we discuss are open to comparison with other places of metropolization. In fact, the research projects that engendered the articles that follow also offer answers to the problems that other urban scholars encounter in their studies. These articles should be understood as a part of a dialogical continuum, the urban ethnographic windows offered here aim at describing, capturing and analyzing processes of metropolization that are taking place across the world. Some of such processes are reconfiguring the old cores of the cities into thematic shopping and leisure playgrounds; here we will be focusing particularly on the resiliency of the old neighbourhoods and on new regimes of living, working or enjoying the city. The article 'Personal is metropolitan', written by Francisco Cruces, argues for an affective (socio-sentimental) dimension and looks at the customary domains of public space (socio-spatial) and individual interactions (socio-communicational) in dealing with the urban. More precisely, Cruces assesses the intimate, affective dimension of life as a key building block of the contemporary processes of metropolization. From a theoretical perspective, Montserrat Cañedo's article not only deals with urban logistics; it also outlines an ethnography of globalization(s) that do not 'superimpose' globalization, as a space, upon local settings. She tries to answer two theoretical questions, how to think about urban time-space from a relational and performative approach and how the experience in and of these time and space frameworks at once conditions and expresses specific forms of subjectivity. Cañedo's performative view of the city helps the researchers to understand a new urban sense of subjectivity; that is, Madrid, like other places of metropolization, is better understood as a 'shared task'. In her view, networks instead of places embody the very essence of the contemporary city (cosmopolis).

By dealing with a Community Vegetable Garden, Sara Sama's article takes us not only to an emerging global phenomenon, the Urban Vegetable Gardens, but also to the intricate and overlapping dimensions related to the 'shared agency' of public space. In her ethnography, traditional spaces mingle and interact with the Internet. The new Information and Communication Technologies play a major role in the definition of the new metropolis, and this case-study shows how complex and multi-layered urban daily life has become, also looking at the role of citizens/neighbours. Sama illustrates how metropolises are becoming a multidimensional space where conventional and digital practices coexist and interact, but also how activists transform their practices, how the city is becoming sentient and what new understandings arise from a public space where the virtual and the physical are embedded.

Monge reflects on how many neighbourhoods coexist in the Urban Village of Malasaña, which is the analytical thread that helps trace the transformations and tensions of a central, historical neighbourhood of the city. 'The city in a quarter' deals with the Malasaña area from within and without. Linking metropolization to the social, cultural and political transformations of Madrid, the discussion aims to problematize the city without following the usual paths determined by processes such as gentrification.

Héctor Fouce's article deals with the space of music; more precisely, how the digital experience is modelling the way we experience music in the city. The cases that he studies are related with the indie scene and the relationship with difficult-to-define social phenomena, such as 15-M or Occupy Sol (*Spanish Revolution*).

This special issue concludes with an 'after-the-fact' contextualization of Madrid looking at the specific contexts that mark its transformation; key events and facts that focusing on places and practices help to contextualize Madrid and to open the dialogue of this metropolis with others. As I have mentioned above, we have developed a kind of 'multi-sited collaboration' (Hannerz 2009) among 'parallel and interconnected research to be carried out simultaneously' (Pardo and Prato 2012: 11) in the rapidly transforming urban space of Madrid. Certain key words, such as emergence, practices, innovation, new and old, public and private, renewal — to mention just some of the most relevant — will appear in most of the articles. All contributors also focus on spaces: intimate spaces, public spaces, relational and performative time-spaces, mediated spaces, urban villages and the musical digital space. I find more useful to leave the definition of these concepts and terms to the authors. Here, I just want to point out the deliberate omission of the usual concepts, such as gentrification, neoliberalism and similar others. Although they will appear in our discussions, we would not like to be marred by them. Ethnography is our trade and ethnographic windows are our way of being in the city and researching the city.

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