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## **Editors' Note**

On behalf of the Board of Urbanities, we are pleased to introduce this Special Issue on *Emerging Social Practices in Urban Space: The Case of Madrid*. Guest edited by Fernando Monge, it includes 6 articles and an Introduction (pp. 2-106).

Italo Pardo and Jerome Krase

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

Guest Editor  
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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*<sup>1</sup> 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).

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<sup>1</sup> 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).<sup>2</sup> 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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<sup>2</sup> The production of these articles has been made possible by the collaborative work of UNED’s Urban Research Group; and the funding given by two National Research Programs: *Prácticas culturales emergentes en el Nuevo Madrid* [Emerging Cultural Practices in the New Madrid] (CSO2009-10780, MICINN 2009-2012) and *Madrid Cosmópolis. Prácticas emergentes y procesos metropolitanos* [Madrid Cosmopolis. Emerging Metropolitan Practices and Processes] (MEC, CSO2012-33949).

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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## ***Personal is Metropolitan: Narratives of Self and the Poetics of the Intimate Sphere<sup>1</sup>***

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This article focuses on current narratives of daily life among young dwellers of metropolitan cities as a particular genre in the growing relevance and visibility of the intimate sphere. The ethnography is highly experimental. It results from workshops based on the collective exploration of the participants' inhabiting practices and consists mostly of micro-narratives. Although most of these data were gathered in Madrid between 2010 and 2014, I also use material from fieldwork carried out in México DF and Montevideo during the same period. The analysis addresses the form of the storytelling, the conventions of modern living as background and a plot where the Ego is the main character. Such discourses must be understood in the light of silent processes transforming city life from the inside. They speak from a strong 'I': a subject committed to autonomy, mobility and self-design. This individualizing tendency compels a young generation of dwellers to 'become oneself' through a personal, reflexive quest that entails being open to the future and breaking with the past (thus establishing discontinuities with class, family, local or ethnic determinations). At the same time, daily routines allow them to discover an emerging order of their own through a process of production of meaning that is amazingly conservative, as it consists in the permanent integration of collective memories and traditional and familial forms of domestic practice. These processes take place at a historical time in which the intimate sphere is given visibility and legitimacy. Classical definitions and metaphors of public space fail to recognize fully these silent processes.

**Keywords:** Intimacy, narratives, domestic space.

### ***Intimacies at Home***

Doing fieldwork in your own society is always a sticky task. First, you have to combine your daily life with participant agendas. Then, you have to follow people that in turn follow their own agendas and have to find ways to locate yourself 'where the action is' (Goffman 1967), in a metropolis where, by definition, there are countless sites of action.

This is probably why most urban ethnographers choose to document collective events taking place in the public space. This was my approach in the 1990s, doing fieldwork in Madrid, México DF and Bogotá on urban festivals, political demonstrations, music consumption and oral histories (Cruces 2007). Then I studied Madrilenian organizations (Cruces et al. 2002), finding that specialist organizations are based on a tight division of labour that sets strict limits on intruder-observers. This means that the researcher has to look for formal entry to the organizational body or, more often, has to opt for a somewhat furtive access through the backstage of bureaux, hospitals, airports, ministries, banks, schools and companies; again, where the action is.

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<sup>1</sup> This article draws on the findings of a research project on *Madrid Cosmópolis. Prácticas emergentes y procesos metropolitanos* (MINECO, CSO2012-33949). The discussion also greatly benefits from the projects on *Procesos de metropolización y esfera íntima. Una aproximación comparativa* (Institute Français d'Urbanisme, Paris III & Ministry of Education, Spain, PR2009-0160) and on *Metropolization and the sphere of intimacy. A comparative exploration* (Department of Anthropology at UCSD, United States of America), as well as from a Research Visit at the School of Psychology, University of the Republic, Uruguay.

This methodological predicament of urban ethnography increases exponentially in the study of intimacy, because everyone in the city becomes a locus of action. Every woman, man, child, young or old persons have a life of their own, an intimacy to build, a work to do, an engagement in the task of self-making, purposefully, endlessly. How to cope with this De Certeauian (1990) proliferation? Although this may seem a merely quantitative consideration, it links substantial issues. One is the singularity of everyone's world; what one finds in studying others' intimacies is what the subjects experience as the unique and unrepeatable character of their own lives. More than with a predictable repetition of the same, one is confronted with the serendipitous and animated ups-and-downs in the life of urban dwellers. Ethnography is a pale, graceless resemblance of daily life. Of course there are patterns and categories that the analyst can (and must) impose, but in the exchanges with one's informants one soon discovers that one's view of other's lives is poorer, somehow reductive and thin, when compared to the richness and meaning of their practices, stories and actions.

A further problem has to do with intrusion. The canonical ethnographic strategy used to be, in Marcus terms, 'to follow the people' (1995). In order to document new practices in the intimate realm (to grasp its situated poetics-cum-politics), I could have reasonably chosen four or five homes and be there when meals were cooked, when children were bathed, when TV family sessions took place or when couples quarrelled over the share of chores and errands. Gullestad's *Kitchen-Table Society* (1989) and Hochschild's *The Second Shift* (1989) are masterworks in this line. A different option would be the sociological path set by J-C. Kauffman in *Le coeur a l'ouvrage* (1997), where he originally theorized *action ménagère* drawing on a lively exchange by mail with informants on the petty details of laundry, ironing and housekeeping.

The ethnography analyzed here follows the path of authors who have shed light on the historical significance of the rise of the intimate sphere, like De Certeau (1990), Giddens (1991, 1992), Gullestad (1989), Hochschild and Machung (1989), Hochschild (1997, 2003 and 2012), Löfgren (2014), Nippert-Eng (1995, 2010) and Kauffman (1997, 2004). The discussion is also inspired by a narratological approach of the kind used by Finnegan (1998) and Brunvand (2001) in order to understand urban life through the analytical lens of its oral genres, discourses and performances.

We live in a time marked by tendency to what could be called *extimacy*; that is, a growing social pressure to disclose intimate life, a social urge to overexpose it to cameras, the internet and other media. So, I decided to try a slightly different approach to data gathering. To put it simply, I did not want to intrude too much; I did not want to be a kind of *Big Brother* in other people's space. This was not merely an ethical, dialogical stance; it was also a theoretical and epistemological one. We must certainly question the old, classical urban common sense which subordinated and undervalued the domestic realm tracing a sanitary line between public/private, production/reproduction, work/home and similar divides. At the same time, how can we avoid to succumb to the opposite, contemporary fascination with intimate

life? In the new urbanity,<sup>2</sup> there seems to be an overrepresentation of the creative, the intimate and the affective which invites to render transparent one's entire life and to melt its separate domains into a fluid continuum (as, in fact, often happens in our daily lives). There seems to be something cool about 'intimacy' today. But this should be the problem to study, not a perspective acritically taken to shed light into this aspect of life.

Some few cultural institutions in Madrid are our partners in this research project. I proposed to one of them, Medialab-Prado, a media laboratory of the City Council, to organize jointly a series of workshops on intimacy to be attended by volunteers. We called these workshops 'collective explorations'. The weekly sessions were advertised through the lab's website<sup>3</sup> and participation was open to its wide network of users. These were mainly students, young professionals and entrepreneurs mostly engaged in technological, artistic or cultural initiatives, who were interested in this collaborative proposal for various reasons. A few were carrying out architecture or planning research, others were activists in social movements, still others were artists engaged in projects on photography, performance or design in the private and domestic spaces. However, most participants shared a genuine curiosity about intimate life — a desire to catch a glimpse of others' internal life while showing some of their own.

I developed most of my fieldwork in this rather unconventional setting. Other, more classical, sources of material have included an online survey of a thousand young internet users in Spain and Mexico; a series of in-depth interviews with young cultural producers ('trend-setters') in their homes and ateliers (Cruces 2012) and filming at some informants' homes. In this last case, the inner space of the house and its system of objects add their own 'voices' to a sort of indoors urban symphony.<sup>4</sup>

The workshop was structured as follows. We talked and interacted for two or three hours around a topic or activity which I suggested; things like bringing personal photos, arranging a meal, making a sketch of the house equipment, inventing a music repertoire, dancing, story-telling and drawing. We have commented on beds, laptops, lullabies and *Tupperwares*. We invented nicknames, shared childhood memories, confided about family quarrels, favourite songs and body noises. Everything went. The task at hand focused the

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<sup>2</sup> I use this word not in the restricted meaning of 'good manners' — a set of rules to behave in society — but in a broader theoretical sense, as a set of dispositions — schemes for perception, evaluation and action — that are linked to the urbanization process. This implies a dynamic relationship between urban life and the formation of the subject, as it is classically argued by Wirth's 'urbanism', Elías' 'civilizational process' and Simmel's 'metropolitan mental life' (I discuss these authors in Cruces 2007).

<sup>3</sup> <http://medialab-prado.es/article/prosumidores2>;  
[http://medialab-prado.es/article/intimidades metropolitanas](http://medialab-prado.es/article/intimidades_metropolitanas);  
[http://medialab-prado.es/article/intimidades metropolitanas 2](http://medialab-prado.es/article/intimidades_metropolitanas_2). All internet links included in this article were last consulted in June 2015.

<sup>4</sup> I refer the reader to the film, *The order I live in*, produced with Jorge Moreno Andrés. A teaser is available at: <https://vimeo.com/131186909>.

group's attention, and became a common goal allowing the group to constitute itself and prompting lively exchanges of experiences, anecdotes and confidences.

Given the co-authorial nature of the exploration, the ethnographer becomes involved in this setting not only as producer of the event, but also at a more intimate level, contributing his/her own experiences and personal condition. The collective focus swings from concrete details to abstract reflections — something explicitly stated as a goal of the meeting. The ethnographer is subtly requested to intervene as host and as interpreter of the situation. This takes him or her away from an ideal, non-intrusive role as a detached observer. However, this loss in neutrality is compensated by a gain in proximity and trust. This kind of setting also makes possible for the ethnographer to obtain more than a mere discourse, as it invites the group to explore the existing diversity of *manières de faire*, idiosyncracies and micronarratives.

### **Narratives of the Metropolitan Self**

‘Your sketch has reminded me of something I always yearned for as a little girl; because at home, we never had this kind of situation. In my house everything was hyper ordered, always. It was so not because my mother tidied up a lot, but mostly because we had few things and there were so many rules at home... Especially whenever we visited relatives. Then it was: “Watch what are you gonna say”, “Please behave”, “Mind how you seat at the table”... There were four pieces of cutlery on one side and four on the other, you never knew how to use them. Like in *Pretty Woman*! I lived this typical scene many times at my grandmother's house. I have the feeling things now are not this way anymore’.

Juana said this during *Doing Home*, a workshop convened to share stories of daily life with a dozen participants.<sup>5</sup> She was commenting on a short performance we, the convenors, had offered earlier. Disguised as a traditional couple, we parodied a familial scene, including the cleaning and sweeping of the place, the gender division of roles and a little quarrelling between husband and wife. Prior to this we had stated:

‘Our home is made of stories. Little, funny, cruel, depressing, nasty, faithful, disconcerting, arranged, chaotic, calculated, improvised, desperate, dull or hopeful.

To tell stories. Why not? We do it every time. A day at home is a day of telling: storytelling, self-telling.

Let's build a home together. For a couple of hours. By sharing stories.’

A sociolinguistic view argues that each discourse has to be understood as an answer to a prior discourse. We could say then that, in a way, in these workshops we found nothing more than what we were asking for. Actually, this should be turned on its head. In our call we put a stress on micro-stories precisely because, as a general rule, this ‘short stories of the self’ have proven to be the basic genre resulting from collective explorations. Certainly, they could be

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<sup>5</sup> [http://medialab-prado.es/article/hacer\\_la\\_casa](http://medialab-prado.es/article/hacer_la_casa)

easily induced by the convenor. But they also sprang spontaneously from the exchanges in the group, whether the topic was photographs, computers, couple troubles or childbearing. Furthermore, these stories reflect the structure of other pervasive urban genres (like media chronicles, institutional complaints and chats about illness) which do arise in natural settings. The key point is that this kind of spoken performance puts the self and its vicissitudes at the centre of a moral narrative. It is therefore suitable for systematic analysis (Finnegan 1998).

Some of the best workshops revolved around accounts like those mentioned above, in which a lively give-and-take of stories, with much laughter and emotion, developed following our opening performance. We had the girl who escaped her family's rules; the girl who instead grew up in an apartment filled with books but with no rules; the man who inhabited an 'uninhabited home' — because he was unable to finish the refurbishing he continuously started, over and over; the young man who quarrelled with his girlfriend about the right way to do the chores; the woman whose boyfriend, obsessed with cleanliness and order, made her feel a dirty person; the amateur artist looking after the hidden beauty of the laundry basket (of which she took a series of photographic *still-lives*; and we had the young woman with a strong drive for chaos 'growing inside her chest'.

Three levels of organization can be noticed here. First, a strong narrative structure; as speech acts, these accounts show a form — or a search for it — that often reminds us of other, more formal, storytelling in literary, dramatic and cinematographic genres. Second, the focus on a specific topic: the conventions of living. Through these stories, different ways of living are portrayed, discussed, understood and negotiated against the unspoken background of 'modern living', the subtext being taken-for-granted, shared cultural values, practices and assumptions. Third, these stories are marked by the speaker's perspective. They are definitely stories of the self, of one's own deeds, vicissitudes and predicaments in daily life. In order to articulate the plot, the speaker's leading role does not exclude, but indeed requires, the intervention of a variety of characters: a couple, a family, friends, landlords, furniture, domestic objects, electronic devices, kids, pets, the fate, and so on.

These three aspects appear to be somehow related to each other. This invites an analysis of this kind of micro-story as a genre.

### **A Search for Form**

These stories have form. Many have a definite narrative structure. In others the structure may be incomplete or merely drafted, but the listener can still detect the storyteller's search for style, his or her definite search for form. What modern folklorists have called poetic justice can be found in the best stories. 'Hunter hunted', 'winner by accident', 'happy ending' or 'what a bad luck' conclusions are temporal narrative endings that, by surprising the listener, bring out the story's hidden rationale. Poetic justice is one of the formal traits that make urban legends recognizable (Brunvand 2001) but that also seems to be present in much of our daily storytelling. For example:

'This is the most curious [of my family photos]. Here is my aunt Amalia, with a suitor of hers who came back from America with my grandfather. He came back,

got in love with her, wooed her, but nothing. Nothing, she didn't want him. Then, on the very day she was going to say "yes" — because he had made an ultimatum: "Well, I leave, I will wait for you in the fairground. If you appear, it will be all right. If you don't, I do give up with you". And it happens that this time she was going to say yes. But alas! Her little sister got sick that day. And she had to stay at home, taking care of her. Thus he left, forever. She never married. And to the last day of her life, she missed him very much.'

Poetic justice can be said to be naturally inscribed in this kind of family saga. It may well extend to the photographs in the family album. Whether or not the album is conceived as a place where the gaze of family members will meet, some may want to act as Alba did:

'This [photo] is from my graduation trip. We went to Rome. I had previously seen a photo of my mother when she visited there. She appeared with this same skirt over the stairs of Piazza de Spagna. Then, I did want to make a similar photo myself. So I took the skirt with me [to Rome] and posed, more or less as she was [in the photograph] on an similar stairway in Trastevere.

- For whom did you take this photo?

- I took it a little for her. It was like saying: I am standing where you stood, seeing what you saw, even when you had no idea that I was going to be here.'

Standing on the stairs, disguised as her mother thirty years earlier, Alba makes a remarkable example of the use of photography to build a narrative to be shared with others. Following Alba's afterthoughts, this is a mirror-photo. The mother will be able to recognize herself through her daughter's embodiment. Reciprocally, the photo shows the daughter looking directly into the camera, foreseeing her mother's future gaze. So this is a 'tunnel-in-time photo' too. It binds three different moments in the lives of the mother and the daughter; the first, at the instant the mother posed; the second, when the daughter replicated it in the present; the third, when the anticipated moment comes, in the future, to look at the photo together (thus blissfully recalling that shared past). In a ritual fashion, this photograph embodies a powerful narrative in the series of mirroring images between mother and daughter; one that speaks about time, identity and the permanence of a loving bond.

Of course, not all the storytelling that we collected contained such a sophisticated treatment of form. In natural speech, scripts and narrative schemata are mostly hybrid, indefinite and sketchy. If there is structure, it is not to be found in the story itself, but in the understandings that are built between narrator and listeners in the progressive, unfinished and open process of storytelling. Here, structure belongs to the order of the dialogue, rather than to the text. Nonetheless many of the stories that we have collected bear a resemblance to classic literary, dramatic or cinematographic genres (comedy, parody, drama, tragedy and allegory) as well as to love stories, filthy stories, memories, lyrical moments and urban legends. This formal resemblance gives the stories a convincing moral strength and beautiful, pleasant endings.

This stylization of speech gets also noticeable in written micro-stories. We asked a sample of a thousand internet users in Spain and Mexico to tell us their lives in a tweet of 140 characters.<sup>6</sup> In this case, the pressure of the limited space tends to reduce, simplify and stereotypify the script. The result is both aphoristic in style and strongly reminiscent of the rhetoric present in our contemporary social world, including self-help literature, religious preaching, black humour, job interviewing, mission statements and other genres — written and oral. Below are some examples:

‘Calm, balanced, funny, loving, cheerful, centred, mature, stable, peaceable, tender.’ [Mex, w, 30]

‘Good, beautiful, inexpensive.’ [*bueno bonito barato*] [Sp, m, 20]

‘I am the nicest healthiest most successful millionaire happy cheerful honest positive handsome sexy positive desirable loved and cared girl of the world.’ [Méx, w, 33]

‘I am a successful gay with much luck, I work hard and make efforts in everything I do.’ [Sp, m, 20]

‘Everything goes as planned, my universe is aligned in order to succeed in every aspect of my life, my family is great.’ [Méx, m, 24]

‘My life is happy, complete. I learn from mistakes. I grow. I smile with the good things. If I fall I get up. I move ahead. No surrender. I take challenges.’ [Méx, w, 33]

‘[I am] a happy person who has enjoyed wonderful moments in life. The only thing being owed is to give thanks God.. [Méx, m, 25 ]

‘I want to stop being conformist and begin to live a life that pleases God.’ [Méx, w, 23]

‘A shit of life (with nothing) or almost nothing.’ [Sp, w, 22]

‘[My life] is shit where I will never become anything that I really like and that gives me enough to eat.’ [Sp, w, 21]

‘[My life] is a mistake that should be ended.’ [Sp, m, 25]

‘You must know me before criticizing me! For you indeed do not know how I am.’ [Méx, w, 20]

‘What a disgusting life. I want a job. I want a future!’ [Sp, w, 20]

‘Hello I wanna study fashion design but I lack financial resources.’ [Méx, m, 20]

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<sup>6</sup> A brief comparative analysis of these narratives can be found in Guaderrama 2012: 273-298.



‘I am a 24 years old girl. I love learning. I am very convivial. For me to live without friends is like being a garden without flowers, lol. I am very competitive, both when the time is to work and to study. I like to give it all.’ [Sp, w, 24]

‘I am a passionate about sports, I love Barça, to live with my couple and my family, to travel and enjoy and having a job in correspondence with my professional skills.’ [Sp, m, 30]

‘I am a very creative person, witty, amiable, honest, sincere, uncomplicated, intelligent.’ [Mex, w, 23]

As we see, the formal traits of micronarratives should not be overemphasized. In most cases, their relation to the great literary forms does not go further than a resemblance. They are, by definition, tactical, opportunistic and non-sequential. They are made not to last but to be exchanged; they are made to present more than to represent. Here, structure is always in the making. It is bridged, so to speak, by the exchange between teller and listeners; it is negotiated among the schemata that the teller has in mind and the responses from her/his audience that he/she is able to anticipate contextually. In a sense, it is this exchange, this ‘conversation’, that gives structure, reminding us of Bakhtin’s famous definition of dialogue as ‘the simultaneous unity of differences in the act of enunciation’ (in Holquist 1990: 36). These scripts and other textual schemata do not abide by the strictures of any specific genre; rather, they follow the speaker’s poetic strategies to communicate to others his or her position in life, to give a coherent account of the singularity of his or her life.

### **Conventions for Living: The Modern Promise of Intimacy for Everyone**

These micro-stories revolve around the topic of the modern conventions of life. Differences in their interpretation and application to personal cases appear in the explicit text, which becomes comprehensible against the background of the values, practices and technologies that are naturalized and interiorized.

The structural conventions of our indoor spaces have a history. Monique Eleb and Anne Debarre, respectively a social psychologist and an architect, have investigated what they call ‘the invention of modern living’ by analysing building plans from different periods in Paris, as well as architecture magazines and treatises on urbanity, understood as guides for the good living (*savoir-vivre*). Some elements in such a system of conventions include, for instance, notions such as ‘comfort’ and ‘hygiene’; the division of rooms according to their function — representative, private or service; and the incorporation of technology — running water, electricity, gas, telephone and elevator (Eleb and Debarre 1995, Eleb and Bendimérad 2010, Cieraad 1999, Frykman and Löfgren 1987).

This became particularly clear in the sessions devoted to equipment. Today, smartphones and laptops occupy, as extensions of the self, a key position in the hierarchy of technologies. They easily become identity objects. For instance, given his love for gadgets and electronics of ultimate generation, one of the participants introduced himself humorously as a ‘cyber-preppy’ (*ciberpijo*). He explained how his living room is furnished unconventionally with three connected mega screens (plus a freezer), which makes sense only

if we consider the layout of the standard living room in Spain, with the TV set regulating family coexistence and being the predictable centrepiece in the room's furniture. In the socially desirable discourse of the younger participants, however, television has become an object touched of obsolescence and alienation, an inheritance of outdated times. Conversely, the most glamorous technologies — those which open life to the future — include the kitchen robot, 'a fantasy magic cook', as someone put it. A woman said:

'Thinking about the TV, when I celebrated my 30<sup>th</sup> birthday... I did not have a TV at home either. So [my parents] gave me a television set plus a blender. What I really wanted was a Thermomix! [a kitchen robot]. I did want the Thermomix, but I was rewarded with a TV! [...] I did not want it, definitely. It was like "You don't know me at all! Don't you know I do not want this?" By giving me a TV, it was like they were intruding on my personality. But nowadays I watch it a lot. The computer is what takes more space, though'.

Before this woman joined the conversation, another participant had told a similar story: provincial parents who send a present to their young daughter, who is making her way alone in the big city. She receives the package. She unwraps it, expecting to see the dreamed Thermomix, just to find ... a little, disappointing TV set.

### **Agonies (and Joys) of the Self**

Self-centredness is an aspect of the narratives that we collected. In the stories, the perspective generally focuses on the narrator and they are told in the first person. This self-centred aspect is often made explicit from the outset through statements like, 'I am going to explain my case', or 'this is a little particular', 'for me it was different', 'this will be probably atypical', 'this is similar but not the same', and so on.

In line with the Goffmanian concept of face and its relevance in the presentation of the self (Goffman 1967), this strong, accented 'I' reminds us of the centrality of this genre in the framework of daily life. Kauffman (2004) has recently actualized this tradition — which he traces back to Erikson and the psychology of the self — by noting that the very concept of identity is the result of a modern (and problematic) quest that makes of every individual the locus of an open, contradictory search. For him, 'Identity is a process, historically new, linked to the emergence of the subject, whose key aspect has to do with the fabrication of sense' (2004: 82). Kauffman argues that this process is double binding. On the one hand, the modern injunction on the individual presses him or her reflexively to overcome origin, class or tradition — the objective conditions of social role that, following Goffman, he calls 'identity-carriers' (*porte-identités*). Reflexivity here means a quest for self-identity guided by critical questioning, choice and openness. On the other hand, identity, by contrast, 'never stops to glue the pieces together. It is a system of permanent closure and integration of meanings, having totality as its model' (Kauffman 2004: 82).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> 'Objective features are not so powerful with regard to identity. This is less so given that they are profoundly contradictory, undermined by permanent conflicts. This is a key point: objective features

This interpretation of the dynamics of the self in contemporary culture is consistent with my own findings on the micro-stories in our workshops. Many are based on what we could call an agonistic plot; as I have mentioned, with the self as the main character. The story that I have given earlier of the dreamed kitchen robot *versus* the TV set imposed by the parents finely illustrates this point. The goal of finding oneself, of establishing autonomy and affirming one's own space provides both the rationale and the climactic tension for the unfolding of events. The singular 'I' develops her or his action in a plot that we could call, in Hegelian fashion, 'the fight for space'. The subject struggles with an alien order, as s/he tries to build his or her own. Sometimes the purpose of the action is not so much the making of space, but the need to find it or just to keep it unchanged. Parents and, more broadly, the family of origin are the preferred antagonists.

'I began to understand that I was in need of a place of my own. Then I looked for my own space. Of course, it was not my parents' home. There, I looked around and said, "This is not my place. It has no light, I don't like the furniture". But I couldn't tell my mother: "Let the house to me and I will do whatever I want with it". No. Therefore, it was like: "I have to look for a space of my own"'.

This view of parents and older kin contains a very ambivalent element. They may well be the gatekeepers of a normative world of impositions, restrictive norms, dubious taste and empty, meaningless conventions. However, they also always appear to be supportive of the subject in his or her worst urban, modern struggles, no matter what. Poetically even more relevant is that in the interplay between modernity and tradition they are the guardians of the subject's roots: cherished childhood memories, loving recipes from grandma, indelible experiences of the first explorations of a pristine universe. The partner in a couple may also play this role of The Antagonist in the deployment of one's self. As in the case of parents, it is easy to understand this contradictory stance. Our other half is always, ineluctably, also a source of daily negativity and resistance. This becomes noticeable in the minimal, petty details as we are forced to negotiate even the simplest arrangement of, say, things on a table. For example:

'I always read three or four books at the same time. I scatter my things all around: the papers, the pens, the phone. For me, this is not disorder because in this way I keep it all in sight. But every time I return home, my boyfriend has made a mountain with all my things and has set it on top of the kitchen table. This, I don't take so well, because I want the table cleared up. When he puts it there he forces

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cannot by themselves determine existence for the simple reason that they lack a stable, coherent universe. They are crossed by all kinds of oppositions, forcing the subject to get involved, whether s/he wants or not' (Kauffman 2004: 94, my translation). 'Identity is a process of closure and fixation, thus opposed to the logic of movement and openness of reflexivity. It continuously creates a unified system of values, working as a frame for the perception of the world that gives meaning to thinking and action' (2004: 110, my translation).

me to arrange it, so he interferes a little in my own chaos. But with my chaos I get on very well!’

The War on Things is a true narrative type that has the Loving Other at its humorous centre. This script also involves, by definition, a dangerous play. Natural ambivalence can fuel quick shifts from *topos* to confession, from joy to sadness, from love to rage. The most extreme (and joyful) instance of these ‘wars on things’ was shared by an Italian participant as he spoke about his parents. Apparently, in the heat of the summer they all used to move from room to room competing over the fresher mattress on which to take a nap. This example points to the important role that objects play in our personal world. They are not passive or silent. They appear to be true *actants*. This is not a merely discursive issue. If they are so important in the stories, it is because they have a strong structuring role in daily life. They play a crucial part in quotidian reflexivity, becoming central in what Kauffman has rightfully called ‘home action’ (*action ménagère*) or, more poetically, ‘the dance with the things’ (1997: 17).

In our workshops and interviews, objects have shown to be so materially important as to be extremely telling. They are reservoirs of memory. They impose their demands, rhythms, limitations, traces and regrets. It is important to understand, though, that they do not act nor speak alone, but only in so far as they are part of a chain of actions and relations that should be regarded as a system — a universe in which humans are the ultimate agents and the primary force. This can be illustrated with the ‘war on things’ type of story. Objects make their appearance as key ingredients in a relationship, be it in a couple or, more generally, among co-residents.

Is it not this in the end the deep meaning of the concept of ‘home’? Home intended, that is, as a system of human relations that intensely depends on the vicissitudes of shared objects, as opposed to a mere enclosure, or a contract or a group of co-habiting kin. For, as good as objects are in separating and keeping boundaries among the members of a group, they are equally good at uniting them. For example:

‘When my grandpa died, my mother saw me playing with his pocket watch. She told me: “When you become a responsible adult, I will give it to you”. I was eight. Years passed, but still I did not feel I could rightfully ask for it. From time to time I thought about it, though, because I loved my grandfather very much. When I returned home from the military service — I was twenty one — I felt brave enough to ask for it. My mother said: “At last, my son, you are finally a grown man”. As soon as I took it into my hands, I could see that the watch did not work. “But mother, have you been careless with it?” “No, son. It never worked”’.  
[laughs from the audience].

Ritual objects symbolically bind generations, beyond death. Unlike the grandson, who believed that the watch ‘did not work’, I think that watch worked very well. In discourse and in action, in myth and ritual, it wstablished a continuity among three generations. It provided a bond that denied definitive farewells. In this story, as in so many others where the social life of inherited objects plays a key role, time is not objectified nor measurable; it is, instead, a

predicated, overarching entity that both embeds the family history and subtly asserts its permanence through the nuances of a good story.

This is probably why we have gathered so many touching stories about objects that maintain their capacity to act across time. Like the story of the woman who accidentally found a drawing in her deceased grandfather's wallet, hidden in a secret fold. She realized she herself had drawn it, thirty years earlier. It depicted a little girl holding hands with an old man. Her grandfather had silently kept it throughout his whole life, close to his heart. Several stories tell of kids who appropriate their parent's toys. Others tell of widowed fathers who move into their children's rooms, once they grow and move out. Objects may be special or ordinary, trivial or high tech, but through them all the relations through time among people living under the same roof can be felt, thought and told. This may sound like a magical appeal. This is, however, what the phenomenologist Alfred Schultz (1977), inspired by the musicians who routinely tune their instruments in order to perform together, called tuning-in relationships. He saw the model of human interaction itself in the coordination through time mediated by objects. The following statement from Ana makes an interesting example:

'This ring, I always have it on. It is made of gold and coral. It is from my grandmother, who had it always on. In my child memories this ring is always on her hand. When she died, my mother took it. But she has never used it. When my son was born, my mother gave it to me and I wear it, always. I am afraid to lose it, but still I use it. Whenever I go out I put it on and when I come back, it is one of the first things I take off and put aside. But if I go out sometimes without it, I feel its absence'.

Objects can mark the body, too. When they come from the past, they become present through the body, which is the most present thing we own. Ana feels the absence of the meaningful ring in her hand.<sup>8</sup> Through her childhood, Rafaela, another participant, had been accompanied by the chromatic accordion that now decorates her living room; the length of her fingers, the strength of her young neck tell of years of rehearsal.

Another narrative type is what we could call the Ulysses Syndrome. Here, the family appears as the origin, the point from which the traveller departs in order to recognize him or herself somewhere else. As in the Homeric account, the end of the story is bitter: when the subject returns s/he feels as a stranger in his/her homeland. One of our participants reflected with accuracy on this experience as he told us about his helplessness when, returning to his native land after years of absence, he listened to the accent of his mother tongue as if it no longer belonged to him.

Various figures or events can play the antagonist role: the anonymous urban order, the landlord, the lack of money; above all, loneliness. As in the case below, one can be one's worst enemy in the fierce battle against the vacuum brought about by the struggle of inventing oneself, of producing *ex nihilo* an independent but meaningful urban existence.

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<sup>8</sup> Could this be why there are so many magical rings in the fairy tales? There they also participate in the plot by whispering untold things to the actors.

‘Then I went to live alone. I had been told that living alone was something great, fantastic: you did whatever you wanted, whenever you wanted, the way you wanted. This was odd for me, because ‘till that moment in my life it had not been this way. There was always someone else. Then I remember some friends telling me, “Nooooo, you prepare yourself a nice dinner, with candles and everything, then you just take a sit and enjoy”. On my first night alone, I came home after having done my shopping and I recalled my friend’s advice. So I said, “Ok, let’s do this”. I prepared a dinner, lighted candles, a tablecloth — I usually don’t; but I wanted to recreate a little that ritual. And I got ready to eat. In less than seven minutes I had already devoured all my food. And there I was, seated and telling myself, “Now, what?” “When does the fantastic thing come?” But there was nothing. So, that same night I decided to invent something called the “Those Who Live Alone Club”’.

At other times it is the other’s gender, both loved and hated, that is lived as an incomprehensible obstacle. Partners, friends, siblings, flat-mates can be seen as facilitating or obstructing figures.

Everyone felt involved in these dramas. This is the main finding of our intimacy workshops. We laughed at the stories of fights for the bathroom and hair in the sink. We felt compassion for unconcealed loneliness and for couples in crisis. We saw ourselves in the fights for cleanliness and in the desire for a healthy disorder.

These are ordinary stories. Then, why do we tell them as special stories? Or, if they are special, why do we hear them as if they belonged to everyone? Without a doubt, this is where the power and mystery in such narrative lies. We all identify with the stories of the self, because each one of us is also another. As with the travel story, the illness complaint and the sexy joke, the strength of this specific genre of modern speech lays precisely in the fact that it integrates that apparently opposite conditions of singularity and universality. It illustrates the poetic dictum: *je est un autre*.<sup>9</sup>

### **Towards a New Regime of Urbanness?**

Néstor García Canclini (quoted in Cruces 2012) has recently argued that in order to understand contemporary cities it is necessary to complement the socio-spatial approach in urban studies — accounting for the social construction of public space — with a socio-communicational perspective which helps to account for the web of mediations, interactions and forms of agency. I would argue that we need to add an affective, socio-sentimental approach that accounts for the feelings, emotions, affective relationships, memories and structures of sentiment. This approach brings to the foreground dimensions of intimacy, subjectivity, care and social reproduction — apparently little, ordinary things — which are ultimately the stuff which daily life is made of.

These dimensions — which we could loosely lump together under the labels of the domestic, private, intimate sphere — has been underrepresented through neglect or

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<sup>9</sup> Rimbaud’s letter to Paul Demeny of 15 May 1871; see [http://www.philophil.com/dissertation/autrui/Je\\_est\\_un\\_autre.htm](http://www.philophil.com/dissertation/autrui/Je_est_un_autre.htm) (accessed 04 April 2016).

mystification both in urban theory and in the common sense of early modernity. The dominant imagery of urbanism has celebrated the built space with its skylines, towers, emblematic and iconic architectures, megaprojects, highways and infrastructures. Alternatively, it dug into the nineteenth-century, industrial-roots metaphors of the city as factory, production chain, road, agora, public square, parliament, government, market and laboratory. In recent times, urban theory has added new figures of urbanity, such as network, flow, project, screen and prototype. Above all else, the web! — all pointing to an emergent, ‘new public space’ that is still in becoming.

However, metropolization and globalization have also brought about an increasing visibility, politicization, universalization and aestheticization of issues of gender, reproduction, domestic life, privacy, subjectivity and intimacy which were formerly considered secondary, even subsidiary — think, for example, of how domestic life was conceptualized in old Marxian vulgate as ‘the place for the reproduction of the work force’. We are witnessing the emergence of a new urban common sense, in which the very notion of ‘public sphere’ — and its physical surrogate, public space — is questioned.

The poetics of daily life embedded in the stories that I have presented here spring from a new regime of urbanness.

On the one hand, they both question and trespass limits that would be taken for granted from a classical, canonical perspective of urban modernity, with its eroded oppositions, public vs private, production vs consumption and home vs work. The remapping of boundaries also engenders an erosion of the invisibility, devaluation and subordination of the domestic spaces entailed by these oppositions. From now on, it will be very difficult to keep thinking the ‘urban’, as the early urbanism did, in terms of the predominance of the public space.

On the other hand, many of our stories — and the very process of collective research that I have outlined — suggest that this new regime embodies the current, contemporary fascination with the creative, the quotidian, the affective and the intimate. This cultural trend is undoubtedly to be welcome, for it helps to give visibility to emotions, relations and deeds that were once hidden in the shade of privacy. It critically questions the formerly pre-political issues of asymmetries of power at home, among individuals of different gender, rank and age. It gives value and permanence to the many cherished traditions, objects and identities which are so central in the daily lives of people in their search for ‘an order of their own’.

Yet, the ethnographic approach that I have presented here also alerts us to the potential shortcomings and paradoxes linked to the rise of the intimate sphere — a fascination that I have tried to render through the (invented) trope *extimacy*. The forces that give value and publicity to intimate, domestic valuables formerly protected in their ‘islands of privacy’ — to borrow C. Nippert-Eng’s expression (2010) — may also be exposing them to the risk of commodification, exposure and overrepresentation. This is evident in many contemporary phenomena, such as the popularity of reality shows of all kinds (‘more real than real’), the vulnerability brought about by the spread of personal information on the web, the growing importance of ‘video-politics’ fuelled by celebrity revelations and media scandals, the commodification of love and friendship through match.com and many other issues that

redefine borders and defy old definitions. The self-cancelling character of intimacy in some of these dynamics points to the limits and contradictions of this process.

I suggest that instead of denouncing this process as an erosion of public virtue, or as a retreat into the private domain and a failure of the strive for the common good, we should openly explore the attendant possibilities, promises and threats. To paraphrase the feminist motto, 'personal is political'; in our times, personal has become metropolitan, and vice-versa. This may be the ultimate morale underlying our informants' micro-storytelling. Whatever may result, in the near future, from the reordering of the couplets home/work, public/private and so on, the Self and its individualizing, personalizing stories will definitely be at the very centre of the study of what it means, today, to be urban.



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## ***Just in Time: Logistical Imaginaries of the Cosmopolis<sup>1</sup>***

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Addressing the supply of consumer goods in a large city allows us to imagine the city as a space of shared life marked by needs, material infrastructures, sociocultural institutions and the circulation of information, and by the interaction among people and between people and animals, plants and objects. Like other big cities, Madrid does not produce what the seven million inhabitants of its metropolitan area consume. I propose that we consider urban space not as a container defined by physical limits but as a dynamic process that unfolds through a multiplicity of relations. This process expands the idea of the city as a political-administrative, social and imaginary 'object' in order to include relations beyond its territorial limits. Thus, space is intended not as distance but as a configuration of multiplicity; as interaction, not as a container. I will address two theoretical questions. First, how to think about urban time and space from a relational and performative approach that allows us to question the imaginary of globalization as a time-space phenomenon that is homogeneous, separate from or 'superimposed' upon the local setting. Second, how experience in and of these time-space frameworks at once conditions and expresses forms of subjectivity that are different from those traditionally described as specific to the modern city.

**Keywords:** Madrid, logistics, globalization, urban theory.

### **Introduction: The Nature of the Urban Condition in a Scenario of Globalization**

Thinking about the supply of goods and objects of consumption in a large city allows us to imagine the city as a space of shared life that needs a specific architecture. This architecture includes infrastructures and sociocultural institutions, as well as the sustained effect of the circulation of information and of the interaction among people and between people and animals, plants and objects. Like all other big cities, Madrid does not produce all that the seven million inhabitants of its metropolitan area consume. Its citizens' lifestyles could not be sustained without the connections between its territory and places near and far (including intermediate places of traffic) that shape spatially and temporally the city's supply networks. These networks are an excellent empirical place for us to explore a conception of urban space that is different from the intuitive, widespread idea of the city as a discrete entity defined by a more or less porous frontier and related to an exterior through a network of discrete and interconnected points. Following others (Whatmore 2002; Massey 2005 and 2012; Thrift 2008), I propose that we consider the urban space as a process that unfolds through a multiplicity of relations. Accordingly, the city is intended here as a political-administrative, social and imaginary 'object' that includes at its heart relations that go beyond its territorial limits. Therefore, space is intended, here, as a configuration of multiplicity of interactions, not as distance or as a surface or a container.

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In today's context of globalization, the vision of the urban condition as something not strictly identifiable with the kind of city that played an important role in classic urban studies (Wirth 2005, Simmel 2005) acquires special importance, pointing to complex time-space reorientations and to the challenge of redefining the character and meaning of key processes. A social theory that remains anchored to distinctions like global/local and macro/micro that tend to render invisible the mutual relations between the two poles is manifestly insufficient to deal with the emergence of new urban chronotopes. One of my theoretical concerns is how to address fact that the Madrid's connections with the 'outside' are part of its idiosyncrasy as a *place*. Through the empirical study of supply networks for consumer goods, I develop an analysis of the more general concept of cosmopolis. I am also particularly interested in these networks as 'bundles of trajectories' (Massey 2005), as embodiments of worldviews with a performative role — that is, as fictions; as stories that organize what they say. In their heterogeneous, dialogic, processual and overdetermined nature, these networks do not promise an absolute coherence, but they do promise a continuous renewal of the urban condition that shapes the city as a shared task.

The classic urbanologists who understood urbanism as a way of life saw as especially significant the ways in which the experience of inhabiting the city affected, on a phenomenological level, the forms of social relation and subjectivisation. For Simmel (2005), the modern city was the place where the rationalist intellectualism linked to the money economy developed, as well as a place of great complexity derived from the variety of stimuli and interests that stressed the need for integration, synchronization and precision. Following him, one wonders what kind of subjectivisation marks today's experience of living in the cosmopolis.

In this article I will first try to answer important theoretical questions. How can we look at urban time-space from a relational and performative perspective that allows us to question globalization as a time-space category that is homogeneous and separate or 'superimposed' on local settings? What perspective should we take in order to achieve an ethnography of globalization(s)? How does the aforementioned different approach to the production of time and space contribute to reshape the ideas of 'city' and 'global space'? How can this approach be empirically based (in this case, supply networks of consumer goods)? I will then address the ways in which experience in and of these time-space frameworks at once conditions and expresses specific forms of subjectivity that are different from those described in the classic literature.

### **The Logistical Architecture of Globalization**

Logistics do not figure prominently in citizens' political discussions. As the British journalist Rose George demonstrated, this is, nonetheless, one of the main urban activities in the contemporary scenario of globalization. Rose tellingly titled his book *Deep Sea and Foreign Going: Inside Shipping, the Invisible Industry That Brings You 90 per cent of Everything* (2013). He boarded one of the seagoing vessels of the largest merchant navy company in the world with the aim of writing a report on the maritime transportation of merchandise. His

investigation revealed that 90 per cent of the total volume of goods consumed by an average western citizen is transported, in part or wholly, by sea. Logistics can be defined as the science (and practice) of moving objects in an optimal fashion. It is no surprise that it originated in the military context in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and that some of its procedures have been developed in contexts of international war (Larner 2014: 272).<sup>2</sup> The extension of logistics to the world of commerce after World War II followed the concept of supply chain, understood as the process of ‘planning and coordinating the materials flow from source to user as an integrated system rather than, as was so often the case in the past, managing the goods flow as a series of independent activities’ (Christopher 2011: 9). The supply of merchandise came to be seen as a permanent flow in which different actors and actions must be coordinated rationally and strategically in order to bridge the time and space gap between production and consumption, thus making it possible for the consumer to receive the product in the most adequate time and condition and at the lowest possible cost (Leslie and Reimer 1999). The logistics development has gone hand-in-hand with the development of specific practices, condensed in processes and objects that mark today’s globalized merchandise. Two such practices are barcodes and standardization, which is well exemplified by the famous twenty-foot units (TEUs). Standardization facilitates the coordination of the actions involved in the production of ‘globalization’; this is particularly clear if we understand the mentioned change in the time-space scale not as a leap to an order (and quality) of processes different from ‘local’ processes but as a kind of ‘extended reach’ based on the articulation of several different practices. Relationships, connections and synchrony are, in this context, the axes of the production of time-space.

Recently, computer software has greatly boosted the logistical possibilities for objects in movement. Accordingly, regulations on flows of information, objects and people have been created that define emerging time-spaces. On one hand, the global logistics pertaining merchandise has engendered a scale economy in which as long as goods circulate within the logistics networks themselves their great physical movement is not proportional to their cost.<sup>3</sup> Thus, ‘a sweater can now travel three thousand kilometres for two and a half cents. It costs one cent to send a can of beer.’ (Rose 2013: 39). The logistics networks superimpose the map of traffic on the world map; its main features being some of the larger ports — such as that of Rotterdam, the largest in Europe — and the transportation networks that connect them. In this new topology of the world the new time-space scenarios — in terms of distances-proximities — defy the traditional time-space logic. Examples abound. It is not only possible but more profitable to freeze Scottish cod, send it to China to be sliced, frozen and then sent back to Scotland to be sold in stores and restaurants (Rose 2013: 18). Tea is transported to England from the different locations in the world where it is produced, to be processed by ‘testers’

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example, the standardization protocols driven by the International Organization for Standardization, ISO (Larner 2014).

<sup>3</sup> For example, ‘746 million bananas, one for every European, can be loaded on a single boat. If the containers of Maersk alone were lined up, they would stretch eleven thousand miles or nearly halfway around the planet’ (Rose 2013: 3).

who guarantee uniformity of taste for each variety; then it is distributed worldwide.<sup>4</sup> Notably, even though the global logistics landscape requires a continuous standardization of products and processes, the ubiquity of computer software and the articulation of the continuous flows of information make it possible to track continuously the merchandise. This, in turn, offers previously unsuspected possibilities for rearticulating the connections based on new, on-the-go calculations that make it possible to minimize the impact of contingencies that ‘break’ the time-space logistics. This means an increase in the ‘elasticity of synchrony’ (Thrift 2008: 100). To give a simple example, cold storage containers allow temperatures to be tracked from afar, making it possible to react to possible breaks in the cold chain or to vary the temperature in order to keep the merchandise as fresh as possible. Also, one thinks of the management of delivery trucks in so-called urban ‘last mile logistics’, which includes avoiding traffic congestion using systems that allow the real-time management of data on traffic and road conditions. These opportunities in logistics processes and the attendant ‘decision-making landscape’ have made possible a global landscape where the continuous introduction of novelties is the embodiment, on the one hand, of capitalist dynamism and, on the other, of the interweaving of the consumer goods in people’s lifestyles in the cosmopolis. This technological scenario does not, however, include the classic figure of a panoptic with one (or a few) control room(s); instead, it is an extended, diffuse landscape of ubiquitous calculations (Callon and Law 2005). In such a landscape, new forms of subjectivisation and relations linked to the time-space of urban lifestyles are born.

Rational calculation linked to efficiency measured in terms of economic profitability is the basic premise of the logistics of commercial flows. This logic belongs to the capitalist model, and some of its effects are left out of the calculations because they are considered to be externalities; for instance, the ecologic footprint, issues of environmental sustainability and the effects of social inequality on the global level, such as the dualization of job markets on the international scale. There are also problems linked to the difficulty of controlling what travels through the extended logistics networks in the interchangeable, opaque TEUs of intermodal transport, to the emergence of new forms of exploitation linked to people’s displacement and to the political challenges posed the ‘mutation of forms of citizenship’ (Ong 2006).<sup>5</sup> These issues are not contemplated in logistics calculations and often remain hidden under the mantle of the widespread myth of the happy, instantaneous and universal interconnection made possible by technology. Instead, connection and synchrony are always partial and need to be continuously sustained through maintenance and repair work. Moreover, connections also produce dis-connections, engendering landscapes that are very different from the ‘freedom of flows’ frequently associated with globalization.

There is no doubt that the growing importance of logistics affects the city of Madrid. The Spanish logistics sector is the fifth largest in Europe in terms of volume, representing

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<sup>4</sup> An interesting account was given in “Food Super Highway”, by Ross Harper’s 2009 documentary for the BBC.

<sup>5</sup> The crews of merchant cargo ships also make an interesting case (Rose 2013, Sampson 2014).

11.5 per cent of the GDP.<sup>6</sup> Its development is linked, above all, to the import of goods for an increasingly solvent market that demands more and more consumer products. Madrid absorbs 60 per cent of the international flows of merchandise that take place in Spain and 33 per cent of the national flows, and accounts for 54 per cent of national invoices for transport of merchandise and logistics. There has therefore been a constant increase in the space devoted to logistics (storage, and so on) and linked to the huge development of transportation networks that has taken place in the Madrid metropolitan area since the 1990s; these networks include transport centres, air cargo centres at Adolfo Suárez Madrid Barajas Airport, logistics distribution platforms managed by the public and private sectors and the dry port.<sup>7</sup> 37 per cent of kilometres of existing highway in 2004 had been built during the previous eight years. Thus, Madrid is a fundamental logistics node in the country, especially for globalized products, and a great importer of merchandise.<sup>8</sup> The growth in the transport of merchandise since the 1980s has indeed been ‘tremendous’ (De Santiago 2008b: 162), prompting some researchers to speak of an ‘uncontrolled Madrid metabolism’ over the last thirty years (De Santiago 2008b: 163).

### **Home Delivery Dilemmas (1): Last Mile Logistics in the Smart City**

On Thursday 6 November 2014, in one of the spaces prepared for the LOGISTICS seminars taking place at the IFEMA Fair in Madrid a conference sponsored by *Telefónica* and the Spanish Logistics Centre (*Centro Español de Logística*) was devoted to the challenges of the urban distribution of merchandise in large Spanish cities.<sup>9</sup> The speakers were people who were in charge of the mobility of goods for large companies and logistics consultants who worked in Madrid. Also present was the person in charge of the Energy Agency (*Agencia de Energía*), which is part of the General Directorate of Sustainability of the Madrid City Council. The aim of the conference was to pool information on the needs and problems related to the activity of the companies supplying merchandise in what is known as ‘last mile distribution’. *The Descartes Systems Group Inc.* is a company that presents itself as ‘a global provider of on-demand, software-as-a-service (SaaS) logistics technological solutions that help its customers make and receive shipments’. The representative of this company discussed the ‘persistent problem of having to wait in the big city’, an issue that recurred in the rest of the contributions, including those by members of the public, which included mainly professionals from the logistics sector. The local version of this problem is: ‘Madrid

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<sup>6</sup> These data, regarding the importance and evolution of the logistics sector in Madrid since the 1980s, have been taken from the analysis by Eduardo De Santiago (2008a, 2008b).

<sup>7</sup> ‘A dry port is an inland intermodal terminal directly connected by road or rail to a seaport and operating as a centre for the transshipment of sea cargo to inland destinations’. *Wikipedia: ‘Dry Port’*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dry\\_port](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dry_port), accessed 25 June 2015.

<sup>8</sup> In contrast to what was happening with services, in 2000 the amount of imports in Madrid was more than twice that of exports.

<sup>9</sup> The analysis that I present in this section is based on participant observation in the conference. All of the quotes that are not bibliographic are from participants in the event, as I recorded them *in situ* in my field diary.

residents have to wait in line for everything'. Urban 'congestion', a commonplace problem that has long affected the modern city, worries the Director of the Energy Agency and the interested companies, which experience merchandise delivery problems in urban areas that are traffic clogged or that are altogether closed to traffic. The business sector translates the problem as follows: 'citizens today have to wait a lot and often, but they don't want to'; adding, 'technological logistics solutions can help them to stop having to wait'. The question is, 'Wait for what?' For the merchandise that they have bought on internet to arrive at their homes (or wherever they have chosen for delivery). 'Wherever and whatever people want and however they want it' seems to be the goal, expressed for example in the following advertisement of a fruit distribution company quoted by a member of the public attending this conference, 'Tell me a fruit. Now a date. Don't tell me anything else'.

The task of the logistics operation, as can be deduced from the discourses of the conference participants, consists of facilitating a totally unrestricted merchandise movement in order to satisfy the desires and preferences of the urban consumer. During the conference, the debate focused on home delivery in view of the exponential growth predicted for e-commerce (on line commerce) in the next few years, which will have a direct impact on the circulation flows of merchandise in the Madrid urban perimeter. The representative of *Ibird*, an urban logistics consultancy, pointed out that in December 2017 around 655 thousand packages will be delivered in Madrid.

*A new ecology of Christmas presents*, the volume of Christmas shopping in large multinational e-commerce companies (such as *Amazon* or *Alibaba*) and their shopping practices (for example, the generalization of last-minute discounts), allow us to imagine new challenges for urban home delivery. The speaker imagined the scenario of the Puerta del Sol and the Gran Vía — the urban centre *par excellence* and a commercial hub in the city's imaginary — as the place where 'Madrid residents will no longer go shopping. They will go to see musicals and exhibits'. This prospect is as uncertain as any other, but it does profile the reality of e-commerce as a novelty that has arrived in the city to stay. Also in this scenario the problems are 'congestion' and 'saturation'. How to organize a foreseeably increased population of vehicles and traffic flows in a limited urban centre? Moreover, how to do this through a kind of organization that no longer seems to follow a unifying logic of rational planning 'from above' (be that the City Council, the company selling the product or the carrier). The main problem of urban delivery, as businessmen call it, is client dissatisfaction. What tends to happen is that, for a package to be delivered at an address, several attempts need to be made, with the carrier making several trips from the logistics operator's warehouse to the client's address. There is the obvious problem of costs, of inefficiency. Above all, the client becomes exasperated waiting for a package that does not arrive. There is nothing worse than receiving the note, 'Today at whatever time, we were unable to deliver the package because no one was present at the address'.

The mechanics of home delivery work *grosso modo* as follows. The computer system of the logistics company records the purchase made by clients on line. Deliveries are scheduled — they are 'optimized' — the day before. The optimization is done on a static model of



Madrid divided according to postal code (with some adjustments). The delivery of the orders registered for a specific day follows the logic, 'Five deliveries are grouped together in Móstoles, planned for 8 to 10 in the morning'. This system is rigid, basically because it does not allow on-the-move readjustments based on new information inputs. What the delivery person does between 8 and 10 am is prearranged the day before and is basically unalterable. The company 'updates' the information on the state of the deliveries when the carrier reports on the deliveries that have actually taken place among those scheduled for the day. However, a product acquired at a later time and also to be delivered to, say, Móstoles is not included in the delivery schedule, whereas including it would have speeded up the delivery process and contributed to reduce costs. The system of logistic management linking a flow of data to a sequence of actions at a fixed moment in time does not allow this flexibility.

As it was said throughout the conference, technological developments make possible a different model of optimization of deliveries according to a 'timeline system'. Organizing the deliveries in the most effective way according to the proximity of the addresses no longer takes place at a specific time (the day before each delivery) but right from the moment the order is processed; and this is done continuously, keeping open the possibility of readjusting deliveries right up to the moment of delivery. This model increases 'efficacy', understood in terms of fluidity of delivery, rapidity and cost saving. The timeline system — that is, a logistics management software that generates a permanent flow of information allowing on-the-go adjustments to the sequence of actions involved in home delivery — includes the delivery vehicles, registering unexpected incidents (traffic jams, breakages, and so on) so that the daily delivery calendar can be re-optimized 'up to the last minute'.<sup>10</sup> Optimizing home deliveries by timeline makes it possible to track deliveries and, therefore, readjust the practices that guarantee synchrony and connection in what is described as a 'dynamic and incremental' optimization. Thus, citizens' relationship to a broad landscape of merchandise becomes sustainable without then having to go through the traditional shopping experience linked to the physical location of the commercial establishment in the city. Logistics as a technologically advanced domain of action makes these emerging temporality-spaces, synchrony and connection potentially 'elastic'.

The apparent banality of companies' 'home delivery dilemmas' conceals not only transformations in the practices of inhabiting the city, but also in the forms of subjectivisation of the citizens of the cosmopolis. The speakers at the conference made numerous comments on this issue saying, 'People live in the world of possibility of bytes and they have a hard time putting up with the inconveniences and delays of physical inertia.' The immediate satisfaction of desires related to merchandise generates affective loops linked to urban lifestyles that are fundamental in people's attachment to the landscape of globalized consumer goods that is sustained by logistics networks. Translated into commercial language, in e-commerce the

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<sup>10</sup> In the concept of Smart Cities, addressed in this conference and widespread in recent years, linking physical infrastructures to technological infrastructures — the introduction of data into any element of street furniture — is central to the evolution of contemporary cities. Thus, continuous flows of 'real-time information' can be obtained, leading to new forms of urban management.

‘fluidity of the shopping experience’ — from accessing the company’s webpage to receiving the purchased object — is decisive in establishing customer loyalty. The consumer wants the purchase to arrive quickly. But in the delivery process there may be problems with synchronicity, leading to frustrating experiences: ‘The package arrives when I’m not home’. ‘When I try to talk to the carrier company I get an answering machine’. ‘There are no time slots for delivery outside of working hours’. ‘The delivery person cannot connect with me or I with him once “the delivery has gone out”’. Preventing these frustrating experiences requires rethinking delivery from the point of view of the client’s desires. Several possibilities exist. For example, the consumer could be allowed to choose a time slot for the delivery; the system could calculate and propose a date and time (because it is capable of automatically fitting it into the established routes in an optimal fashion), which the customer would be allowed to accept or not.

In this context, logistics itself is presented as a consumer good, an opportunity to ‘package’ the customer’s desires in the context of a highly time-sensitive market economy. Some companies offer broad delivery times at zero cost and narrower delivery times (faster or more compatible with the customers’ requirements) for a fee. The client pays to sustain the consistency — connection and synchrony — of his or her experience of a globalized flow of merchandise in the specific urban context.

The representatives of the companies at the Logistics Fair also envisaged new possibilities for a flow of globalized merchandise that accounted for social relations, including neighbours and neighbourhood delivery outside working hours. I was told, ‘The client wants his package, but now, he’d prefer it to go to his mother’s house! How wonderful to receive it right there!’ ‘The *Amazon* book, the *Privalia* dress, the shopping from *El Corte Inglés*. Bags, boxes, packages: at home. And if I don’t like it, they’ll take it away’. The experience of mobility, the reversibility of decisions and the fluidity of desires and of their satisfaction are sustained, among other things, by logistics flows that link people to their objects in the context of the city as a way of life. Thus is endorsed the image of unlimited, unrestricted flows ‘with no inertias’ that logistics somehow projects on urbanites.

The person in charge of the Energy Agency of the City Council took a different view, expressing his concern with the environmental sustainability of a city that is increasingly permeated by the logistic flows of on line commerce. Not only the intensification of traffic but also its impact on the morphology urban life were mentioned. The increasingly close fit to customers’ demands has determined changes in the material aspects of delivery in Madrid. Instead of dealing with a fixed departure-arrival point, the person in charge of the mobility section of a large company must now deal with a network of decentralized distribution nodes scattered across the capital. The local government representative asks, ‘How can this network of flows be materially articulated, particularly considering issues of ecologic footprint and environmental sustainability?’ In a commercial logic, some of the answers heard in the auditorium were not surprising: ‘ecologic appointments’ for home delivery can be commercialized in a way that allows the client to choose a delayed delivery according to criteria that prioritize something different from the immediate satisfaction of opening the

purchased package. The consumer would be ready to wait if the wait had an ecologic meaning. This meaning, added to the intangible dimensions of the merchandise landscape, is another kind of nourishment for citizens' lifestyles.

### Home Delivery Dilemmas (2): Ecologic Consumption

The concern with environmental sustainability and other issues external to contemporary modes of production and consumption engenders social, political and business initiatives. *Terra Madre* [[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYwbbITT3\\_4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYwbbITT3_4)] is a small Madrid company pioneering the sale on-line and by home delivery of food products (mostly fresh fruit and vegetables) with ecologic certificates.<sup>11</sup> Its founder, originary from the United States, has been long concerned with food issues. He described his approach as follows: 'making the world of food more rational', 'recovering the producer-consumer link', 'avoiding adulteration', 'eating more locally', 'weaving the community through food'. Driven by these ideas, ten years ago he started his company, which promoted national ecologic food consumption in Spain, and more specifically in the metropolitan area of the capital, taking advantage of the opportunities that this market, still in its infancy, offered.

'Ecologic fruit and vegetables delivered to your home' is the slogan that dominates the *Terra Madre* webpage. Throughout the year, the company buys from an average of thirty ecologic suppliers of fruit and vegetables and, to a lesser extent, of canned or bottled products such as milk, cleaning and personal hygiene products, and so on.<sup>12</sup> Preference is given to suppliers that are close geographically. However, this 'company policy', says the owner, is necessarily flexible because 'if we provided only what is produced in Madrid, we'd be a potato, onion, melon and cabbage company. That's it. Ours would be an unviable business because our clientele wants a complete, varied shopping basket'. Therefore, suppliers are located 'as near as possible'. And yet, production rhythms may cause a nearby supplier to be unable to supply the product; in these cases *Terra Madre* must resort, at least temporarily, to a geographically more distant supplier in order to satisfy market demand.

Suppliers must have their product certified as ecologic by the competent authority in their community. As distributor, *Terra Madre* comes under the scrutiny of the control board of the Community of Madrid, which grants the certificate of 'distributor of ecologic products' and checks that what is sold is what it says it is; for example, in the case of fruit and vegetables, the adjective 'ecologic' mainly relates to the non-use of pesticides in the production. 'Being ecologic' carries specific conditions and this company's business depends on its abiding by such conditions. To give a few examples, the label 'ecologic' implies a direct relationship with the producers who must be paid a fair price; it requires that quality food should be 'humanized' and healthy, and that food practices should be linked to the social fabric of the community. Satisfying the requirements does not happen on its own; it involves

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<sup>11</sup> This section is based on an ethnography collected in 2012 through participant observation in the activities of *Terra Madre* and several interviews with the owner and workers. The quotes are literal transcriptions from the interviews.

<sup>12</sup> Fresh meat and bread are about the only products not sold by *Terra Madre*.

a complex, multi-participative and technologically mediated work. However, transportation of the product from the supplier to the company's warehouses is dependent on the logistic networks established for conventional food flows. This is a main source of tension, as it conflicts with this business' underlying non-commercial values. At *Terra Madre* they acknowledge that 'Without Mercamadrid [the great wholesale food market in the city], none of this would be possible. For example, there's no fruit in Madrid; it has to come from Murcia. So, it would be unfeasible to pay transport costs for 20 kilos of peaches here and for 50 kilos of orange somewhere else...'. So, *Terra Madre* uses the carriers' pre-set routes, which make transport costs viable because they link the production centres to the city's logistic platforms. 'In a way, we adapt to the flow of non-ecologic food. For example, a truck is coming from the Jerte and my supplier agrees with the carrier to put a couple of boxes of ecologic cherries on top for me'. This makes business possible but, as I have mentioned, it also poses a challenge to the ecologic policy of the company for, thus, the model is no longer exact and it is no longer a radical alternative to the current food model.

At the other end of the chain, *Terra Madre* has a portfolio of clients to whom every week it emails a link to its order form. The clients fill the form specifying products, quantities and method of payment and can add observations on the products or the delivery. 20 per cent of the clients are commercial establishments and consumer groups. The latter have different profiles, although they can all be described as 'communities of experience' in which the consumption of ecologic food is the key element. I was told, 'We have groups of neighbours who are very politically aware regarding ecologic issues; for example, this is the case with a group of young people who moved here, in the Sierra, from the city. There are also groups of friends who get together to hike or because they like nature and they take the opportunity to buy as a group. There are families. There are the parents of children who go to the same school and are aware of the importance of eating healthy for their kids' sake, and for whom this is also an excuse for socializing.'

To survive, *Terra Madre* has opted for a 'customized service'. 80 per cent of the customers are families or individuals who order what they need every week or two. The company does not reject the means by which the ecologic food market traditionally restricts the client's 'freedom' in favour of other values or needs (such as promoting consumer groups or offering 'model baskets'); it complements them with a more personalized purchase. As I was told, 'It's what the client demands: To be able to choose how to meet their needs and appetites. Not for us to offer them Swiss chard, even say for two weeks in a row, if they don't like it'. Thus, this niche in the market can be extended to bring ecologic food to a broader spectrum of consumers. Thus, however, the tension between freedom (of the client) and limitation (of the logistic framework) emerges strongly, jeopardizing the meaning of 'ecologic product'. Is it possible to combine the values of the ecologic product with the demands of the consumer city? Is 'ecologic', in the end, a characteristic of the products, of the social relations, of the values systems or of the possibilities offered by technology? *Terra Madre* actively struggles with these doubts.

To summarize, the City Council, large companies and small social or business initiatives all address the sustainability of flows of merchandise in the urban landscape, though they do so in different ways. The questions are many and varied, and so are the answers. In any case, it seems clear that the complexity of commercial logistics is related to the ways in which the inhabitants' forms of subjectivisation and social relation are involved.

### **The Hypermodern Citizen in an Economy of Experience**

The French sociologist François Ascher (2005) coined the expression 'hypermodern eater' to describe a contemporary kind of *homo consumens*.<sup>13</sup> He argued that we inhabit a third modernity that represents an intensification and deepening of the dynamics of previous modernities; basically, individualization and rationalization. This is not in conflict with the proliferation of new social links related to consumer practices or with an aestheticization of these practices that privileges an emotional and perceptible experience. The subject-who-consumes is increasingly differentiated and more reflexive. If consumption has always been a vector of identification (which is the same as saying of distinction), today this has become more complex because the individualization of the consumer has intensified.<sup>14</sup> There are new regimes of meaning and of co-production of bodies, subjects and food; among others, regimes of 'health', 'food safety' and 'light diet'. What stands out in all this is an aesthetic and aestheticizing dimension of consumption. In an economy of experience of the senses, daily life is *tasted* (Pine and Gilmore 2011). This is, in a way, contrary to the 'entropy of taste' typical of industrialization, the second modernity in Ascher's chronology.

These new forms of consumption produce an acceleration of the dynamics of innovation, understood as the constant production of differences in the merchandise; nuances, versions and degrees of difference that affect what is consumed and, of course, how, when, where, by and with whom. These economic dynamics of accelerated innovation are directly related to the consumer's hyper-reflexivity when faced with the 'options' on offer in a merchandise landscape that is particularly broad in large cities. This reflexivity corresponds with that that the agents in the chain of value apply to their own practices — the *agencements* (Hardie and MacKenzie 2006), themselves merchandise. These processes would be unintelligible without reference to the enormous extension and omnipresence of technological applications (Thrift and French 2002, Thrift 2008) that make possible the ubiquitous calculations and judgments of both the hyper-modern consumer and his suppliers, and that outline an(other) ecology; an informational ecology or *datascape* which affects urban consumption decisively. In this landscape, choice in consumption is exacerbated through practices that shape mobile time-spaces in which changes in direction, opinion or location do not necessarily interrupt the continuous flow of merchandise or the attachments that it

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<sup>13</sup> Obviously, this refers exclusively to a limited fraction of the world population; specifically, the middle and upper classes in industrialized countries.

<sup>14</sup> Regarding food consumption, examples go from the sale of individual portions to the exponential increase in food choices, the delocalization of many, of time and spaces of everyday community meals, and so on.

produces. Paradoxically, the practices of calculation in the logistics networks — standardization, geo-localization, and so on — favour a (partly imagined) ‘freedom of movement’ that is qualitatively different from that which characterizes contemporary forms of subjectivisation, especially in large cities.<sup>15</sup>

### Conclusions: Logistics as an Urban Imaginary

It is unlikely that an ordinary citizen would see the advertisements of global logistics companies because, normally, they are found in specialist publications.<sup>16</sup> However, it is fascinating to look at these ads because they are an unending source of depictions of today’s time-space production. Showing a photograph of a company cargo ship in transit, the reefer operator NYKCool states that their relationship with their clients follows the route of relationships not of ‘territory’. Through a word-play between ships and relationships, they conclude: ‘We believe in loonger [sic] relation-ships’. Siter Transporti also uses an image of a vehicle in transit, this time on a highway, to state their ‘commitment on the go’. Space as connection and time as synchronicity are the promises contained in this logistics publicity. Maersk, one of the most powerful companies in this sector, uses a page with a long, three-column text in which they ensure their ‘absolute reliability’ on routes between Asia and Northern Europe. In the unforeseeable and always-to-be-created world of logistics mobility, a commitment of operating ‘on-the-go’ is, above all, a commitment to control: the projected operations that *can* be calculated perfectly. Shipping ‘is predictable’. ‘We just made shipping boring’. The almost impossible image proposed by the GoReefers advertisement shows a woman in a lab coat and a Mardi Gras-ish hat with fruit against a background of containers and cranes; a combination that is meant to say, ‘this is what we think makes us the best’. The discontinuities of territoriality — shipping to new markets such as China, Thailand and India — are translated into a reassuring advertisement. As I was told, ‘What happens if your

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<sup>15</sup> The concept of ‘calculative self’ refers to the link between processes of technologically-based rational calculation and contemporary forms of subjectivisation. For example, it helps us to understand how the extension of ‘audit cultures’ (Strathern 2000) affects working subjects and, in general, forms of citizenship, if we consider the audit as a kind of Foucaultian governmentality. The expression ‘lifehacking’, derived from the computer world, has become popular as a way to name an urban trend. A lifehacker is someone who uses all kinds of methods, tricks and shortcuts in everyday life to increase ‘productivity’ and ‘efficiency’. ‘Liberation’ from the inconvenient ties of everyday life allows one to have time for activities that one finds more interesting or that one simply chooses to perform. Soylent, a kind of nutritive drink that substitutes the need to eat anything else (except at chosen moments of socialization around a ‘habitual’ meal) was invented by a United States software engineer to ‘save time’ at meals ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soylent\\_per\\_cent28drink\\_per\\_cent29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soylent_per_cent28drink_per_cent29)), which shows a calculative logic at the service of our imaginaries of freedom. Even though it could be seen as a reactualization of old utopias of self-sufficiency, the concept of lifehacker is symptomatic of a contemporaneity that mixes in an original way the ubiquity of calculations in technologically-based datascapes with processes of individuation through choice (and consumption).

<sup>16</sup> The advertisements that I consider here were found in several 2013 issues of the magazine *Eurofruit*. The international marketing magazine for fresh produce buyers in Europe, <http://www.fruitnet.com/eurofruit>

container does not meet the requirements on arrival? The fruit is sound but one of the probes failed and your fruit is declined entry? Do you re-run the cold treatment, or do you ship your fruit to a different country? Who pays for the additional costs?' GEODIS offers the definitive solution portraying logistics as an activity that guarantees the connections and translations that make globalization, in terms of traffic of merchandise, possible. GEODIS advertisement reads, 'Your reputation and success depend on whether you receive or deliver your products on time at a reasonable price from anywhere in the world'. 'Global logistics solutions made for you'.

In a digitalized economy that is globalized and functions 24-hours-a-day, the continuous flow of objects and data is an indispensable requirement; one that demands extended periods of maintenance. On the other hand, the vicissitudes of everyday urban life, the rhythms of activity and the processes of interrelation, identification and social differentiation that define the urban condition as a way of life are interwoven with this flow of merchandise. Through continuous performance, time-spaces emerge which are based on the production of connection and synchrony. Embodying the just-in-time model of global commerce, logistics practices draw scenarios that could easily constitute an imaginary for the cosmopolis, beyond the uncertain ideology of freedom of flows; an imaginary made of old dreams (and new means) of rational control of urban life that both reshape and are reshaped by the continuous emergence of contingencies.

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## ***‘Take Part in the Community Vegetable Garden!’: Community Appropriation and Management of Urban Public Space<sup>1</sup>***

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This article is based on the ongoing fieldwork that I started in 2013 on the claims made by a group of local people on the state and quality of ‘public space’ in relation to a plot located in a small plaza of a very central neighbourhood of Madrid. The plot belongs to the City Council and cannot be built on. After repeated complaints about its abandoned state, local people calling themselves ‘neighbours’ decided to look after it. One of them started a Blog narrating the progress of this urban garden project and initiated the process of obtaining a ‘temporary cession of the plot’ and of getting the City Hall to legalise the project. In little over a year, these ‘neighbours’ deployed a broad range of digital technologies, making of this initiative also a political, hyper-connected and continually monitored project. In cases like this, the agents use information and communications technologies (ICTs) in functional and sometimes remedial ways in order to shape, express, manage and publicize citizens’ activities and claims. These digital tools are significant in relational networks that make it possible to understand citizens’ initiatives promoting ways to manage urban public space that are ‘alternative’ to formal political and administrative management. It is also a collective way of making the city not only ‘smart’ but also ‘sentient’. This ethnographic case helps us to understand the significance of new technologies in current neighbourhood management of urban public space.

**Keywords:** Madrid, ICTs, citizen participation, technological and political appropriation of public space.

### **The ‘Sentient’ Perspective: Expectations in an Ethnography of Technological Imageries of Madrid<sup>2</sup>**

In the summer of 2013 I was completing a fieldwork that I started in 2011 on technological imageries of Madrid; particularly, on the production and significance of public space and the means and meanings of citizens’ participation in processes of urban change. Two key imageries had emerged in my ethnography, the ‘smart city’ and the ‘sentient city’.<sup>3</sup> They were part of a larger imagery, the so-called ‘creative cities and cities of knowledge’ built on a prolonged process of industrialisation and commercialisation of culture and legitimised by discourses derived from the ‘theory of the creative knowledge class’ (Florida 2002). According to these narratives, concentrating ‘knowledge’ and ‘creation’ with ‘technological innovation’ and ‘entrepreneurship’ is key to the post-industrial regeneration of cities and economic growth (Yudice 2002). On the one hand, the imagery of the ‘Smart City’ that emerged was linked to the competitive and promotional actions of local governments and of private enterprises in so-called strategic urban sectors; that is, ‘energy’, ‘mobility’, ‘buildings’, ‘cultural production and commercialisation’ and ‘governance’. The city unfolded as a collection of invisible, yet ‘efficient’ technological infrastructures designed by experts

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<sup>1</sup> See [solarpasilloverde@gmail.com](mailto:solarpasilloverde@gmail.com) and [www.solarpasilloverde.wordpress.com](http://www.solarpasilloverde.wordpress.com), accessed 15 September 2015.

<sup>2</sup> This research has been funded by a Spanish National Research Program: *Madrid Cosmópolis. Prácticas emergentes in the New Madrid [Emerging Cultural Practices in the New Madrid]* (CSO2009-10780, MICINN 2009-2012).

<sup>3</sup> Imageries are based on representations; ‘they structure social experience and engender both behaviours and real images’ (Ledrut 1987: 84). Imageries create acting images, image-guides and images that carry out processes; they do not only represent material or subjective realities.

and deployed to 'solve', 'order' and 'control' the urban environment in an automated fashion with the aim of offering an 'optimised' experience. On the other hand, the 'sentient city' grew as counterpoint to the 'smart city'. In general terms, it contradicts the apparent ability of the technological city to feel, foresee and act in an 'objective', thus 'optimal and efficient' manner through processing real-time data flows from micro-sensors and through monitoring and identification devices placed in space, in objects and on bodies. Based on the adjective 'sentient' (linked to 'sensitivity' in its Latin root),<sup>4</sup> the subjectivity of perception is defended by highlighting that the human and non-human instances that produce, interpret and use data flows (including software algorithms and action devices) respond to political decisions, subjective values, legal codes and power relations (Thrift and French 2002). The critical content on this imagery has been furthered by several social and technological analyses that tackle the way in which a technologically-mediated city is conceived, designed and produced.

In the case of Madrid, my ethnography showed that the imagery of the 'sentient city' was rooted in political claims linked to the *15-M Indignados* movement. This movement has demanded more direct and informed citizen participation in the production and management of the city's resources and opposed the local government's urban planning and development strategies based on the privatisation and deregulation of analogue and digital infrastructures, services and 'cultural' and public spaces that were being deployed in line with national and European 'economic recovery' policies.<sup>5</sup> In doing so, this movement has also brought together tales of disillusionment and the search for new employment prospects among a significant number of young (and not so young) professionals from the cultural sector and from the sectors of technological innovation, arts, architecture and public social services. This has occurred in the context of an economic crisis in which the annual unemployment rate amounts to 18.75 per cent (2014),<sup>6</sup> subsidies for culture and technological innovation have been severely cut and the breakdown of the construction sector has left several projects unfinished.

The imagery of Madrid as a 'sentient city' is thus produced from within and also deployed across a new scenario that includes workshops, seminars and conferences calling for citizens' participation and reflection on what should be considered to be 'urban commons' (from urban public space to infrastructure, including 'knowledge', 'creativity' and 'affection'); but also the recovery through self-management of underused plots of land or of spaces such as Tabacalera, Montamarta, Patio Maravillas, ¡Esto es Una Plaza! and El Campo de la Cebada and the establishment of an endless list of websites Blogs and digital platforms which promote these experiences. Given the social impact of these actions, the collectives that engage in them are becoming involved in mediations among the administration, private companies and citizen claims. Some, like Medialab Prado or El Matadero de Madrid, have

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<sup>4</sup> I follow Shepard's (2011) conceptualization of the 'sentient city' and other theoretical developments in this line.

<sup>5</sup> See, for instance, the requirements established by Smart Cities to obtain such funds and private investments.

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.madrid.org/baco\\_web/html/web/AccionVisualizarSerie.icm](http://www.madrid.org/baco_web/html/web/AccionVisualizarSerie.icm) (accessed 15 September 2015).

become involved in the public sphere for the cultural management and dissemination spaces; others run small offices specialising in cultural, urban and technological mediation and consulting services. These developments are traversed in myriad ways by a technological grammar inspired by the development of *free culture* and *open-source code*, from multidisciplinary ways of working and producing knowledge that follow a ‘*hacker’s logic*’ to interventions in the public space inspired to so-called *open-sourced networked urbanism* deployed through ‘open source logic’ and ‘prototyping’ (Haque and Fuller 2009, Corsin and Estalella 2013).

**‘Hi. We’re Sarah and Tomás. Like you, we’re neighbours here and we want to improve this space for the community’**

Immersed in the techno-political ‘sentience’ emanating from a city in a state of continuous questioning, I was walking in a small public square in my neighbourhood in a central area of Madrid when I thought that it was strange to see there a half-broken, tumbling wire fence around a barren plot of land. This plot was located in an area near the city centre and was therefore surrounded by public and private urban interventions aimed at promoting the city centre as a tourist attraction linked to the cultural industry (museums, theatres, music, food, trade and recreational activities). Moreover, the plot was located in the District of Arganzuela, an area that for the past 10 years has undergone intense transformation as a result of redirecting the M30 motorway underground, refurbishing the former Madrid abattoir (*Matadero de Madrid*) and turning it into a large public cultural centre and construction projects awarded to private enterprises for building shopping centres on public land. In response to this top-down urban intervention, local opposition was increasing. In the nearby Central District, an intense and diverse political activism originating in the *15-M Indignados* movements has produced high-impact squatting initiatives such as Tabacalera, as well as interventions by young architects and artists who together with neighbours have recovered abandoned plots of land such as the abovementioned Campo de la Cebada and ¡Esto es una Plaza!. Traditional neighbourhood association movements such as *Asociación de Vecinos Nudo Sur* are very active, as are the movement called *Asamblea Popular Arganzuela* and *La Traba*, the squatters’ social centre linked to anarchist movements.

It was only a matter of time, I thought, before the plot of land that set me pondering would become, like many others, a space for confrontations between different stakeholders. Thus, I waited for such an event to take place in order to construct from the start an ethnography of the processes of reclamation and reinvention of public space that were taking place across the city and understand the significance of information and communications technologies (ICTs) in the attendant networks. On returning from holidays at the end of August 2013, I found that three people aged around 25, a lady aged around 65 and a group of children were clearing the plot. The space was still limited by the wire fence. However, a coloured ribbon ran around the perimeter and a poster on every side read:

‘Hi. We’re Sarah and Tomás. Like you, we’re neighbours here and we want to improve this space for the community. We’re clearing this plot on Tuesdays and

Thursdays starting at 18:00. For more information, you can call this number: XXXX, or write an email to [solarpasilloverde@gmail.com](mailto:solarpasilloverde@gmail.com)<sup>7</sup>

In this simple note I found three key aspects that led me to consider this event as the beginning of the techno-political process that I wanted to study. This encouraged me to construct an ethnography of this case through participant observation and direct involvement. Firstly, the poster included a personal presentation: Sarah and Tomás explained what they were doing using the word ‘neighbours’, which encompasses both traditional and emerging urban values and practices of conviviality. On the one hand, this word is linked to the sociability and affection traditionally attributed in Spain to the working class neighbourhood as a shared living space. On the other hand, it resonates with the social and political 15-M movements. These relational concepts were re-appropriated by those movements and, as pointed out by Corsin and Estalella, were ‘squatted’ and linked to claims on the public space as being *commons* (2013: 122). Secondly, this poster introduced a main characteristic of citizen participation in the digital age based on the concept of ‘voice’, which entails a process of personal intervention whereby social agents provide information about themselves and the circumstances in which they act, at the same time involving others in their call and thus generating a ‘community’ of interests or of affected parties. The third important element of this poster was the *ordinary* action of opening up an email account whose addressee was [solarpasilloverde@gmail.com](mailto:solarpasilloverde@gmail.com). This action conferred to the plot an identity with affective potentialities (Stewart 2007) for collective action;<sup>7</sup> this autonomous occupation of the medium also produced a message which could lead to collective action (Bennett and Segerberg 2012). The name of the email account located the plot in the neighbourhood. At the same time, the categories ‘solar’ (plot) and ‘verde’ (green) drew attention to a set of neighbourhood demands that had been made over the past 25 years regarding the green areas and facilities under pressure from urban development; specifically, the Rail Green Belt Action Plan contained in the review of the 1985 General Urban Plan (Madrid Council 1997) and the Directing Plan to restore the Manzanares River (Madrid Council 2010).

These three aspects were also significant to understand the success of Sarah and Tomás’ call and the way in which events later unfolded, in fact as a techno-political appropriation of a public space. Within a week of opening the gmail account, Sarah and Tomás proposed to open a Blog in order to record the clearing work that was being carried out and anything else happening in the plot. The Blog provided a material and durable environment where an appropriation of public space that was both analogue and digital was recorded. It did so through a personal journal that described the everyday work carried out by ‘us’, ‘the neighbours’; photos and some text contributed to make it last. Participants in the clean-up of the plot warmly received the Blog. However, for the first two months the Blog was maintained only by Sarah, an American aged 24 who was trained in Global Studies and Art and had moved to Spain to start a new life with her boyfriend Tomás, of the same age. Tomás was trained in video and photography and his family had lived in the neighbourhood for a

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<sup>7</sup> Stewart suggests that affection relates to the ‘animated inhabitation of things’ (2007: 16), making up an ‘animate circuit that conducts force and maps connections, routes, and disjunctures’ (2007: 3).

long time, running a space for stage arts. So, the expression ‘we, the neighbours’ started to take shape in the Blog under Sarah’s personal voice expressed in broken Spanish and with great excitement not only for the occupation process but also for meeting new people in the neighbourhood.

Three weeks later, approximately 15 people had joined the work group that met every week on the plot. Meanwhile, through the gmail account, requests to take part grew fast into a list of 25 participants. It was difficult to organise work in the space. Although Sarah and Tomás had started the initiative, no one claimed to be in charge and there was no predefined project for the space. Thus, when people turned up and asked what they could do to help, the answer was usually: ‘we simply turn up and do whatever we consider to be necessary to improve this place.’ Once the space was cleared of weeds, litter and rubble, people started expressing a feeling of ‘unease’ and ‘not knowing what to do to move forward’. On 22 August, Sarah wrote in the Blog:

‘After working for an hour today, Bruno suggested that we should hold a meeting to talk about our future plans for the project. Saying, “Hey, we’re cleaning a space. Get raking!” is easy. Having a group of 15 people agree to what should be done with a space filled with possibilities is a different matter altogether’.

### **‘Consensus! What a beautiful word’: Founding a ‘Community’ and ‘Opening’ a Public Space.**

The first assembly held on the plot on 22 August was attended by 15 people aged between 24 and 65. All described themselves as ‘neighbours’, inhabitants of a ‘neighbourhood’ that extended beyond the closest perimeter of the square. There were no architects, urban designers, activists experienced in the practice of squatting or any other agents linked to the abovementioned interventions and developments. We were a heterogeneous group in terms of age and profession that represented the most politically-active side of the neighbourhood’s social fabric. There were young liberal professionals who did not have steady employment and lived with their parents. There were not-so-young liberal professionals who, despite their employment instability, wanted to have children and had relocated from the city centre to this district because it was less busy, somewhat cheaper and with more schools and parks. There were also senior citizens who had lived in the area for over 17 years and in the past had taken part in neighbourhood demands for the improvement of the local infrastructures.

The first topic of discussion was the need to ‘reach an agreement’ on how to use the space. This was decided in only 10 minutes. The activities that would be carried out were drawn up and it was decided that the project would be publicised in order to increase participation. For the majority the space should be kept ‘open’, ‘for community use’; for them it was a ‘public space’, ‘part of the plaza and the neighbourhood’s history’. Several participants described it as an ‘urban community garden’; as ‘a place to recover neighbourly engagement’, ‘hold children’s activities’, ‘live music’ and ‘workshops’, and ‘learn about urban ecology and agriculture’. After a single round taking turns to speak, the space was defined as a ‘self-managed urban community garden’, a ‘space for neighbourhood meetings’

and ‘cultural and ecological activities’. It was also agreed that any of these activities should be organised by those who proposed them, inasmuch as any participants in the assembly wanted to be ‘organiser or representative of anything’. Several times, the younger crowd used expressions such as: ‘Like in ¡Esto es una Plaza!’ or ‘Like the Campo de la Cebada’, adding ‘but without as many massive activities as in El Campo de la Cebada, which is a racket’ or ‘without any of those trendy design things; they’re cool but I want to think of things for myself with the neighbours, here’. The re-appropriation of these models of intervention in the urban public space (and their production) suggested that they were used as strong ‘prototypes’ for organising an occupied public space. However, they were also questioned and contrasted with the explicitly shared idea of an ‘autonomous’ process that would follow its own pace: ‘the garden that us neighbours do of our own accord’. This project was linked with subjective and affective experiences such as, ‘my grandfather’s garden in Jaen’ or ‘my garden in Arganda’.<sup>8</sup>

To the people in the assembly it seemed important to take the process of self-management of the space slowly, at a pace allowed by their personal life and without a pre-established programme;<sup>9</sup> it would be set only by events and expectations arising in the production process itself which, as I understood, was basically considered to be an act of neighbourly sociability, learning and collective work, an *oeuvre* (Lefebvre 1996 [1967]). Thus, a political claim on the right to inhabitation, appropriation and participation took shape; a ‘right of use’, rather than a ‘right of exchange’, that was consistent with the treatment of space as a resource in urban neo-liberal policies (Vasudevan 2014: 5).

The next point of discussion, linked to the new definition of the space, was to think of a new name for the plot. Tomás pointed out that ‘it’s no longer a simple plot of land, so I propose that we think of a new name for what we are creating’. The assembly agreed to open a ‘public’ participation process until the following meeting, using the mailing list and the Blog and talking with people who visited the garden. After the assembly, a notice board was set up. On it, a piece of paper read, ‘Take part in the community vegetable garden!’ (see n.1).

Significantly, no proposal was made at the time to disseminate or publicize the process offline through a campaign that would reach beyond the plot. Two weeks later, the ideas that had been expressed online and which Sarah, Tomás and I had collected during work meetings were discussed in a new assembly and voted on, as there was no consensus. The vegetable garden was named *La Revoltosa del Pasillo Verde* (The Mischievous/Rebellious One of the Green Belt). This denomination kept the words *Pasillo Verde* (and its aforementioned connotations) and in classic Madrid style included a *castizo* twist pointing to a modern sense of dissent and neighbourly opposition: *La Revoltosa* referred to the title of a *zarzuela*,<sup>10</sup> whose storyline follows a tale of love and jealousy that takes place in a *corrala*<sup>11</sup> at the end of the 19th Century. Therefore, the chosen denomination met the Madrid character of the

<sup>8</sup> Arganda is a town near Madrid.

<sup>9</sup> In time, this concept would consolidate in practice.

<sup>10</sup> A *zarzuela* is a traditional operetta based in Madrid.

<sup>11</sup> A *corrala* is a traditional Madrid building; a dwelling with flats around a central courtyard.

neighbourhood also referring to the small *corrala* that stood on this plot of land.<sup>12</sup> Finally, *La Revoltosa* is a feminine word that refers to the beautiful protagonist of this *zarzuela*, a single woman who is desired in vain by many men. This tied in with the ‘spirit’ of the project, which was defined as ‘self-managed’, ‘non-conformist’, ‘rebellious’ and ‘independent’ from political parties, professional guilds and other collectives with an explicit history of squatting and self-management, for which there was, nonetheless, some sympathy.

However, in this phase of the project — defined as ‘open’, ‘collective’ and ‘inclusive’ — the words ‘community’ and ‘neighbourhood’ remained linked to those who essentially took part in the assembly and in the online community. A significant proportion of those who were intended to participate actively in the production of this public space — called ‘neighbours’ — was absent. The elderly, ‘marginal people who spent most of their days and nights in Plaza de Peñuelas’ and ‘traditional middle-class families’ were not there. This absence was unforeseen by the organizers; they were not expert activists but had some experience in online information networks of interest groups involved in civil and political action. They had taken for granted that every ‘neighbour’ would be aware of the online call, expecting it to have power of ‘fast’, ‘widespread’ dissemination beyond the sphere of personal relations. That this was not the case would have significant long-term consequences; in regard, firstly, to participation and to the legitimacy of the space in the social fabric and, secondly, to the concepts of ‘community’ and ‘neighbour’ on which the process of appropriation and management of this public space was based.

### **‘La Revoltosa’ On the Go: A ‘Wonderful Chaos’ that was Digitally Organised . . . and Disorganised**

The assemblies that followed the first one tackled how to organise work avoiding what a 43 year-old woman described as ‘a wonderful but unproductive chaos of people coming and going without really knowing what to do, how, or why’. A design for the space was agreed in a new assembly on 12 September. Sarah had written down the ideas that had been put forward and approved by consensus. The result included a perimeter of edible fruit bushes that limited the space without closing it; a central space for meetings and common activities with furniture built from recycled materials; raised terraces where to stir and fertilise the soil for planting vegetables, while land on the perimeter was allowed to recover; an area for aromatic herbs; and two compost bins. Álvaro, a 25 year old engineer, added the garden’s measurements to the floor plan and defined the space to be allocated to each area. A friend of Álvaro prepared a 3D design aesthetically similar to the life simulation video game *Sims*, which we uploaded to the Blog and disseminated via email asking for suggestions for improvement. The development of the various spaces was done through the organisation of ‘work groups’ according to each person’s ‘skills’, ‘spare time’ and ‘interest in learning’ the activities proposed. A majority decision was reached without ‘leaders’ or ‘work group coordinators’. Some suggested that work should be truly collective. Others said they did not have spare time

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<sup>12</sup> The *corrala* was expropriated and torn down but in over 10 years no official decision has been made on how to use the land.

to become involved in regularly organised tasks. In general, it was difficult to coordinate the working hours of the participants and members moved from one group to another or became part of several groups at once, thus becoming involved in different tasks and learning processes. This prevented prolonged or strong leadership from arising.

During the first two assemblies, technological applications were agreed upon which would help to coordinate the activities of the work groups, comment on them or make suggestions. They were, a WhatsApp chat, a space for ‘collective work and document archive’ on Google Drive and a page and group on Facebook. As these applications were well known and widely used, it was agreed that they would help to produce, disseminate and subject to criticism the garden’s activities, and to encourage greater participation. Two proposals were kept on hold that concerned the use of free software in line with the principles of ‘openness’ and ‘horizontality’ marking the process of space appropriation and dissemination of the initiative. From the start, it was emphasized that the administration and management of the apps should be public and shared and should reflect the different points of view, expectations and levels of involvement that came together in appropriating this plot of land — a ‘public space’ — and managing it as *commons*. While the unification of profile names under the label *Huerto La Revoltosa del Pasillo Verde* had been agreed, none of the logos or images that had been produced over time had been considered to be the sole representative of the project to the wider public. Passwords to the different apps were available to anyone who requests them on condition of carrying out ‘responsible work’ and being ‘respectful’ of the decisions that were agreed; in practice, however, holding the password was equated to ownership of the spade, the rake, the two hoes and the watering tools. These indispensable gardening tools were in the hands of the more stable group that participated regularly in the assemblies, cleaned up and tended to the garden. In turn, ownership of these objects (passwords and tools) contributed to establish this group as the main ‘code programmer’ of the garden in a technological-political sense; as the people, that is, who produced the garden’s form and regulations (Latour 2005b).

Digital development was considered to be an inherent part of the garden. It was almost expected to grow automatically, as if it were to update itself according to what was happening in the physical garden, with no human interaction (such as, uploading photos, writing posts, sharing information, organising contacts and so on). In fact, at the time of writing no specific work group had been set up for coordinating and organising the production of the digital garden. Furthermore, the mere existence of the digital garden was expected to work as an ‘objective’; permanently monitoring what took place in the garden, automatically generating a sense of ‘transparency’ and ‘openness’ that would attract the active participation of online and offline ‘neighbours’ and legitimising taking over the plot. In practice, this was not the case. The mutual accommodation between technology and people and the complex learning process led to a feeling of unease, constraint and frustration, which is worth describing briefly.

During the garden’s initial stages, the Google account containing the mailing list *Huerto La Revoltosa* became the main tool for coordinating the activities, disseminating the information and launching suggestions to be discussed in the fortnightly assemblies. Over the first four months, the list increased to 65 members (currently, it includes 98 people).



Addresses were added as the online and offline requests arrived. In the first year no system was used to store contacts and no distinction was made between regular participants, online supporters and contacts established to seek advice, information, materials and documents or to advance in the aforementioned aims.<sup>13</sup> As no one sorted out the correspondence,<sup>14</sup> flows became long and confusing; general information was mixed with private information and with comments on unregulated practices. Moderation became a joint and ongoing learning task, leading also to some self-censorship. All this interference has led participants to say that ‘this mail is a drag’ and ‘we need to use it only when necessary’. In September 2014, two lists were made, one including 40 regular participants and another including all contacts. However, activity decreased significantly and many occasional participants of the garden complained they no longer receive information.

The problems with the mailing list were not reproduced in the work and archival space opened with Google Drive. In this case, the problem was that participating in a digital environment was considered to be a task ‘necessary’ but ‘tedious’. Many were also unfamiliar with this medium, which was seen as a ‘space for bureaucracy’. Work in this sphere was carried out by a maximum of eight people. They wrote a document drawing inspiration from documents shared publicly on the websites of associations involved in negotiating with the administration with the aim of regulating the occupation of plots of land. As only a few people had contributed to this effort, the document was eventually shared with the general mailing list, asking for amendments and suggestions.

Moreover, once the clearing work done during the first month was over, the Blog was no longer updated, not even weekly. The comments section in the Blog depended on the posts published. However, as many ‘work groups’ did not use this space to communicate their work, it never really became a place for communication among those participating in the garden and visitors. Also the hyperlinks to other, related Blogs were underused. Therefore, the power of the Blog to generate a ‘recursive’ audience (Kelty 2008) contributing suggestions and modifications to the garden in real time remained limited. Half of the participants stated that they did not know anything about Wordpress and/or had never published in a Blog. Those who did know claimed to prioritise what they called ‘manual activities’ and ‘fast and easy’ communication. Also in this case, only eight people participated sporadically uploading minutes, describing the work carried out in the garden with photos and text, advertising activities and publishing some on the space and its history. Blogging was, however, key to updating how the plot was to be considered a lived and living space. The large use of photographs was especially relevant, bringing out the plot of land’s past through old images of the plaza and the neighbourhood, highlighting the work that was being carried out and putting a face to those taking part in transforming the plot. This not only added veracity to the occupation as a neighbourhood initiative; it also contributed to creating a sense of authenticity and reliability.

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<sup>13</sup> These contacts included town council staff, neighbourhood associations, consumer groups, squatters’ collectives and other gardens.

<sup>14</sup> Labels or headings could have been used to categorize it according to the topics.

The WhatsApp chat that was started after the second assembly with eight people and that currently brings together 20 people was the technology that most actively contributed to the social and technical production of the garden and to the community of participants. The chat brings together texts, photos and voice recordings. Those who have ‘a wander in the garden’ use the chat to communicate what they have done there and ‘upload’ their impressions on cleanliness, the humidity of the soil and the state of the plants, as well as novelties regarding neighbours participating in the project, the search for and the recycling of materials and Police activity. These comments form the basis for coordinating collective tasks and offer points of discussion at the assemblies which are then communicated to the mailing list or recorded as issues to be ‘thought and talked about’ in a future Blog post. As a result, as some of the participants put it, the chat has been the ‘garden’s hard core’; it is the main place for decision-making and organisation and, ultimately, the main artefact inscribing the longest-lasting and most cohesive form of ‘us’. The WhatsApp chat has also become what someone called a *patio de vecinas* (communal backyard); a place for care and affection where we talk about holidays or apologise explaining our personal setbacks for missing our daily commitments. It is also the place where we talk about politics and arrange to attend cultural, political or leisure events, not always together, not always as *La Revoltosa* or as ‘neighbours’, but also as ‘friends’. In this sense the chat reproduces the practices and relations linked to the popular expression *vecinos* (neighbours) and *vecinaje* (neighbouring), people who are close and affectively involved and who take care of each other and of their shared living space.

When it was started, the website [www.facebook.com/www.HuertoLaRevoltosa](http://www.facebook.com/www.HuertoLaRevoltosa) (accessed 15 September 2015) failed to achieve its aim of communicating ‘efficiently’. It was supposed to alleviate both the difficulties encountered with the email and the Blog and those of a barely-inclusive ‘us’ on WhatsApp. Three weeks after it opened, we realised that if someone wanted to publish as *Huerto La Revoltosa* they had to be an administrator; moreover, we also realised that the commenting system was as rigid as the Blog’s; that we could not add or be added by ‘friends’; that we could not participate in Facebook groups and that only the administrators’ ‘friends’ were becoming ‘fans’ (without their knowledge). Of course, a Facebook page is not a profile. What we were explicitly asking of Facebook was to ‘contact neighbours in the area’ and other collectives on a personal basis, so that we could add them and they could add us as ‘friends’. Reacting to what we considered to be a mistake, we did not start a profile but decided to open a Facebook group. This was also seen as a failure, as most participants found it difficult to be included in the group; only the people who were already ‘friends’ with the administrators were included, so the emails sent to invite people to join were ineffective.

The way in which the technologies described until now have been part of the dynamics of our communication, relationships, organisation and production as a group of neighbours and as a community, became critical when on 29 October 2013 our garden was abruptly dismantled by order of the Council’s Department of Urban Planning.

## **‘La Revoltosa Evicted, Resists!!’: ‘Harvesting’ and ‘Sowing’ in a Virtual Garden**

‘29/10/13 11:54:48: Sarah: Guys! A neighbour just called to tell me there are policemen taking away the garden materials right now’.

This was the first alarm, posted on WhatsApp. Sarah immediately called Álvaro, who lived across the square, asking him to go to the garden. However, Álvaro was not at home; from his laptop at the University, he informed people in the general contact list. Less than a minute later, he copied and pasted the alerting message to the Facebook group and then shared the link to the Facebook post in an email, without a subject, aimed at the general mailing list. Later, he stated: ‘I didn’t really think much about it. I was overwhelmed and wanted everyone to know what was happening’. His actions made it possible for the news to reach those who were not in the Facebook group but were in the mailing list (the chaotic, unfiltered list). At that time, *Huerto La Revoltosa* did not have a Twitter account (it would be opened three days later.) However, the individual and collective agent who received the online alert, started to tweet the news and, within hours, the hashtag #huertolarevoltosaevicted acquired relevance. While a small crowd remained connected and alert, only a small group of four people witnessed events on the ground, trying to save plants, tools and other objects and taking pictures and videoing what was happening. They tried to narrate the story live through WhatsApp, Facebook and emails. At 15.45, while the Council staff were still in the garden, I published a report on the Blog including text and photos and unifying the information on what had happened. I wrote in the first person plural and used information and statements from online conversations. My fieldwork diary reads, ‘I’ve written my first feature on the Blog alone. I tried to write according to the often-repeated idea that “the garden is each and all of us neighbours”’. In the coming days, those preliminary accounts and pictures drafted, consulted and shared online would be essential to setting up collective actions.

During the day, several people suggested and agreed through different channels to end the day with an ‘emergency assembly’ on what was once again a plot of land with the aim of ‘organising ourselves’ and as an ‘act of protest and resistance’. At 7 p.m. only eight people gathered by the parked earth-diggers. Standing in a circle, we reflected on what had taken place. Low attendance was attributed to the fact that the dismantling had taken place, perhaps on purpose, during a long bank holiday weekend. However, there was also a general feeling of disappointment that Elena put into words saying, ‘I have the feeling of not having really connected with the neighbours who have lived in the area all their lives’. In spite of this disappointment, most seemed to agree that the garden was the object and driver of participation in the neighbourhood; therefore, the only way to garner greater local support and legitimise a new attempt of creating a space ‘for community use’ out of that plot was to focus on ‘keeping the memory of the garden alive’ and connect with the demands made by other gardens in the ongoing negotiation process aimed at legalising urban gardens. During this meeting, it was agreed that in future assemblies, the opinions expressed through the mailing list and the Facebook page should also be considered alongside those of the people physically present. On that first day there were already 20 decisive proposals, including engaging in symbolic acts of protest, such as sowing small gardens across the neighbourhood; writing a

press release; starting a change.org petition; occupying the plot and rebuilding the garden with the help offered by the Urban Gardens Network; and establishing ourselves as a neighbourhood association and demanding temporary cession of the land. Having considered all these proposals, a majority agreed on ‘continuing the struggle’ as a ‘community garden’ and that action could follow two non-exclusive paths. First, the space could be re-occupied through carrying out activities on the plot that would remind people of the existence of a garden; this action would culminate in establishing a new garden. Second, the administration could be asked to allow us ‘to temporarily use it as a community urban garden’. This implied turning *Huerto La Revoltosa del Pasillo Verde* into a neighbourhood association that would formally submit a project to the Town Council and becoming more actively involved in forums where the legalisation of urban gardens was publicly discussed and defended; among them, there were the Meetings of the Garden Network and other meetings taking place in the *Matadero de Madrid Cultural Centre* and *MediaLab Prado* under the name The Citizens’ Table. In those meetings, since 2012, different associations, collectives and professionals including City Council politicians and staff, had discussed what was described as ‘citizen participation in managing what is public’.<sup>15</sup>

Following the assembly held on the night when the garden was forcibly dismantled, Bruno designed and sent via the mailing list a poster to be disseminated online. It included three pictures of the garden; one of the plot in its original state of decay, one of people sowing and watering the garden and one of the diggers tearing everything down. The three captions read: ‘a plot of land abandoned for years’, ‘is turned by the neighbours into a garden’ and ‘the Town Council tears it down by way of thanks’. That night, Armando and I wrote press releases which we shared through the mailing list the next day to be agreed upon prior to publication. The two texts were merged into a single press release. People agreed to disseminate it massively in their public profiles and in private correspondence, involving friends and relatives, the media and so on. We signed the press release as ‘The neighbours who promoted and have been supporting *Huerto La Revoltosa*’. In what was our most direct statement ever, we wrote, ‘We reassert our commitment to the vision and mission of *La Revoltosa*: the creation of urban community gardens where there are abandoned plots of land. We will continue working to achieve the temporary cession of the plot and to bring life back to *Huerto La Revoltosa* organised as a neighbourhood association’. This note ended by raising the possibility of lodging formal complaints through the website of the Town Council and included the link for people to do so.

On 31 October, Bruno wrote to the mailing list:

‘Have you seen that Anonymous Spain has shared the pictures of the garden and that almost one thousand people have shared them? There’s a big debate going on, on their Facebook page’.

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<sup>15</sup> The Citizens’ Table was started by the Madrid City Council as an open consultation process to discuss the writing of the Strategic Cultural Plan: <https://lamesaciudadana.wordpress.com/about/>

On 1 November, BT wrote on WhatsApp:

‘01/11/13, 11:41:39. I don’t know if you’ve thought about this, but there’s a stretch of wall from the old “*corrala*” that is still standing. If it’s painted white and a simple message sprayed in black (I think I have some), it would be quite eye-catching ;-)’.

That night, a small group met at the plot and wrote in children’s handwriting: *La Revoltosa*. Nothing else. More than the occupation of the plot ever had, the dismantling of the garden had turned this project into a public and political issue. Around its carcass, its absence strongly objectivised its presence and its existence. The picture of the graffiti was shared across the media and for a while was the header image for the Blog, the profile image of the Facebook group and the WhatsApp group chat. Between 1st and 7th November, the dismantling of the garden was mentioned in several national and local newspapers, on the radio and on television.

In a new assembly held on 7 November, an agreement was reached to ‘make the most of media exposure’ and start a petition on change.org to collect signatures in support of the claim, ‘We don’t want abandoned public plots of land but gardens that are cared for by the neighbours’. However, several participants again pointed out that we had failed to ‘reach the area’s neighbours’, that there was a ‘clear lack of information on the streets’ and that ‘according to rumours heard from old people out for a walk’, the dismantling of the garden had also been a response to complaints made by at least three neighbours living in a tower block near the garden. It was therefore agreed to set up information desks in order to explain ‘the community urban garden project’, receive suggestions and collect signatures. This would happen over one week, with morning and evening shifts. Posters and signing sheets would be left in the local businesses and schools and leaflets with a brief history of the garden and the relevant online addresses would be posted in mailboxes in the area. It would also be possible to sign the petition online. The change.org petition obtained 1,430 signatures in less than one month. 300 signatures were collected at the information desks together with several proposals and written complaints about the garden. Thus, we met those who did not support the garden. They were mainly middle-class neighbours aged 40 and over with traditional conservative values who wished this to be a quiet residential area in the city centre. Their main concerns were that the plot, and by extension the plaza, would become a noisy space with night parties and crowded activities, or that it would become established as a place for radical left-wing activities that would prevent the Town Council from improving or expanding the facilities in the neighbourhood.

After this, the garden lived on, though not as a space for growing vegetables. It continued its existence as an online space. A collaborative work was carried out to formalise a project written by six hands and delivered in four different formats to four different departments of the Madrid City Council. A request was also made for the temporary cession of the land. *Huerto La Revoltosa* remained as a public online space. It was a place to hold public assemblies and conversations, to exchange information among people who called themselves ‘gardeners’, ‘*revoltosos*’ (mischievous, rebellious) and ‘neighbours’ but also with

silent passers-by and occasional visitors who shared news on the legalisation process of gardens and on ecological and political events. Furthermore, the online *Huerto La Revoltosa* began to be treated as the garden itself; ‘virtual watering shifts’ were organised fortnightly which involved checking the email account and publishing the contents. Thus, *Huerto La Revoltosa* began calling assemblies, parties, meals on the plot and meetings with the district’s neighbours associations. It also narrated the administrative journey aimed at obtaining the cession of the plot and offered information on the history of the space via Blog posts. But *Huerto La Revoltosa* also existed ‘as a self-managed community garden of neighbours’ participating in the meetings of the Madrid Urban Garden Network on the latter’s website and was included in the Wikimap of urban gardens in Madrid. Moreover it was mentioned in eco-friendly publications and conferences that discussed the growth of urban gardens in Madrid, in the meetings of architects and urban planners debating citizen initiatives aimed at appropriating public spaces, in the meetings of the District Council where we were supported or condemned and in meetings where the Plan to regulate urban community gardens in Madrid was discussed. This Plan was finally approved in the summer of 2014. *Huerto La Revoltosa* was not among the 17 gardens that were legalised.

In short, between October 2013, when it was dismantled, and February 2014 the garden lived a virtual existence, updated in a variety of ways, both analogue and digital. This virtual existence made *Huerto La Revoltosa* no less real (Lévy 1999: 11).

*La Revoltosa del Pasillo Verde* formally became a neighbours association on paper. The update that followed did not result from the vain attempts to achieve a temporary cession of the plot. On the contrary, it resulted from a new slow occupation of the plot that aimed to start a new stage in keeping with the pace of its participants’ daily lives and their personal wishes and desires. In its reappearance as a garden, *La Revoltosa del Pasillo Verde* has gradually moved away from the frantic ‘aggregation logic’ of social media practiced when it existed only virtually (Juris 2012). It has resumed an online/offline activity based on a closer ‘connective logic’ (Juris 2012) maintaining and intensifying contacts with specific agents that are mainly located in the District and are considered to be ‘more akin’ and ‘useful’. This connective practice has been carried out in accordance with a wish, often stated in informal conversations and in the assemblies, of not imposing organisational paces or production processes that belong to environments and agents that have ‘different motivations’. Ana, a 45-years-old language teacher, expressed this position clearly during a work meeting attended by three people. As I complained about the low level of participation; she said, ‘well... the thing is... none of us have a professional dedication to or expectation of the garden, we come here because we feel like it. Sometimes it feels like certain drifts set the pace; an ambition of doing things, of being everywhere; it doesn’t need to be like that, right?’

*La Revoltosa* reawakened at a pace consistent with being interpreted as something ‘from the neighbourhood’ and it was continuously monitored through active listening, a position made necessary by its previous dismantling. With this in mind, for instance, the production is done by compact work shifts in order to avoid the feeling of a space in a continuous state of ‘work-in-progress’. A more homogenous outlook has lessened the feeling of precariousness and ephemeral infrastructure. However, *La Revoltosa* continues to reflect the reality of being

somewhat amateurish, built with scarce resources by several hands through ‘copy/pasting’ prototypical objects from here and there.

## Conclusions

The blooming of urban gardens in Madrid is acquiring significant visibility and impact, bringing about relevant changes in the relations between the administration and civil society. Urban gardens are part of the political and associative artefacts or political assemblies (Latour 2005b) that bring together new and old citizens’ claims for participating in the management of urban resources, rekindling traditional figures such as ‘neighbour’ and ‘community’. Technological and digital mediations appear as a practically banal fact. However, they are important in these processes, configuring what I have called the imagery of a ‘sentient’ city. They play a role in the way in which we conceive the city, in the different forms of appropriation of and claims on the public space and their legitimacy, and even in associative local dynamics.

The relationship between technologies and humans can be better understood as a ‘shared agency’ (Latour 2005a), which is not without complexity, contradictions and unwanted effects. In their actions, human agents attach spurious meanings to ICTs and make use of them in ways for which they have not necessarily been designed. In turn, through their design and functioning, ICTs establish dynamics, logic and relations that are unexpected by humans. In this regard I have highlighted three key processes. On the one hand, I have discussed how traditional relationships such as ‘community’ and ‘neighbourhood’ are produced remedially (Bolter and Grusin 2000) through the analogue and digital process of appropriating a plot of land and producing *Huerto La Revoltosa*. They act as coordinates of a concern that is both affective and political about what is public and common; of what, located in the lived space of the ‘neighbourhood’, confers the right of use and management. Thus, they legitimise appropriation of the public space as urban commons, reinventing and updating the community urban values of coexistence, implication and care which belong to the idealised past of neighbourhoods of the city which, as in the case presented here, are undergoing processes of gentrification. On the other hand, I have pointed out how the ‘connective logic of networking’ (belonging to mailing lists and Blogs) and the ‘aggregation logic of social media’ such as Facebook and Twitter (Juris 2012) have had significant effects on the remedial practices of the categories ‘community’ and ‘neighbour’. Using the Blog and the email was at the heart of people’s starting a process of collective identification, producing a sense of involvement as a ‘community’ and representing themselves as ‘us, the neighbours’, to themselves and to others. It has encouraged those who were most involved in the project to start building ties and connections with similar movements, organisations, groups and so on. As a consequence, the garden and the neighbourhood have become visible in the digital sphere of civil and political activity. It has also strengthened the demand for the open circulation of information and the practice of collaboration via decentralised (and not necessarily localised) coordination. Use of Facebook (and, later, of Twitter and of the change.org app) has fostered the coming together of actors as individuals and has been decisive at specific times; in particular at key moments of confrontation and negotiations with

the Town Council, when dissemination was necessary to gaining legitimacy and perpetuating the garden and to gathering a visible mass support that transcended the physical and strictly local space. However, the agents' expectation that digital technologies and applications would expand and maintain the active participation of the district's inhabitants was never met. Instead, these technologies have contributed to consolidate an extended online 'community' mainly based on political affinity, a community that is engaged yet dispersed across many different online and offline civil and political initiatives and that has engaged in little or no direct participation in the physical tasks carried out in the garden. They have also contributed to consolidate a 'community' that is actively involved with the garden but snugly closed in itself, giving rise to networks of online and offline emotion, affection and care as it maintains the garden.

As the fieldwork on which this article is based is ongoing, I continue to combine the roles of anthropologist and neighbour-activist. So far, I have been active in the physical and digital production of the urban community garden, while engaging in participant observation, in-depth interviews and online ethnographic follow-up. I have kept a militant stance in several contexts of discussion and decision-making without hiding my role as an anthropologist who is researching the process in which we are immersed. This has enabled me to learn various skills — especially online skills and the use of social media from a community activism perspective — in a process that I have shared with a variety of agents who for the most part are not expert activists; they are geeks, hackers, online journalists and other tech-minded citizens. For me, this has not only formed the basis for a reflective exploration of what it means to use ICTs in such settings; it has also been, as pointed out by Hine (2000: 70): 'a way of developing a richer understanding of the practices on which both production and use of artefacts in a Network is based'.



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## *The City in a Quarter: An Urban Village with Many Names*<sup>1</sup>

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Malasaña is an old neighbourhood of Madrid, a quarter with character, though with many denominations. To most Madrilenians, as well as to the hipsters who live there and to tourists, the quarter is known as Malasaña. For older, retired residents of modest means it is Maravillas. Yet, its official, and least known, name is Universidad. Whatever its name, this neighbourhood is not just home to a large variety of small shops, old and new, traditional and hipster, to mainstream franchises on its fringes and small, specialized commercial spaces, old bars many without charm and innovative ones in old buildings; Malasaña is what Jane Jacobs (1961) would call an Urban Village. This article has two main goals: to show how, while maintaining some old charms, the urban village of Malasaña has been reconfigured by the new micro cultures of alternative groups, creative classes, hipsters and visiting suburbanites. It also intends to show how this bottom-up transformation connects with global trends found elsewhere. There are two major dynamic drives in this neighbourhood; one from within — the traditional, old quarter with a distinctive mix of population, the other from without — the transient (but key) inhabitants of the current service-oriented urban realm, mostly youth from other areas of the city and the suburbs and tourists. As a metropolis, Madrid is a good example of emergent practices related to the social, cultural and economic dimensions that reshape a vital, singular place of the old city. It is also a good case study in dealing with the global and local processes that shape the contemporary city.

**Keywords:** Madrid, Malasaña, Urban centrality and regeneration, Madrilenian Scene (*la movida*), Hipsters.

*Sometime ago Malasaña was Maravillas.  
Today they are two neighbourhoods in one,  
Maravillas during most of the day,  
Malasaña by night.  
(Juan)*<sup>2</sup>

### **An Imaginary Stroll Through Two Neighbourhoods**

We are in one of the old quarters of Madrid, bearing witness to how this area, generally known to its inhabitants as Maravillas, becomes Malasaña late in the day. It is now morning, most shops are open and the people in the neighbourhood, most of them old, are buying groceries and doing their errands without haste. They stop on the sidewalks, even in the road, to chat with acquaintances, and they talk with shop-assistants and the bar owners. Their small talk can be heard from the other side of the street. Here, the traditional shops are disappearing and the cherished *ultramarinos*<sup>3</sup> and other grocery stores are gone, replaced by the so-called

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<sup>1</sup> Project *Madrid Cosmópolis. Prácticas emergentes y procesos metropolitanos* (MINECO, CSO2012-33949).

<sup>2</sup> Juan, interview made on 24 July 2014. In this article I use pseudonyms for the people I mention. I have maintained the confidentiality of all my sources. I owe them a great deal and I hope that their trust and patience will be honoured in these pages. Thank you.

<sup>3</sup> *Ultramarinos* literally translates as ‘Beyond the seas’. These were grocery shops that sold salted dried cod, canned foods, beans, spices and foodstuffs that originated from beyond the Atlantic Ocean and were not sold in the fresh produce street markets.

‘Chinese’ shops.<sup>4</sup> These shops are thought to be owned or run by Chinese people and are open most of the day and night. Small supermarkets, branches of the big suburban hypermarkets, are opening throughout the neighbourhood.

In the smaller, narrow streets passers-by can hear birds chirping and the sun appears briefly on one of the sidewalks. This is not a car-friendly area. Over the last few years, some of the streets have been pedestrianized and there is not much parking space. Some of the streets are clogged with cars and small delivery vehicles. In spite of these changes, it is difficult and inconvenient to walk along the streets where cars are parked. The fronts of most buildings show the design of modest homes, in many cases rejuvenated and clean. If one watches from the sidewalk, it is not difficult to see signs of home renovation. There are many bags of debris, and passing by them we can hear, through the windows, the noise of the work mixed with the voices of the stone masons.

The neighbourhood shows clear signs of being one of the oldest quarters of Madrid. The physical backdrop was born of the topography of the land and shaped by the roads that connected the centre of the city to the surrounding villages. Maravillas, like many towns and old quarters of Spanish cities, is named after the main church attended by their inhabitants; this is the Iglesia de los Santos Justo y Pastor or de las Maravillas, built in 1620. Some of the street names are reminders of past crafts, features of the land that disappeared long ago, or apocryphal stories today known by few people.

The street patterns, the older convents, churches and palaces — whose origins can be traced to the seventeenth century in Maravillas — shape the layout of this quarter, partially transformed and unified by the regular and symmetrical structure of nineteenth-century housing buildings. Behind the walls of the older buildings, gardens can sometimes be seen, but more generally they can only be glimpsed from their gates; the presence of still other gardens lying concealed behind high walls can only be guessed by looking at tree branches overhanging the street. The morphology of the neighbourhood attests to a time when all classes and kinds of citizens shared the same space. Yet, despite these landmarks being still inhabited, the neighbourhood shows traits both of a modest, working-class lifestyle and of a bourgeois class-oriented one. There are no public gardens in this neighbourhood, some of its streets are tree-lined, and its seven public squares, some of them with real charm despite recent modifications, accommodate benches and small play areas for children. In some of the squares, like Plaza Juan Pujol, the benches seem to be designed to prevent socialization as they accommodate just one person and do not face other benches. In other squares, such as Plaza Santa María Soledad Torres Acosta, one finds backless, uncomfortable benches lining the sides of the pedestrians’ space. In spite of these difficulties, in these squares people enjoy meeting and talking with their neighbours. In these squares there are also people who are difficult to classify: Spaniards and foreigners who spend their days loitering around those few

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<sup>4</sup> These shops are bargain and convenience shops where anything can be bought anytime. They are a kind of corner stores that serve both the basic needs of people in the neighbourhood and those of the evening and night visitors, typically selling them cheap soda and alcoholic beverages.

neighbourhood benches and corners. Outside the supermarkets, there are beggars waiting for alms or food.

The premises of a different kind of local life, that called Malasaña, begin late in the morning. At this time of the day Maravillas and Malasaña share the same space. At this time of the day traditional shops are joined by so-called 'modern' businesses, the kind usually referred in the academic literature as post-modern, open their doors and terraces to a different kind of customers. These are shops and restaurants offering varied and creative meals; they are also cafés established in the 1970s, stores selling or serving beverages, juices, cupcakes and salads and bars offering dishes that mix different international culinary traditions. There one can watch students, liberal professionals, people making deals in different languages, tourists, writers and generally people free from the traditional office schedules. The bars and some old warehouses, miraculously still standing, cater to a clientele whose social profiles change through the day. At mealtimes, the fast-food joints come alive, as do the designer, ethnic and health-food ones and the nondescript Spanish bars, which some call 'old people bars' where 'traditional' customers meet during the day. In most of these bars there is a mixed clientele. In the mornings, afternoons and early evenings, people from Maravillas and workers of the area outnumber those of Malasaña; in the late evening up to the small hours of the morning, most customers are visitors and local people who have a Malasaña's lifestyle.

In the quieter streets of the area, we observe a peculiar mix of shops and businesses. For example, la Calle de la Madera (Wood Street), combine some surviving woodwork craft suppliers, an ironmonger, a china shop, a *droguería* (a shop selling cleaning products), an Art Gallery (Sabrina Ambrani), a Theatre Company (Yllana), a Comics Shop (Wonderland Comics), Kundalini Yoga, a Chinese Traditional Medicine establishment, and a well-known Vintage Café (Lolina) on the corner with Espíritu Santo (Holy Spirit) Street.

By afternoon, weather permitting, some changes in the people roaming the local streets begin to appear. Schoolchildren in uniform leave their Catholic schools; in their teens, they horseplay while walking home. The older neighbours, those inhabiting Maravillas, are decreasing in number; parents with children populate the few squares where there are playgrounds, cafés and bars. The 'creative class', still clearly visible on the outdoor terraces of the fashionable premises of Malasaña, is now joined by bohemians visiting the 'traditional cafés' established in the 1970s. These cafés revived the *tertulias*, traditional informal social gatherings where participants debate literature, philosophy, social or political issues. While waiting for friends in the Café Manuela, customers can play board games supplied by the owners.

At the tables of bars and cafés, people doing business on laptops and tablets visible to passers-by are now being replaced by *tertulianos* and by lounging tourists carrying cameras or shopping. There are middle-aged, self-absorbed customers writing on their computers; readers; groups of friends and acquaintances talking without pressure about anything that come to mind. Outside, people sitting on the public benches speak or play guitar, while drinking from one-litre beer bottles (*litrona*) or drinking other alcoholic beverages hidden in

paper bags. These people do not fit the indie label, and their 1970s look should not be confused with that of hipsters or rockers.

After sunset, particularly during weekends and holidays, Malasaña blooms. Some streets are busier than during the day. Informal, now illegal,<sup>5</sup> street-drinking groups meet in public areas that are known to be less controlled by the police. These places are usually close to shops selling alcohol — sometimes, illegally, to minors — and pizza joints that are open till the small hours of the morning. So, Malasaña is now not only a space for the ‘creative class’; it is also a place for young people without resources who seek to enjoy a corner of Madrid with a special charm.

In the late afternoon opens the self-managed Multipurpose Space Patio Maravillas.<sup>6</sup> This is an ‘occupied’ building offering local people and visitors a varied and free range of alternative activities with a political critical perspective. Some of these activities are public art performances or leisure activities with a social dimension. Located near the Ministry of Justice,<sup>7</sup> the Patio denounces the inequalities and conflicts marring a neighbourhood of the historic centre of a city that in a few decades has become a polycentric metropolis oriented, as Juan said, around either squares or Multipurpose Malls in the suburbs.<sup>8</sup>

The evening is not just Malasaña’s prime time, a time internationally associated with the ‘Madrilean Scene’ (*Movida Madrileña*) of the 1970s and 1980s; it is also the time when the Malasaña side enters into conflict not only with people associated with the Maravillas district but also with the residents who wish to rest or want to enjoy a quiet time at home. Before the Madrilenian Scene made Malasaña famous (see Hector Fouce’s article in this Special Issue), Malasaña’s name was used by a kind of local people who are less conspicuous now. In the late 1960s and early 1970s<sup>9</sup> newly created neighbourhood

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<sup>5</sup> The law known as *Antibotellón* law (Law 5/2002 of 27 June on Drug Dependency and other Addictive Disorders) was approved in 2002 by the Community of Madrid and, among other objectives, it was aimed at stopping the huge social gatherings to drink in the streets, parks and public spaces. For the critics, these repressive measures are aimed more at tax collection device than at education and social control; see:

<http://www.madrid.org/wleg/servlet/Servidor?opcion=VerHtml&idnorma=2694&word=S&wordperfect=N&pdf=S>, accessed on 13 June 2015.

<sup>6</sup> <http://patiomaravillas.net/epa/funcionamiento> (home page), accessed on 13 June 2015.

<sup>7</sup> At the time of writing, the police have evicted the Patio Maravillas from the old building. On the same day the ‘Patio’ occupied another building which is not far away from the original one and has been squatted for seven years. In one surprising political twist, one of the persons related with Patio Maravillas is now Councilman of the newly elected Madrid Council. The Patio Maravillas has, however, been evicted again. Perhaps this time the Patio Maravillas will get a public space owned by the Madrid Council ...

<sup>8</sup> See Romina Colombo’s article in this Special Issue; Sara Sama also deals with neighbours and activism.

<sup>9</sup> The last two decades of Franco’s dictatorship (1955-75) were characterized by major policy changes and growing unrest among the Spanish population. The economic policies pursued by ‘technocratic’ governments composed of members of the Opus Dei and reformist politicians opened the country’s boundaries. The poor inhabitants of the countryside migrated to the major Spanish cities, such as

associations took the name Malasaña to challenge a plan of renovation and the planned Gran Vía Diagonal (Boulevard Main Street) involving the demolition of an important number of houses, the eviction of the inhabitants, and the destruction of part of the historic heritage of the neighbourhood. This project was opposed also by the Guild of Architects and by the Chamber of Commerce of Madrid.<sup>10</sup> These movements, indicating a social and political change in the neighbourhood, are what gave the area its new name: Malasaña.<sup>11</sup>

### How Many Neighbourhoods in a Quarter?

The neighbourhood of Maravillas or Malasaña does not appear in any official map of Madrid. In our imaginary stroll around the Malasaña area we go through La Palma Street and encounter the Church of Maravillas in a quarter whose official name is Universidad (University).<sup>12</sup> However, in the present discussion, I will not deal with the whole administrative neighbourhood of Universidad,<sup>13</sup> which includes both Maravillas and Malasaña

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Madrid and Barcelona, and to other European countries (France, Germany, Switzerland and Belgium). Spain became a tourist destination for people from more affluent, democratic European countries. The impact of tourism was not only economic, but also social and cultural. During those years illegal and clandestine trade unions and political parties became increasingly active and visible. Franco's death in 1975 started the Spanish Transition to democracy. An invigorating optimism and internationalization set the country in motion. Terrorist activities by extreme right- and left-wing parties and by Basque separatism hit hard. Three years later, Spain approved a Democratic Constitution. From a legal perspective, the Spanish Transition ended in 1978; yet, for many scholars it ended in 1982 with the victory of the opposition party in the general elections. A few months earlier, a failed *coup d'état* showed both the fragility of the democratic system and citizens' commitment to democracy.

<sup>10</sup> See <http://www.somosmalasana.com/la-gran-via-diagonal-el-plan-que-casi-acaba-con-el-barrio/>, published online on 11 January 2010, accessed on 13 June 2015. In an excellent article, the recently deceased Moncho Alpuente, a resident of Calle del Pez, described the speculative forces and interests outside the neighbourhood who struggled to make a business of it:

[http://elpais.com/diario/1988/12/28/madrid/599315056\\_850215.html](http://elpais.com/diario/1988/12/28/madrid/599315056_850215.html), published on 28 December 1988, accessed on 13 June 2015. On neighbourhood associations and the neighbourhood movement, see Observatorio Metropolitano (2007, 2009, 2014) and Pérez Quintana and Sanchez Leon (eds 2008).

<sup>11</sup> *Malasaña* was the name of a popular heroine who rebelled in this Madrid neighbourhood against the Napoleonic occupation. Manuela Malasaña was a young embroiderer, daughter of a French baker, Jean Malesange, so its surname is a French surname phonetically transformed into the Spanish Malasaña. However, the adoption of the name by the fighting neighbours is related to a game called *mala saña*, which means 'bad fury' or 'excessive cruelty'.

<sup>12</sup> Among other things, in my field notes I describe walks, anecdotes, reflections, interviews and other information collected over nearly a year of part-time fieldwork. However, it is worth mentioning that the scenes that I describe here are not invented; I have written up events registered during my fieldwork.

<sup>13</sup> The Central District of Madrid is divided in six wards (*barrios*); they are the Palacio, Embajadores, Cortes, Justice, University (Malasaña) and Sol. According to the census of the City, the Central area has 134,271 inhabitants, of which 31,412 correspond to the University neighbourhood (November 24, 2014). It is the second district in terms of population density.

as well other areas, and is delimited by the streets Gran Vía, Fuencarral, Sagasta, Carranza, Alberto Aguilera and Princesa.

This is the first time that my research deals not only with two overlapping neighbourhoods, Maravillas and Malasaña, but with a third one, Universidad. It is not uncommon that neighbourhoods delimited by the symbolic boundaries established by residents and visitors overlap and that some of their spaces may be in conflict; the turf wars in American cities come, for example, to my mind. Yet, it is unusual to deal with a single neighbourhood resulting from the combination of two clearly differentiated neighbourhoods. Juan, the informant whom I quoted at the beginning of this article, pointed out this dual nature, which is clear to a careful observer. So far, neighbourhoods like Maravillas or Malasaña were simply classified as ‘diverse’, a concept that I found empirically unhelpful.

Place names also show the diversity of the neighbourhood: Santa Maria Soledad Torres Acosta and San Ildefonso squares are respectively commonly known by the names ‘Luna’ or ‘Grail’. These variants are not, of course, unanimous. The name Grail is related with a bar that used to be in the square and characterizes the festive side of the area, which is unacceptable by those who aim for a less commercialized neighbourhood. Other unofficial denominations, such as Sad Street or Happy Street (attached respectively to Calles Espíritu Santo and San Vicente Ferrer) exemplify how certain groups name the key streets of ‘their’ neighbourhood.

José Manuel,<sup>14</sup> is a working-class third generation Malasaña’s native. He recalls his life in the neighbourhood as a teenager at the time of the *movida* and clearly defines Malasaña’s boundaries; they are, the Carranza Boulevard, and the streets San Bernardo, Fuencarral and Pez. This area is much more limited than the official Universidad neighbourhood. Beyond Fuencarral Street and Carranza Boulevard lie the bourgeois and wealthy world of expensive markets and other businesses, rarely visited by local people like José Manuel. Carranza, at the edge of the neighbourhood, was also the boulevard where his mother walked during the holidays, hobnobbing with the wealthier neighbours who lived beyond her world. Pez Street was the limit to ‘something else’, an underworld of slums and prostitution. A little further, the Gran Vía is a strange place, ‘like Mars’, ‘a kind of Manhattan in Madrid’. Not all border-crossings were threatening. José Manuel said that by crossing the San Bernardo Street he had a chance of ‘getting out’ of a hopeless life. Beyond the San Bernardo Street were the ‘good’ Catholic schools and State education Institutes that allowed people like him not only to flee the poverty common to the area but also to escape the drug abuse that was devastating a formerly active and exciting situation of political, social and cultural unrest. According to José Manuel, Malasaña was a place marked by political tensions. It was a central place that moved from a class struggle taking place in the streets of the Madrilenian Scene and from the ravages caused by drugs to an exciting night venue that is home to a new subculture, the hipsters.

The *movida* was ‘something else’ to both those who had fought Franco’s regime and the old inhabitants of the neighbourhood. The *Madrilenian Scene* has been claimed to be a

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<sup>14</sup> José Manuel is a third generation locally born *Malasañero* (meaning ‘from Malasaña’) who does not live in the neighbourhood (April 20, 2015).



consequence of the disillusionment with the political utopias fought for by elder people, and of the 'needed urge' to stretch the boundaries of the recently gained but still fragile freedom. What began as a festive and creative outburst was followed in the neighbourhood, José Manuel told me, by drugs.<sup>15</sup> According to most of the people to whom I have talked, it was a kind of holiday season enjoyed by the children of an expanding middle class who had time, some money and a willingness to enjoy freedom. To José Manuel, drugs and alcohol turned his neighbourhood into a nightmare where most people of his generation died of drug addiction or had a miserable life as survivors without hope. The destruction of his generation and the transformation of the life in the neighbourhood is also visually testified by the disappearance of businesses related with the social fabric and life of Malasaña, such as cafés, Oven Shops (bakery stores selling pastries), the old corner stores and crafts shops. José Manuel also described how the residents felt puzzled about the arrival of new businesses that they found hard to classify, such as a Latin American crafts store and gift shops.

During those ebullient years I was not far in time and space from José Manuel's Malasaña. He lived the transformations of Malasaña from within. I was younger, and that neighbourhood without clear boundaries or names was to me one of the urban central spaces of my coming-of-age; unlike José Manuel, I experienced it from without. We both sought to leave our neighbourhoods and did so when we grew up. I began to explore Malasaña with my friends; it was a space of realization and transgression, of coming-of-age and becoming a citizen. It was, and still is, a place of mischief and personal realization. Also from this point of view Malasaña is a central place.

In the mornings and evenings, the neighbourhood was clearly — what I was later to learn — Maravillas. Seedy, old, fascinating premises; cheap bars; traditional shops such as rope-mills, shops selling candle, dairies, groceries, haberdasheries and carpentry but also cabinet-making and old or decaying factories. These 'institutions', which shaped the neighbourhood, were already disappearing; they spoke of the very same world that is still vanishing today. For example recently I realized that the Children's Shoe Store Penalva, one of the 'oldies', was gone.<sup>16</sup>

The night was, then, very different from today's buzz which I have described earlier. Then, there was little activity in the area. Only La Palma street and some premises around the Plaza Dos de Mayo began to show signs of change. I connected with Malasaña in a mediated way, by following what was going on outside Spain in music and culture and more generally by listening to innovative and revolutionary radio programmes, such as *El Buho Musical* (The Musical Owl),<sup>17</sup> which was broadcast every weekday from 11 pm to 2 am. Radio hosts, such

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<sup>15</sup> A disruptive role was played by the pervasive presence of drugs in the creative and festive Madrilenian Scene, a phenomenon that helped transform the Spanish identity.

<sup>16</sup> This news of the closure of the nearly century-old shoe-shop, emphasizes that there are currently only two businesses in Pez Street opened before the Civil War: *La Moda* (in 1896) and *Bar El Palentino*. See, <http://www.somosmalasana.com/cierra-penalva-la-ultima-zapateria-de-la-calle-pez/>, published 13 November 2013, accessed 12 June 2015.

<sup>17</sup> See: <https://balbinoruiz.wordpress.com/tag/el-buho-musical/> or <http://de4a3.blogspot.com.es/search?q=el+b%C3%BAho+musical>, accessed 11 May 2015.

as Paco Pérez Brian and Rafael Abitbol, acted as musical guides who helped us to broaden our musical tastes, which were no longer confined to the Latin American, politically-oriented songwriters cherished by our older friends, brothers and sisters. Those years we lived with hope, but there was also a darker side. There were police repression and attacks by far right para-military groups on neighbourhoods associations, bookstores and individuals who dressed or behaved suspiciously; who were, that is, pro-democracy or leftist. Some young activists were killed by the police or by these para-military groups. We carefully avoided these risks but were still exposed to some minor risks, such as receiving a beating because our appearance was 'suspicious'.

The transformations that this central area was experiencing in those years were not limited to political democratization; there were also parallel social and economic changes related to an increasing economic growth. These emergent trends were associated with the metropolization and internationalization of Madrid. Malasaña was becoming a kind of blueprint for what was coming for the rest of the country, it was also a space deteriorated by those very same transformations. On a social level, there were tensions among the old neighbours of Maravillas, the new ones of Malasaña and the increasing number of people enjoying the *movida*. This is, from my point of view, one of the characteristic traits of the old central areas of cities that became metropolis. No matter how polycentric the metropolis is, these redefined central areas play an important role in the key social, economic and international dimensions of the city. Maravillas is an urban village reshaped by a superimposed new urban village, Malasaña.

Juan described to me, not without irony, how Maravillas became the well-known neighbourhood of Malasaña.<sup>18</sup> When he arrived there, many young people moved in but the old residents still dominated it. The area was cheap and central, with some of the bars, cafés, bookstores, theatres and other premises once related with the Universidad Complutense,<sup>19</sup> now located a few kilometres away in the University City. He said that in the 1960s, before associations became a trait of the neighbourhood, the City Council tried to launch an aggressive plan of gentrification of the district by building a Gran Vía Diagonal of Malasaña; that is, a wide avenue connecting the Plaza de España with Alonso Martínez.<sup>20</sup> This new boulevard would force many residents to leave their homes, which would be torn down; many palaces and churches would also be destroyed. The opposition to this plan was very important. The Traders Association threatened to withdraw their money from the banks promoting such changes. This plan was finally rejected in 1980! The mayor who discarded this plan was Enrique Tierno Galvan, the same mayor who would later support *la movida*. He

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<sup>18</sup> Interview, July 24, 2014.

<sup>19</sup> The Universidad Complutense was established in 1499 in Madrid's neighbouring town of Alcalá de Henares. During the nineteenth century it suffered from closure ordered by the government, and from changes of location and name. In 1836 the University moved to Madrid and was named Central. It regained the name, Complutense in the 1970s. <https://www.ucm.es/resena-historica>, accessed 30 May 2015.

<sup>20</sup> Initially, this avenue would reach Glorieta of Bilbao. A proposal for it to reach Columbus Square was also soon discarded.

and the Council he led were quite controversial. Some critics argued that he took advantage of this alternative movement to launch a new image and identity of the city. By supporting the *Madrilenian Scene*, they said, he killed the alternative and independent dimension of the underground movement, thus contributing to turn it into just a burst of fun and ‘hedonism’.<sup>21</sup> Before that, Malasaña was also, as Susan Larson explains writing about the magazine *La Luna de Madrid*, ‘a revolutionary cultural project [which] began on the streets and in Madrid’s *popular imagination*’ (Larson 2003: 309). The continuous, movable feast ended with the end of the *Madrilenian Scene* of the 1970s-early 1980s. As I have mentioned, drug abuse and trafficking seriously damaged the neighbourhood, claiming the lives of a considerable number of protagonists of *la movida*.

In my view, there is a key event in Malasaña’s birth and transformation that brings together two different trends, the alternative neighbourhood and the cultural movements with the festivities, into a single process. As Carlos Osorio has argued (2014: 61), in 1976 the citizens’ movement had succeeded and had become involved in the organization of the popular neighbourhood festivities. On 1 May 1976, students, unaware that the Plaza del Dos de Mayo would be busy with a neighbourhood celebration, had called a ‘*jump*’ there.<sup>22</sup> One can only imagine the surprise of the students when they got there and were met by a *verbena* (street party). They chose to join the party. As Carlos Osorio writes, ‘It was the first massive party of Dos de Mayo. The following year, the youth party ended with a scene featuring a boy and a girl naked on top of the statue of Daoíz and Velarde’ (2014: 61).<sup>23</sup>

The image of the naked couple on the statue may be seen as marking the transition from a time of political struggle for freedom to a creative and festive period that would come to be called *la movida*. This image is etched in the memory of the neighbourhood and of the city; it synthesizes several years of underground *Madrilenian Scene*<sup>24</sup> that flourished against, or despite, the institutions and the political struggle. During those years, Malasaña gained a new centrality in the growing metropolis, in the country and internationally. No matter how

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<sup>21</sup> Fouce (2006) is an excellent source on the Madrid scene there (See also José Luis Gallero 1991). The memoirs and autobiographical accounts of some of the protagonists grew over time and are, along with novels cast in context, literary sources that deserve exploration. Among others, Max Aub, Arturo Barea, John Doe, Camilo José Cela, Rosa Chacel, Theophile Gautier, Carmen Martin Gaité and Benito Pérez Galdos wrote on that area of Madrid. These writers were joined later by new authors such as Ginés Esther or Miguel Rubio.

<sup>22</sup> ‘Jumps’ are surprise political demonstrations and protest actions. They were illegal and severely repressed by the police. People who were to participate in this ‘jump’ knew the time and place where they should be meeting to show their opposition to the regime. They were prepared to evade the riot police. The ‘jumpers’ arrived by different routes discreetly, made their claim and were prepared to flee as soon as the action became dangerous.

<sup>23</sup> Luis Daoíz de Torres and Pedro Velarde y Santillán were two officers celebrated as heroes who fought against the Napoleonic invasion in 1808.

<sup>24</sup> According to Larson, before 1981 *la movida* was a movement closer to *punk* and urban ‘tribes’ (2003: 309). The second stage was the coming of age a new cultural industry, and the third was a commercial expansion and internationalization.

exciting this new village was, it was a vulnerable neighbourhood. We all made it a central space that continues to hold a prominent position in metropolitan Madrid.

### **Malasaña: Paradoxes of a Central Space in the Metropolis**

Thus far I have deliberately built a narrative of a neighbourhood made up of three different neighbourhoods, Maravillas / Malasaña / Universidad. I have built a fragmented picture drawing on my fieldwork notes, walks, observations, interviews, documentary material and previous experience in the neighbourhood. This fragmented story wants to make visible a central space of a city that today is both part of and a response to the metropolitan area that has grown around it.

This strategy had the central goal of contrasting the hegemonic narratives on this area. A good example of such accounts is an Internet Play Ocio TV programme on Malasaña (*Somos Madrid*).<sup>25</sup> The expert hosting this episode described how *la movida* transformed this ‘nondescript’ neighbourhood into Malasaña. The programme displayed the usual nostalgia for the neighbourhood that was, while stressing its modern and creative identity. We are now familiar with the story of how a festive outburst of creative and festive energy, *la movida*, was followed by the ravages caused by drug consumption and trafficking among the young who participated in that movement and in the neighbourhood more generally. Ideological perspectives determine how these events are interpreted.

According to the aforementioned TV programme’s narrative, today Malasaña is a much better, safer neighbourhood. However, as I have tried to show, tensions are not new in this quarter of the city. The current assessed threats include the loss of Malasaña’s specific identity, gentrification and the transformation of the *village* into a hostile place for neighbours. In a short promotional video on Malasaña, the Madrid City Council highlights the following *values* of the neighbourhood: alternative, young, rogue, independent and rebellious.<sup>26</sup> For the City Council, at least in this video, the highlight of the neighbourhood are its modernity and alternative dimensions, not its traditional Madrilenian way of life (*castizo*) and a monumental and artistic heritage that can attract tourism. A well-known travel guide that promotes the top ten attractions of Madrid shows a route that crosses the neighbourhood of *la movida*.<sup>27</sup>

There are, however, many other stories that I have tried to bring out in the previous pages. They are as many as the local inhabitants and, just as important in a central neighbourhood like Malasaña, as the many visitors and passers-by. José Manuel’s narrative<sup>28</sup> pointed to tension, political struggle and decline, while Angeles,<sup>29</sup> another informant, described a nicer neighbourhood, intergenerational and socially varied. For her, the main traits

<sup>25</sup> See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mjy3uAwzMzE>, accessed 13 June 2015.

<sup>26</sup> This video was made by the City TV: esMADRIDtelevision:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=miEwCgBIfdU>, accessed 13 June 2015.

<sup>27</sup> A specific section is titled, ‘People and places of La Movida’ (Rice and Rice 2007).

<sup>28</sup> Interview, April 20, 2015.

<sup>29</sup> Interview, July 23, 2014.

of Malasaña were the shared public and private spaces, such as the *Café Comercial* where customers of different generations and economic levels used to mix.<sup>30</sup> The ‘genial’ architecture of the neighbourhood, Angeles points out, is one of its greatest assets. The buildings, according to her, have an ‘average’ quality and there people of different classes and generations mix. The building where she lived is a good example. She lived in an *exterior* home; the *exterior* being the part of building facing the street. These homes were bigger than the *interior* homes, which were affordable for people with more modest incomes. Angeles did not live far from José Manuel; only two hundred meters separated them. However, José Manuel’s house was one of several small apartments that shared a toilet on each floor and he remarked that in material and social terms the living conditions in his building were far from idyllic.

José Manuel recalls that his was a neighbourhood with dense social relations. Each local person had ‘her grocery shop’ where she or her children bought food and other household products. Buying elsewhere was considered a ‘betrayal’ of relations of mutual trust between the shop and the family. Shopkeepers did not speak well of their competitors, while emphasizing how well they cared for their customers. Women, in José Manuel’s world, could meet to sew and make clothes for their families; some used their skills to repair clothes for clients. Women controlled the use of private spaces at home; men worked outside and mingled in the public spaces of the street and the bars. While bars were essentially male spaces, cafeterias were more gender inclusive and late afternoon could be used for family meetings, particularly during the holidays. Both, Angeles and José Manuel, feel their way of life in this neighbourhood could be equated to that of a town. Their neighbourhood was, clearly, Maravillas by day, and Malasaña by night; albeit a Malasaña striving to define its destiny both from within and from without, with the arrival of young people who would take to the streets to proclaim ‘The Future is already Here’, as did the musical group Radio Futura of *la movida* with their thus titled song.<sup>31</sup>

What Radio Futura envisioned in their song was not what the people of Maravillas fought for and whose alternative perspective promoting a quiet village still stands today. My informant Paula,<sup>32</sup> who moved in a few years ago, explained to me that the neighbourhood believed in public spaces and defended them against institutions such as the City Council. According to her, today Malasaña is a neighbourhood organized around citizen associations and other groups like the *Patio Maravillas*. It seems to me that Paula chose to live in this neighbourhood, and likes it, because for her it is like a town where you can be anonymous and ecologically friendly and enjoy a gentle urban way of life. No matter how much the city has changed, it is still easy to find activist and political associations in the area. The *15-M Indignados* movement meets on Saturdays in the Plaza Dos de Mayo. During the weekends

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<sup>30</sup> On 27 July 2015, *Café Comercial* closed for good. Established in 1887, it was the oldest *café* in Madrid.

<sup>31</sup> This is one of the most representative songs of this musical group. See also ‘In love with the youth fashion’ (Radio Futura, 1980), and Hector Fouce’s book (2006) on this movement.

<sup>32</sup> Dialogue held on 16 April 2014; and interview of 18 July 2014.

self-organized citizen and neighbour activities, some children-oriented, take place in the Square. It seems that the years that have passed since the 1970s have not changed this trait of the quarter.

Maravillas/Malasaña is actually a social and cultural landscape generated by *la movida*. As I have already mentioned, this transformation began in the 1970s and was mostly a middle-class phenomenon. It was generated by the political disillusionment of the younger generations. Now the political utopias of those who opposed Franco were no longer something worth fighting for. The future was here; that is, here was the urge to experiment freedom and push the boundaries as far as possible at a time when strong civil liberties were not yet achieved (Fouce 2006: 29). During those years we witnessed the emergence of the so-called 'urban tribes'; that is, *moods*, *rockers*, *punks* and other subcultures that connected the younger generations with movements born in Spain. Class-conflict is hidden in these subcultures. Hard rock came from the urban periphery, the working class suburbs; Post Punk and New Wave came from urban middle-class youngsters with time and economic resources to make of the night their habitat.

The *Madrilenian Scene* was not limited to this central area of the city; it was part of a metropolization whose main feature was internationalization. One key aspect of this movement was its desire to live a present connected with the avant-garde in London and other leading cities of the West. The economic resources that allowed young people to travel to places like London and buy vinyl discs enabled them to develop a diverse local cultural movement connected to cultural trends and fashions from abroad. Spain had experienced forty years of isolation and was eager to know what was happening abroad. This was the time when Maravillas not only became radically transformed but became also a manifestation of Madrilenian identity and an international attraction. But this movement associated with Malasaña was controversial. It was criticized from a conservative perspective because it was 'hedonistic' (coded in academic terms as post-modern) and from a leftist, progressive one because it was not revolutionary. The first democratic mayor of Madrid during the political transition was Professor Enrique Tierno Galván, a socialist who welcomed these cultural movements. It helped him to take Madrid away from the dictatorships' grip. His policies, which remain a point of reference and a subject of controversy even today, marked the time when Madrid became a European capital (Spain joined the European Economic Community in 1986), an international city.

So, the international dimension experienced in Malasaña is related to the transformation of Madrid into a metropolis. The city expanded like an oil stain, incorporating nearby municipalities (Terán 1992; Juliá, Ringrose and Segura 1994; Monge 2002 and 2012). The functions of the old town changed for worse. Factories and office buildings became vacant in neighbourhoods such as Universidad (Malasaña/Maravillas); in the 1950s the Central University had moved out of the neighbourhood and decline was only predictable. Malasaña, the 'new' neighbourhood born out of Maravillas transformed this downward deterioration into a different, though uneven, success story. It is precisely the vulnerability of the

neighbourhood<sup>33</sup> that was turned into a positive asset by the new, young bohemians attracted by cheap, affordable houses and apartments. This transformation was made also possible by the centrality of this area in the emerging metropolis. Malasaña became not only a central public space, but also a dynamic setting developing economic activities usually related with metropolization (a knowledge-intensive, service-oriented economy): fashion, music, theatre, design and services were created by a new class that can be defined as entrepreneurial if one looks at the positive aspects, or precarious if we consider the impact of economic dynamics that have destroyed stable jobs. I will not enter here into the debate between those who consider this new economic reality as a creative class (Florida 2014) and those who see it as a necessity imposed on the younger generations by job shortage and insecurity.<sup>34</sup>

We have seen that the Malasaña's *movida* was a phenomenon mostly generated by people from outside the neighbourhood. We have also seen that it is a phenomenon inextricably linked to the processes of political transition to democracy and metropolization. And we have seen that it is a central space not only in functional terms but also in symbolic ones. I have shown how in Maravillas/Malasaña, two neighbourhoods and ways of life share the urban space. Maravillas's inhabitants buy a portion of their needs in the same stores as Malasaña's; both share services and public spaces, and all those living in the neighbourhood complain about the noise at night. Cafés are a key element of shared space in the quarter. Angeles<sup>35</sup> is well aware of this and sees cafés as key in shaping this 'village', which is characterized by such a diverse array of social classes and by cultural diversity and sub-cultures. In the *Café Comercial* she explained to me that she used to go there as a child, with her parents, to have an early-evening snack — a *merienda* — and then, years later, as a University student, to discuss politics with her friends. In the cafés the space is shared by elders, writers, artists, tourists and 'normal' customers — during the interview we were indeed sharing this space with them. Some of these cafés and traditional bars, serving the neighbourhood during the day, are the same places where young people go in the evening and during the night. Listening to all the people who have told me about the neighbourhood and their lives in it and about how the way they perceive other social and cultural groups of the Maravillas/Malasaña, I was struck by the unstable balance of interests that are interwoven in the daily life of this part of the city.

It is also striking that this neighbourhood, associated with modernity, dynamism and creativity and offering a balance between tradition and local adaptation to the latest international trends, was and continues to be considered a *vulnerable area*; that is, a neighbourhood 'in which all hope of upward social mobility, of overcoming their social condition of exclusion or close to it, is seen as extremely difficult to achieve. By contrast, it involves a perception of insecurity and fear of the possibility of a downward social mobility,

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<sup>33</sup> Vulnerability in the sense of a combination of substandard, cheap housing, high rates of unemployment and deficient social services.

<sup>34</sup> To learn more about this issue, from a comparative perspective between Madrid and Mexico City, see: García Canclini, Cruces and Urteaga (eds 2012).

<sup>35</sup> Interview, 23 July 2014.

of worsening of their current living conditions.’ (Hernández Aja 2007: 8). ‘Is it possible to assess Maravillas and Malasaña as both vulnerable and alternative, young, rogue, independent and rebellious?’ Yes, according to the City Council.<sup>36</sup>

Today *la movida* is not the dominant feature of Malasaña. A new subculture now embodies modernity, the hipsters. They have seized the popular imagination. Along streets like Velarde or Espíritu Santo, their presence is remarkable. They became a media phenomenon, approved and also detested by the same leftist groups who despised the *Madrikenian Scene*. Malasaña changes and, in turn, shows a significant continuity with the Malasaña that ‘gave’ this place its name and ‘placed’ these streets on the metropolitan and international maps. Hipsters are different from the people who made *la movida*; yet both aim to connect with international trends in local ways. Both emphasize individuality through fashion and both make use of a not very politically-oriented culture. Unlike the protagonists of *la movida*, who were not originally a business-oriented subculture, hipsters are entrepreneurs who are generating a new fabric of economic activity, including restaurants, cafés and modern design establishments. During the day, hipsters can be seen working on their tablets and Macs (I have not yet managed to see a hipster using another computer brand). Theirs seem to be what I call an ‘augmented sociability’; that is, a kind of personal interaction that combines physical presence with the presence offered by social networks, and by the Internet and mobile telephones. The younger generation who began meeting in Malasaña to discuss, talk or engage quietly in the ‘new’ cafés, like the *Manuela*, the *Ruiz* and the *Parnasillo*, does not seem to follow this pattern; but they could be also seen as embodying a new kind of sociability that adds to the dense social and cultural fabric of Malasaña. These cafés recovered a nineteenth-century tradition, adapted it to the new winds of political change and attracted an intergenerational clientele. Like many other social or culturally oriented businesses, these are essentially inclusive spaces. Some are patronised by people connected with the outside, who combine chatting in the cyberspace with talking with people at their table, nearby customers, waiters and the people who appear on their screens. This happens in hipster premises, too, and is a good example of how a neighbourhood may accommodate various trends. Perhaps this unstable nature is entangled in the neighbourhood’s *panopticon* dimension. We are watched and watch others. In Malasaña, the global has become local, and vice-versa. Malasaña, as a popular Spanish song says, has a special, metropolitan, emergent and traditional character, not properly described by the popular terms of globalization, theming, gentrification or commodification, although they all relate to dynamics that can be observed here.

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<sup>36</sup> See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=miEwCgBIfdU>, accessed 13 June 2015.



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## *The Sound of the Digital Global City*

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Madrid has been the centre of the Spanish musical scene and industry since the 1980s, when *la movida* became a metaphor for the new colourful, young and cosmopolitan country that was established with the arrival of democracy. The city is basically a place, but this sense of place started to crash with the arrival of digital music. In the new paradigm, intermediaries were supposed to disappear and music was something contained in networks and computers. The question now is how to integrate digital music — a nonphysical, individual experience — with the way in which Madrid is lived in musical terms. With the advent of digital music, concerts became the primary source of income for musicians. The centrality of the gig can be understood as confirmation that we are living in an economy of experience. This centrality also reorganized the way in which music is produced and consumed. Records are produced in order to create the opportunity of a musical event that can be promoted in social networks and media; concerts are the places where musicians construct their fans' communities and are the places where records are sold, not a way to know the band but to demonstrate the support for the band. I suggest that to study the place of music in the process of metropolization in Madrid we need to understand music as a field of tension.

**Keywords:** Global city, Madrid, digital music.

### **Introduction: Digital, Urban, Global**

Urban anthropology has changed the way in which we observe and understand the city. For decades, the city was considered just a space, a territory full of buildings, streets, transportation and economic dynamics that determined the way people lived. Now, we know that the urban experience is something more than inhabiting a city and we know that although many urban dynamics cannot be observed in the streets they are intrinsic parts of city life.

Let us consider the case of music. For many people, the only way to see the relation between music and city life is to watch live music, including musicians playing in the streets or parks, observe the venue scene, the music festivals and the youth subcultures related to particular neighbourhoods. Most listeners will disregard the link between city life and their consumption of music played on the computer or the mobile phone. Right now, music is non-material, ethereal and invisible. There are no records anymore; there are less record shops and they do not have the social relevance that they had in the past. It seems we now live a digital life and a different, material life, and that only the latter links us to the city.

Digital practices are modelling how we experience music in the city. All the records shops that have recently closed were incapable of competing with piracy and i-tunes. Street musicians recorded and sold their own CDs. The ways they rehearse and communicate with their fans have a digital footprint, although these activities are performed in an urban, material environment.

In the present discussion I try to identify the link between digital music and urban life on the basis of my ethnographic research in Madrid's independent (indie) music scene. Although Madrid was represented as a global city (Sassen 2001) at the time of the economic crisis of 2008, it became a truly global node only when protesters camped in Puerta del Sol on 15 May 2011. Madrid's identity is being determined by the tensions between two economic and social models — that of intensive capitalism and that claiming to represent the needs of

the ‘99 per cent of the population’.<sup>1</sup> I will argue that the music scene has made visible some contradictions of the new urban model and has anticipated discourses and arguments that appeared in the *15-M* protests.

### Local Space in the Age of Digital Music

In November 2011, a focus group with 12 youngsters was organized in the framework of a research project on youth and urban culture (García Canclini, Cruces and Urteaga 2012) in order to discuss the ways in which these were connected to music. Since most participants were music lovers, it is not possible to generalize their experience, but it was clear that they preferred to invest their money in attending live music events rather than in listening to recorded music. Although many recognized that ‘when I download music from the web is like I’m missing something’ and said that their ideal would be ‘to buy a record player and make a wide collection’, they concluded saying, ‘I have not the proper budget’. Then, they made a list of options for listening to music for free on the web, from Spotify or YouTube to classic P2P programmes, such as Emule or Ares. The group praised the advantages of the mobile phone (as opposed to the computer) for storing digital music, and recognized that ‘everything is now digital, but there are things that you want to own’. At one point, a male participant rummaged through his backpack, took out a USB device and said to the other members of the group, ‘look what a friend gave me today; it’s full of music. It makes me laugh.’ Everybody broke out in laughter, which grew in intensity as another respondent showed an even smaller USB device. The high-tech gadgets of some years ago are now risible. The dematerialization of music and its digital consumption is now a reality that marks the enjoyment and exchange of music, although nostalgic or purist positions do call for attention to the record as an object.<sup>2</sup>

The dematerialized consumption of music has created a monumental crisis in the phonographic industry worldwide, a crisis that is particularly felt in Spain. The end of 2014 marked a high point for the record companies, as the yearly sales data showed that for the first time in 15 years, the sales of records were higher than those of the previous year. The business is increasingly moving towards digital consumption, but the sale of CDs and DVDs reached 31.3 billion euros; that is, 7.9 per cent more than the previous year (29 million euros). This growth took place despite the radical fall in the volume of sales of DVD (30 per cent less than the previous year). The digital realm showed a similar trend, sales went from 24.5 to 25.9 million euros, an increase of 5.85 per cent (Promusicae 2014).

Corporate balance sheets apart, these figures reflect a change in the consumption of music. That records are sold and money is generated by downloads suggests that legal access grows with the increased offer of platforms. The physical market is based on a growing purchase of Premium products, and it seems that this sector is supported by adult consumers (SGAE 2014). But the growth in the consumption of music is mainly explained by the increase in subscriptions to streaming services (such as Spotify and Deezer). A new

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<sup>1</sup> This is a motto of the Occupy protests around the Western world.

<sup>2</sup> Records are always intended to be in vinyl, since it is generally assumed that CD is a dead technology.

generation of listeners, who never knew the pre-Napster models of production and consumption, has adopted streaming as a form of consumption. This generation does not value possession of musical media; it is interested in the immediate consumption; it wants to have access to the entire catalogue here and now. The diffusion of smartphones has provided the technological basis for this new kind of consumption, at the same time contributing to limiting illegal access. In this line, the correspondence should be noted between the growth of streaming music and the growth of subscriptions that allow access to music with no advertising interruptions and with other additional benefits (Fouce 2014).

It seems that, after three decades, the first great crisis of the music recording industry, generated by the arrival of digital services, has come to a close. To get an idea of the depth of that crisis, it should be noted that in 2001 600 million euros worth of records was sold in Spain. The ‘celebrated’ 2014 data show sales little over 100 million euros. Few economic sectors have suffered a comparable earthquake, although cultural sectors such as the cinema and, more recently, book-publishing, are experiencing a similar crisis.

However, a second crisis of the music sector is not yet over, as it is part of the general crisis that has affected Spanish society since 2008. In September 2001, VAT on cultural activities was increased to 21 per cent and during the first 12 months, ‘the income from concerts of popular music in Spain went from 206.5 million euros to 147.4 million euros: a decrease of 28.63 per cent. While state revenue increased by 13.3 million euros, the loss of revenue generated by personal income tax, corporate tax, Social Security... fell by 42.3 million’ (APM 2014: 17).

The dominant discourse during the rise of piracy argued for a new productive model that musicians should adopt in order to earn a living; they had to accept that record selling would not provide enough resources anymore and that live music would be the paradigmatic form of music business. A new environment was growing, far from the centrality of the recording.

As former EMI Executive Simone Bose pointed out, new bands used to record their first album without real musical skills, often hiring session musicians (Fouce 2006, Cruz 2015); only later, playing live gigs, they developed real skills. Musicians matured in front of the audience. Today a good live performance is essential to start and maintain a career in popular music, although the record retains importance as a way to organize time in popular music bands because it allows bands to mark milestones in their career and generate events to promote new productions that can then be published on social networks. These seem to be good reasons to keep playing live, now under the ‘new record tour’ label (Fouce 2011).

The reconstruction of the music industry through streaming services has not meant a return to the old model. There is no direct income from record sales that allows musicians to earn a living. The artist Le Parody made public the sales figures from different digital music platforms: 3067 reproductions of a song made 26.49 euros (0.007 euros per listener). We should consider that musicians cannot upload their music but need the services of an aggregator to do so; as in this case the aggregator charged 11 euros, the artist made about 15 euros. However, despite the poor economic results, the artists do not abandon these services.

As an artist said to me, ‘I knew that Spotify is a scam, but you have to be there because you have to be visible’. There is a problem of transparency, for there is no way to know the number of reproductions of a song. As Nando Cruz’s assessment of the Spanish indie rock shows (2015), this is a classical problem in the relationship between musicians and intermediaries of any kind. It is the fragmented digital consumption of songs as opposed to music records that generates these low profits. As Merino suggests, ‘The current system is aimed at the exploitation of large funds catalogue, not to promote new talents’ (Merino, quoted in Lenore 2014a).

The 1429 downloads of Le Parody’s record in digital format through Bandcamp generated 407 euros. Bandcamp allows listeners to fix the price they want to pay but they can also listen for free. In contrast, record selling at her concerts generated 700 euros (7 euros per disc). But the music activity of Le Parody is supported basically by revenues from concerts, amounting to 5,550 euros a year (Corroto 2013). These figures seem to support Anderson’s concept (2008) of a long tail economy in which the future is selling less of more and popularity no longer has the monopoly of profitability. The exploitation of those niches of consumption can be profitable for the owners of large catalogues, not for the artists.

The way out from the digital crisis was analogue, face to face and spatially located, but in intimate harmony with digital tools, allowing musicians to avoid record labels, recording studios, agents, promotion and so on. The musician Abel Hernández, who goes by the stage name El Hijo, points out that ‘right now, because of internet and communications in general, a musician can be much more effective as a booking agent or as his own manager. In older times you needed a specialist. I try to figure out how this work was done before, without mobile phones or internet access. One really needed to be a professional in order to access all resources’ (personal interview, 25 October 2011).

The disappearance of the contractual relationships with record companies or managers has been celebrated to exhaustion by musicians. The word ‘indie’ has indeed been used to describe the decision of some bands to publish their work outside the channels controlled by the industry. Historically, independent labels were born in Spain every time that a new musical scene emerged without support from the industry. This happened at the time of *la movida* (new wave) with labels such as DRO, GASA and Twins (Fouce 2006) and in the following decade (Cruz 2015), and it is happening today with the emergence of a new underground scene in Madrid (Gil 2015a). Independence is defined as a production model that works in perfect harmony with art’s aspiration to autonomy. It is also the centrepiece of a new creative class that rejects secure jobs (Florida 2012) based on established schedules and routine occupations to embrace self-employment; a creative class more concerned with their own vital interests than with having a fixed income.

Florida (2012) argues how this creative class emphasizes the fact that no large company or any other kind of institution will take care of creative workers. ‘Freelancing’, he points out, ‘carries considerable risk. The kinds of work you want might not be widely available, especially in a deep recession, and the assignments may not always pay well. Assuming you’re in demand, you have a choice: be selective about what you do and settle for less

money; or do a lot of things you don't really like, much as employees often have to do, and make more ... It takes more than a home office and a temporary badge to build a worker's paradise' (Florida 2012: 91).

To a good extent, independence is not an option; it is, instead, a necessity to make one's own way in a situation in which old intermediaries (managers, record companies, concert promoters and the media) have increasingly less weight. There is, however, still room for intermediaries in the musical world; they continue to be powerful actors. Also, disintermediation is not necessarily good news. In his review of the creative process of the record *Una semana en el motor de un autobús*, the album that launched the career of the band Los Planetas (a milestone in Spanish indie scene), Nando Cruz looks at the central role played by David Lopez, the AR responsible for the artistic management at the record label RCA. At least on two occasions the group wanted to travel to New York to record their new songs. David Lopez said no, believing that the new songs were not good enough to justify the expense. The band, who were having a difficult time both personally and creatively, were not happy but 'the only one who was meant, by contract, to speak clearly to J (singer and composer) was David Lopez. That was the art directors' main job: manage their groups, guiding their albums to success and, if necessary, be a contrary voice' (Cruz 2011: 94).

The absence of intermediaries places the artists directly in front of the public and reveals their creative processes, but sometimes the relationship between musician and listeners requires a certain level of intermediation. Musical creation and the decisions on how to manage it often require a point of view less immersed in the creative process in order to put things into perspective. The do-it-yourself model that is now widespread in the world of music has eliminated all those echoes that are needed in the musical voice. As the musician Manuel Sanz (of Cosmosoul) points out, 'musicians tend to be very involved in their inner world, in their own experience ... Apparently a very social person, a musician spends most of his or her time in a room, experimenting, researching ... and there is a very physical part: to study, to play in order to master your instrument, to be trained ... I think that artists also reach a level of detachment and of disconnection from reality. In fact, managers looked like strange people who were unrelated to the artist and the music, but who most times used to play the role of parents, friends ...' (personal interview, 20 October 2011).

So, the digitalization of music has produced a change in consumption and a decline in record companies' sales. It also has produced a radical reorganization in the relationship between musicians and listeners. Digital is no longer just a way to circulate the music; it is also the way in which music is recorded, managed and communicated. As I have said elsewhere (Fouce 2012), music has been the laboratory of a new culture, a mirror for other cultural industries, such as the film industry and book publishing. The new model that seems to work for musicians — entrepreneurial, autonomous, independent, multi-tasking; in one word, precarious — anticipates a production model that over the last ten years has become widespread. The uncertainty associated with this new model of life (Cruces 2012, Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011) goes beyond the field of cultural production. Most of the

political movements that have over the last five years marked the social and political agenda in Spain are rooted in the critique of this new social model.

As Esteban Hernández (2014: 14) explains in his analysis of the end of the middle classes, ‘in the last century, culture pointed out the fears, desires and beliefs of the common people in a very precise way and before any other social field. Culture was a tool for anticipation’. The style of life of the musician and the artist, who ‘seemed opposed to the productive world ... has become the inspirational centre of the new capitalism’ (Hernandez 2014: 14). In the same paradoxical way, because of its way of reorganizing the role of actors and the steps of the production chain, the digital domain has come to mark the experience of live music in the city.

### **Urban Life and Musical Practice: Inside the Madrid Independent Scene**

During the 1980s, when Spain embraced modernity after nearly 40 years of dictatorship, Madrid attracted some worldwide attention in popular music because of *la movida*. Heavily influenced by the punk and new wave fashions, the colourful hedonism of those years is a historical milestone, as pop and rock music was seen as an important part of living under democracy. Debates on what should be the role of music in the life of Madrid are based on nostalgia of *la movida*. It seems that, more than three decades later the city has not yet been able to develop an alternative musical imagination. Much of the discourses on music refer to an ideal confluence of different groups and musical styles that enjoy with plenty of spaces to play music, great media exposure and institutional support from the City Council. Against this nostalgic ideal (Méndez and De Cozar 2013), the reality is marked by music places monitored by the authorities and by a disinterest of the media in the local scene.

Two very different events have marked Madrid’s musical life in recent years. On the one hand, the death of five teenagers during a music party in Madrid Arena has served as an excuse for the local authorities to intensify control over live music in the city. On the other hand, the *15-M* camp in Puerta del Sol brought together the experience and aspirations of different groups, including some linked to music, and projected them into a process of imagination of a new urban reality. On 1 November 2012, during the celebration of a great festival of electronic music, five teenagers died at the exit of the Madrid Arena in a stampede following the collapse of a multi-purpose pavilion that was owned by the city of Madrid and managed by a private company. The sale of more tickets than allowed and insufficient security measures caused the collapse. Since then, the City authorities have implemented particularly strict policies on the use of all public buildings, and especially of concert venues. As manager Carlos Mariño said, ‘in Madrid we live in an atmosphere of paranoia. The Mayor didn’t solve the problem, but sought culprits quickly to put the issue to rest. They wanted him to do in a few days all the work he hadn’t done over the years’ (Lenore 2013). The restrictions put on music venues by the local authorities were not new in Madrid, but they reached their peak after the Madrid Arena’s tragedy. Since the city authorities are aiming to limit live music performances in central areas, there is no way to open a new venue or organize a concert in bars that are regulated by more limited licenses.



Javier Olmedo, manager of La Noche en vivo, the organization representing live music venues in Madrid, points out that these measures are creating empty spaces in the music venues. 'We have the best network of concert halls in Spain; good spaces, highly qualified professionals and the most strict regulations ... We are constantly under the eye of the City authorities' (personal interview, 20 March 2014). In 2012 it was decided not to have a new edition of The Primavera Club festival in Madrid despite its success because of the municipal restrictions that forced promoters to carry out safety studies of the municipal space Matadero. The director of the festival, Alberto Guijarro, complained that the popular music was 'marginalized and criminalized in a new way. We feel that music is not considered as a part of the culture. To have a festival you have to feel involved, and here in Madrid things do not flow' (Barranco 2012; online source)

Because of the administrative difficulties imposed on opening a legal venue a new music underground generation is emerging in Madrid which is largely inspired by the libertarian spirit of *15-M*. It should not be forgotten that the management of concerts has also changed radically in the last decade; most bands rent the venue and take the risk. As the musician Mario Zamora of the Luger said, 'People who attack the record companies often do not have a clue on how the mafia of the rental of venues works ...' (personal interview, 22 November 2011). Faced with this reality, some new venues have arisen in the underground spirit.

The journalist Pablo Gil has documented the dynamics and the actors of this new underground scene. He writes, 'Tickets cannot be purchased in advance. In some cases, prices are established by the listeners. It is sometimes impossible to find information on the web. The place, the day and time are announced by email or through WhatsApp. Concerts take place in warehouses in the periphery; these are broad and cheap spaces where no neighbours can be disturbed. No one knows exactly what one is going to find there, but while the official agenda of rock gigs is becoming shorter, the number of clandestine concerts in Madrid is increasing' (Gil 2015b). Place like La Faena II, located in a garage in the Suances district, the Planeta de los Watios in Tetuan or the Vaciador34 in Carabanchel are nodes of a network that disdains both public spaces and the privately-run venues.

All these new venues are located outside the city centre, where live music historically took place. As Fernán del Val (2014) has documented in his doctoral dissertation, there is a historical tension related to music venues in Madrid. During the 1980s the acclaimed *movida* took place mainly in central neighbourhoods, like Malasaña, one of the trendiest areas of Madrid city centre. The sound and discourses of *la movida* belonged to the same celebration of modernity as the discourse of the new Socialist Party, which was elected to both national and city government at the beginning of that decade. In contrast, the hard rock and heavy metal scenes developed in peripheral neighbourhoods of South Madrid, like Vallecas and Carabanchel. The discourse of heavy metal band emphasized the dark side of modernity, including unemployment, unrest, drug consumption and bad living conditions. Today, the tension between centre and periphery is higher as the central quarters (Malasaña, Chueca and Conde Duque) are criticised for being gentrified and full of hipsters while Vallecas and

Carabanchel continue to be identified with resistant discourses. However, the new underground music scene and the alternative political movement cannot be understood without considering the key role of places located in the city centre, like the Patio Maravillas (in Malasaña)<sup>3</sup> or the Tabacalera (in Lavapiés). Most of these spaces are self-managed and non-profit, and it is precisely in their management model that we found the *15-M* footprint.

On 15 May 2011 the protest of indignados in Puerta del Sol took place, establishing a new political climate marked by a critique of the traditional parties, the emergence of new parties rooted in the 2011 protest and the demand for more transparency and participation in the decision-making process. The origins of this new flow of opinion can be traced in the alternative and resistant movements that have emerged in Madrid over the last ten years, from teachers to medical staff and other public servants resisting budget cuts and restrictions on public services (Alvárez 2015). The *15-M* also contributed to inspire these new political actions. As it has been argued (Fouce 2012, Sanz and Mateos 2011), popular campaigns against digitalization were the first opportunity for young generation to engage in political participation, and the Puerta del Sol event is where it all started for most of them.

One of the achievements of *15-M* has been to re-establish, both ideologically and in practice, the importance of the collective. Part of the success of the 2011 protest is explained by its appeal to people with different political, generational and social backgrounds. As the artist Le Parody put it, ‘What cultural roots have I? As white middle class accommodated in a consumer society... there is nothing. But *15-M* gave me that, that view that there is a collective, that something new and strong is happening, something that influence that group I belong to and that configures me as a person’ (Lenore 2014b; online resource). This new identity is linked to a new set of practices and social relations.

The return to the underground in Madrid is related to where music is performed rather than to what the songs say. People set up music performances in garages, self-manage festivals, organize raves on empty plots; performances that vary from flamenco to *bakalao*<sup>4</sup> are organized in warehouses located in the periphery. The boundaries between musicians, DJs and the public are diluted. After *15-M*, everyone is doing something. Perhaps people are doing the same things they were doing before, but with a new forcefulness and urgency (Le Parody, in Lenore 2014b)

While the official discourse neglects both the existence and the impact of this underground scene on Madrid, these events — along with others not focused on music, such as the aforementioned Tabacalera and Patio Maravillas — are indeed generating new dynamics that contribute to reconstruct the cultural field in the wake of a deep crisis. While the reports on the state of culture in Madrid make no reference to the alternative spaces that I have described, they are incorporated in the practice of the city government. The recovered municipal cultural centre, Conde Duque, makes an exemplary case. After years of inactivity due to building work and the resignation of its director, the City Council appointed Isabel Hernandez, a public worker, as director of the centre. Corroto reports her saying, ‘To work at

<sup>3</sup> Fernando Monge’s article in this Special Issue deals with this neighbourhood.

<sup>4</sup> This is a kind of electronic music generally associated with the working class.

Conde Duque is to work with what's happening in the neighbourhood... I'm in a neighbourhood and I have to work with it and give it the importance that it deserves' (2015; online source).

One line of collaboration is with the choir Orfeon de Malasaña. This choir was created to give a yearly outdoors concert during the self-organized Festival of Malasaña. It is formed by the two choirs of the Patio Maravillas in Madrid, but is open to any choir or individual singer who wants to join the experience. As the Patio Maravillas is an occupied building in the heart of the neighbourhood, the Orfeon is based in a space at the margins of the public and the commercial. On 7 February 2015 the Orfeon de Malasaña met outside the usual dates to give a concert in the Auditorium of the Conde Duque, as part of the GastroFestival 2015, an initiative of the City Council organized in the private premises of Madrid Fusion. Malela Durán, one of the directors of the choral society, presented the event saying, 'it is a pleasure and an honour to play in a well-appointed Auditorium, where the voices do not have to be forced, where they do not compete with the urban noise. It is also a way to restore a public space to the district. Amateur singers also have the right to sing in top quality facilities, because these facilities belong to everybody' Isabel Hernandez declared that the Orfeon's presence 'dignified the Auditorium'<sup>5</sup>. The choir rehearsed on several evenings in the Auditorium (at other times they rehearsed in the courtyard of the building) in the presence of children and fans. The introductions to the songs included several allusions to the rise of new political alternatives and to the corruption of the Partido Popular,<sup>6</sup> as well as tributes to Siryza's electoral victory in Greece and criticism to the privatization of public services. All this happened in a festive atmosphere in which the chorus was generally listened to in silence. Thus, here was a self-managed initiative linked to an occupied centre and using public facilities in the framework of a privately-managed festival.

In spite of the emergence of new spaces and innovative dynamics, the live music scene in Madrid is marked by the two crises of music which I have mentioned. The yearbooks of the music industry (SGAE 2014, APM 2014) indicate an increase in the audience of live music performances. However, it is important to stress that the live music market includes venues and festivals, which work in very different ways.

Venues are feeling the weight of the crisis. In a context marked by the reduction of the number of concerts, and consequently of the number of spectators (in 2013 there were 393.297 less attendees than in 2012), the live music scene has lost quality and diversity. A venue manager explained, 'Obviously, when you reduce your programming from seven to three days, you ensure that in those three days you have good concerts, and that they are sold out. We try desperately to avoid risk' (SGAE 2014: Mpopular 7).<sup>7</sup> The lack of public is a problem that has grown over the years. Darío González, the owner of the El Buho Real venue explained that 'the real problem is the public, the word of mouth fails, there is no curiosity to discover new musicians'. He went on to say, 'This is a problem for musicians. The artist

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<sup>5</sup> This is a quote from the choral director speech to present the concert. I attended the performance.

<sup>6</sup> This party rules both in Madrid and nationally.

<sup>7</sup> This report has been published online and each part has a title.

needs the feedback of the audience. He presents his music to a live audience but at the same time he needs to get something back; he needs to check the response of the audience to continue composing. There is no such a thing as a bureaucratic artist.’ (personal interview, April 2009).

In various focus groups conducted in the last five years, young people identified the concert with the festival or the big event. ‘People I know attend these big concerts, the Viñarock,<sup>8</sup> for example’, said Miguel in 2011. In that conversation he mentioned also festivals such as Getafe en vivo — which took place in one of the biggest cities outside Madrid — Sonisphere — different editions take place in Swiderland and in Italy — and Wacken, in Germany. A venue manager said, ‘We are realizing that young people, who are our main audience, save money to pay 200 euros to see 200 groups in a festival but do not attend the daily schedule of the venues’ (SGAE 2014: Mpopular 3). The generation that grew up in an environment in which recorded music was free have not relocated their music consumption in small live music venues; they try to maximize their investment in the economy of experience.

So, one of the objectives of both public policies and of the various actors in this market will be to promote live music. It seems necessary to spread among young listeners the idea that a live music act is not necessary synonymous with a big event, that it can just be shared cultural experience in their daily life. Since the explosion of rock and roll in the 1950s, youngsters have been the main consumers and producers of popular music. Alaska, the great icon of Spanish musical modernity since the 1980s, was little more than a girl when she started to perform with her punk band Kaka de Luxe (Fouce 2006) and most independent bands of the 1990s were formed by teenagers (Cruz 2015).

However, bands like Grushenka, June y los Sobrenaturales and Mourn have not been allowed to perform at Madrid venues like Sirocco and Dick (both located in city centre) because of local regulations; people who are under 18 are not allowed to attend shows in places that serve alcoholic drinks. In the case of Mourn, people younger than 18 ‘shared the stage with the band of the father of two of them, but apparently in Madrid the presence of adults, parents or legal guardians, is not enough’ (Saavedra 2015; online source). It is strange that this prohibition of access only applies to live music venues in a country where bars are places for family and intergenerational socialization.

As an example, Javier Olmedo, Manager of LNEV, said, ‘a musician comes to give a concert accompanied by his under-age child who cannot enter the venue because alcoholic beverages are served there. Where can he leave the kid? No problem, he can leave the child in the bar opposite the venue, which also serves alcohol but does not have rules banning children’s entrance. Do you think that makes any sense? Would not be easier to allow in minors accompanied by adults or organize a colour-bracelet system indicating who can ask for a beer and who cannot?’ (personal interview, 20 March 2014).

In recent years concerts for teenage audiences in places such as the Palacio de los Deportes (now BarklayCard Centre) have proliferated. These places do not sell alcoholic

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<sup>8</sup> This is a popular festival of hard rock and rap music that takes place in Villarrobledo, a village in rural South Spain.

drinks and their programmes include boy bands, like One Direction or Justin Bieber, that ensure profitable box-office sales. However, as ticket sales do not generate sufficient income both the venues and the bands depend largely on bar sales to make a good profit. As Saavedra points out, 'Minority and underground places are suffering from these restrictions. There, a pop and rock gig is not understood as a cultural or even recreational event, but as a purely criminal act' (2015; online source).

Although for some time this problem has not been on the music scene agenda, the debate has been recently reactivated. As part of the Mad Mad festival held in June 2015, Radio 3, the public radio linked to minority music, has called a U18 competition for bands with members who are under 18. The website <http://entradasinidad.blogspot.com.es/> has been collecting support from musicians to promote a change in the rules. Many voices link this kind of youth leisure with a urban and social model that must be changed. As noted by the anthropologist Muñoz (2010), these policies work as systems of equalization; as ways of managing the urban space by eliminating difference.

It is unacceptable, I argue, that in this city 14-year-old children are unable to attend concerts when their hormones are asking for rock and roll. The authorities want to reduce rock to a cliché, to a kind of Cola-Cao advertisement or to an afternoon playing Guitar hero. They want to soften the rebellious part of young people; as the Godfathers (Sex Museum musicians) said, they want us to be born, study, work and die.

In contradiction to this, a rock-and-pop concert scene aimed at family audiences is being created. The Malasaña neighbourhood celebrates the family festival Malakids twice a year, including rock concerts held in public squares and streets. At various times of the year, close to the start of school holidays, Menudo Fest brings together rock bands for family audiences. They are fathers and mothers encouraging their children to enjoy a live music experience away from children's shows. They are working on the musical culture of their children while enjoying musical experiences that cannot normally be included in the family schedule.

The old conception of youth as a problem appears to underlie the aforementioned regulations. Youngsters are seen represented as people unable to adapt to the city regulations on time and space. Carles Feixa (2015) understands that the youth temporalities fit with difficulty in the time-management schemes of today's society. According to him, the great contradiction in our society is that young people want to be adults but are not allowed to, and adults want to be young but cannot. Feixa proposes to understand young people through the metaphor of the *Blade Runner* from the Ridley Scott film, a hunter fascinated by replicants who must be eliminated. He writes, 'Adults hesitate between the fascination for youth and the need to exterminate the root of any deviation from the norm. The result is a hybrid and ambivalent model of adolescence, riding between a growing social infantilization, translated into economic dependence and lack of responsibility, and a growing intellectual maturity, expressed in access to new technologies of communication, to new aesthetic and ideological currents' (Feixa 2015: 32).

In contrast with visions of youth which considered the young man as a kind of noble savage whom adult society should civilize, this model fluctuates between a fascination with the young and blaming them. Returning to music, this ambivalence is observable in the fact that while institutions are not sparing efforts in avoiding concentrations of young people, media speeches exalt and celebrate the success of young artists, classic models such as Pablo Alborán (the best-selling pop icon in Spain, right now) or modern icons like Justin Bieber.

### **Conclusions: Music, Creativity and Disappointment**

I have described how music has been a laboratory for the new culture. There are several voices that amplify this idea by pointing out that culture has been the space in which huge transformations in the way life is conceived have been anticipated, which include transformations in the fields of leisure, work, consumption and sociality. For a long time, musicians (like many other creative performers) were considered to be at the margins of society. Playing music was something good to do while you were young, but it was not real work. It was something for bohemians, crazy geniuses and romantic personalities. It was not a job that would allow people to integrate fully into society. When compared to a proper job, playing music was regarded as too irregular, insecure and risky. However, as Florida explains (2012), creative persons are no longer seen as iconoclastic; they have become 'mainstream'. Therefore, the analysis of the ways in which music is produced allows us to understand how the experience of modern life is changing and how this affects urban living.

The experience of young creators is marked by a 'self-construction effort'. Most of them share the 'ability and the effort to construct themselves through continuous deployment of creativity, knowledge and invention ... rooted in strong values of autonomy, in opposition and rejection to alienated labour' (Cruces 2012: 157). In this sense, young creators and by extension musician fit in Richard Florida's (2012) description of the creative class.

Those trying to make their way in music are not waiting to be discovered by a big label that will take care of their career through recording, promotion and managing a concert agenda. Now the musician pursues various projects and performs several tasks: Abel Hernández, a musician of El Hijo, plays and composes for his own band, produces for other musicians, composes soundtracks, writes a music blog, works for a national paper and publishes as an art critic in various magazines. His latest album was financed through crowdfunding, organized by him and his girlfriend. He remarked, 'I am a professional amateur. 80 per cent of my time is spent on logistics; organizing concert dates and rehearsals with musicians, preparing documents with the technical specifications for concerts, managing travel, hotels and promotion, and so on. This has a cost, because the time and effort I put into these things could be invested in harmony or piano lessons.' (personal interview, 25 October 2011).

The music producer Laura Organa combines her salaried work in musical production with work as a freelance producer and translators (personal interview, 2 November 2011). Manuel Sanz, the bassist of the CosmoSoul, has a company that manages his own band and others and also manages a venue for concerts and exhibitions in the Lavapiés neighbourhood

(personal interview, 20 October 2011). By being their own bosses, they take the risks inherent in their work and make their daily life come second to their professional requirements. As Lorey (YProductions 2009: 70). pointed out commenting on the experience of the creative class ‘not only work, but also life would be subject to economic exploitation: it would not be possible to separate work from life, production from reproduction’ It is the cost of being able to flee from alienating work, the price of independence; as if such a course of action had been chosen and not imposed by new forms of organization in post-industrial society.

Workers’ freedom disguises the precariousness involved in cultural production (Cruces 2012, Rowan 2010). Since the main capital of a musician is his own skill, work and creativity, a process of self-exploitation takes place which is celebrated in the public discourse as a conquest of independence but recognized as exploitation in reflexive discourses. Once again we observe the ambivalence between rebellion and conformism, risk and safety, resistance and challenge to integration which characterizes both the experience of youth (Feixa 2015: 42) and cultural creators (Cruces 2012: 157).

This way of organizing the process of creative work is anchored in a chronotope that seems to exclude both the past and the present. It is not a festive way of living the present, like that experienced during *la movida* (Fouce 2006), but an agonic one. Hernández (2014) uses the example of the American band Drive-by Truckers, a band that is well recognized by critics, has over a decade of experience, has produced a dozen discs and is constantly engaged in international tours. He writes, ‘A couple of bad choices when planning your career or the publication of low quality material can relegate you to that land where it is hard to close contracts and fix dates for a tour’ (Hernández 2014: 265). As Cruces (2012: 164) remarks, acceleration, immediacy and the control of trends contribute to create a climate of uncertainty which though common among artists has come to permeate the experience of an entire generation. Hernandez argues that, ‘This peculiar perception of pathways, full of moments of acceleration and long downtimes, agitated periods when finish projects on time and eternal delays waiting for new labour opportunities, are starting to be a common experience for all sorts of workers’ (2014: 264). The solution to uncertainty, he goes on to say, is to ‘focus on doing the work correctly and ... live in a continuous present, away from concerns’ (2014: 266). In this world of uncertainty, he adds, ‘it is not surprising that we return to solid ground, to the community, to what we perceive as real; rather than to the many options of the virtual and the intangible’ (2014: 268).

In recent years, the romantic heroism that has marked the way artists have been seen throughout the 20th century has changed. The uncertain life trajectories, based on the capitalization of one’s own abilities, have replaced the old guarantees of a bourgeois life where individuality was sacrificed to gain the security that was the heritage of the majority of adults. The former admiration or demonization of the artist has become mere disappointment.

The celebratory discourse of the creative class has been hegemonic, but the buzz of discordant voices is heard more and more. These voices advocate recognition of existential exhaustion, disappointment, suffering and frustration, and the tenacity to endure it all, as shown by Cruces (2012: 165). On such a tenacity rests the self-exploitation of a creative work

that has finally become the dominant model in the productive areas of post-industrial capitalism. This criticism of the life-style of the creative subject has fuelled movements advocating social change starting from the local level and that at the time of writing are part of local government in many Spanish cities. It is exemplary that Madrid Regional Deputy, Pablo Padilla took office wearing a t-shirt of the movement *Juventud sin futuro* (Youth without future) carrying the motto ‘no home, no job, no pension, no fear’.

If at other historical moments music anticipated dramatic transformations in the forms of production, work, consumption and enjoyment, it does not seem too risky to suggest that reflexive reaction against the consequences of these transformations can provide a basis for the new processes of change that are becoming visible in Spain after the *15-M*.



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## ***Processes of Globalization in Madrid: Indicators and Analysers for a Contemporary Metropolis<sup>1</sup>***

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In a context of intense production and permanent circulation of transnational representations of place identity, urban studies often seem headed toward the search of proof of the metropolitan nature of modernization and the global character of advanced economy. Beyond this, asking what effects of metropolization and what processes of globalization have intertwined with a city's recent history encourages us to look for narratives that can clutter the classic portrait of a global metropolis, filling it with the ambivalences of socio-symbolic aspects — that is, cultural — of everyday life and the contradictions of political and symbolic economies. Drawing on statistical sources, research publications in urban studies and newspapers archives, this article aims to provide quantitative indicators and qualitative analysers from the last three decades, in order to trace a genealogy of today's Madrid.

**Keywords:** Effects of metropolization, processes of globalization, indicator, analyser.

### **Introduction**

In 1985, the Spanish writer Juan Benet asked the following question: 'I wonder what will be the signature of our time (...) Let's say that I'm talking about the eighties (...). Where is the Baudelaire, Kafka or Wittgenstein who within 60 years will define, through a retrograde transfer, *today's Madrid*' (1985; my translation, my emphasis). Perhaps Madrid does not have representative features as do Paris, Prague or Vienna. Perhaps it has a Pléiade of a different kind. Twenty-five years ago Benet asked this question. A short story by another writer turned the first concert of The Smiths in the city into the milestone of a new urban epoch (Loriga 2010). Meanwhile, at the 1988 *Triennale di Milano* Madrid exhibited its most emblematic urban projects as best metaphor for the city at that time.

The defining elements of the present article collude in this prelude. *Madrid Today* links to the search for representative features, which from the 1980s can be found in two different processes; that of globalization (for example, the arrival of foreign music bands) and that relating to the effects of metropolization (for example, urban policies). This seems to have become an uncomfortable issue for our theoretical imagination, often solved through reference to certain typical features of an iconic economics (Massey 2012a) and through melodramatic or epic narratives (García Canclini 1999). Instead, I prefer to compile, on the one hand, *indicators* — that is, quantitative and methodologically formal features, selected from two main sources: national, regional and municipal statistics and research publications — and, on the other hand, some *analysers*;<sup>2</sup> chosen heuristically as qualitative features, that is

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<sup>1</sup> This article would not have been possible without the suggestions and corrections from my colleagues of the group *Cultura Urbana* at the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology of the UNED, whose research project *Madrid Cosmópolis: Prácticas Emergentes y Procesos Metropolitanos* (CSO2012-9949) I joined in 2014 thanks to the Research Personnel Formation (FPI) Suprogramme of the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness.

<sup>2</sup> This concept was extracted from Institutional Analysis, it refers to events, persons, situations, actions, and so on that can reveal new meanings or unexpected and contradictory aspects of a certain institution.

to say, methodologically less formalized and relatively *ad hoc*. The resulting features are presented in four sections. The first describes continuities and discontinuities among residential and productive forms of centrality and peripherality in the metropolitan region; the second introduces the new profiles that have emerged in the Madrilenian labour market; the third describes the faces and histories of foreign presence in Madrid; the fourth relates to the evolution of material and non-material flows that are particularly relevant in the city and its urban culture. A final section discusses the main problems faced in consulting the sources<sup>3</sup>.

### **Territorial Dialectics in a Metropolitan Region**

*Madrid Sur* is a painting by Antonio López, who worked on it for two decades, from 1965 to 1985. In 1964, one year before López started this project, the Metropolitan Area of Madrid was legally created, including 23 municipalities. Over twenty years, the painter would depict the process started by that decision: Madrid was becoming the European city with the highest demographic rate of metropolization (the most eloquent table can be found in Sassen 1991: 43). The population almost doubled, thanks to rural immigration. If we pay attention to the spatial distribution of that increase, we discover that the metropolitan areas grew much more and much faster than the central town had since the 1960s (Leal and Domínguez 2009); during the 1980s, the latter even showed a negative balance for the first time. In September 1983, a special issue of *Revista de Occidente* announced the ‘crisis of the city’ (Leal 1983: 182). This was due to a combination of various factors, such as a decrease in the average family size, a fall in the birth rate and especially an increase in the price of housing. Thus, when Spain became part of the European Union in 1986, central Madrid was less populated than in 1970, while in some metropolitan areas, such as the South depicted in López’s painting, the population had tripled.

Since that year, the ‘sea of houses disappearing over the horizon’, in the words of López (Mazorra 2015), changed the city’s growth rate drastically, and by extension the scale of metropolitan influence. Again, a special publication indicates novelty, in this case through the collected voices of town planners. In June 1987, on the eve of the municipal elections, *Alfoz* published a monographic issue dedicated to discussing whether the notion of ‘metropolitan area’ was still valid, considering that Madrid seemed to have reached a regional status and thus required new urban policies. Until 1980, the rate of urban land growth was twice the rate of demographic growth, but from 1985 to 2007, it was 80 per cent to 170 per cent; the population increase was, however, just 30 per cent. The metropolitan area of Madrid had grown 6 times more than that of Barcelona, while experiencing a similar demographic growth.

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<sup>3</sup> Data extracted from research publications are indexed, those from statistical sources are not. The main governmental sources used for Madrid are: Censo Municipal (Municipal Census), Consejería de Asuntos Sociales de la Comunidad de Madrid (Community of Madrid Social Affairs Office), Instituto de Estadística de la Comunidad de Madrid (Community of Madrid Institute of Statistics), Subdirección General de Análisis Socioeconómico del Ayuntamiento de Madrid (General Subdirection of Socioeconomic Analysis of Madrid’s City Council). I can be contacted for further details.

As a result, in 1995 the surface of the urban sprawl exceeded the surface of the compact city (Delgado 2014: 204-206). Within this intensive expansion forms of residential and productive centrality and peripherality (Sassen 2005) can be identified which raise, on the one hand, the question about the links between this suburbanization and metropolitan transformation and the processes of globalization of political and symbolic economies and, on the other hand, the issue of the continuities and discontinuities in the classic models of urban divide between centre and periphery and between the north and the south of the city.

As I have mentioned, until 1985 the southern zones of the metropolitan area absorbed the population in search of affordable housing. But from then on, the focus of those movements started to be the North, the West and the East. This change is attributed to the emergence of *qualitative*, as opposed to just quantitative demands of housing (Leira 2014). The quantitative rise in housing demand had to do with a dramatic change in the average household size: between 1991 and 2001, single person homes grew by 80.1 per cent and two people homes by 40.8 per cent, while homes with 5 people or more decreased by 27.1 per cent (Leal and Domínguez 2009: 85). The stress on the qualitative aspect of the demand, in terms of housing improvement, constituted an unprecedented phenomenon in a city where on average 10 years before, in 1975, families moved 1.1 times.<sup>4</sup> Firstly, these new demands engendered an increase in the number of houses and their prices; by 2006, houses were 6 times more expensive than in 1985. Secondly, they entailed the unprecedented proliferation of residential landscapes marked by single family homes, row houses (Arias 2003) and closed apartment blocks with private community gardens. In these housing complexes metropolitanization meant spatial segregation; a phenomenon diagnosed as typically global which in this case, rather than affecting a low-income population, was experienced by high-income dwellers (Leal and Domínguez 2008).

Thus, Madrid seemed to have lost its classic residential centrality. In 2012, 52.9 per cent of the region's population was concentrated in the central town, while 39.7 per cent lived in the suburban and peri-urban areas (Díaz and Lourés 2012: 119). At the same time, new middle- and high-class domestic imaginaries linked to global signs of distinction did not lead just to peripheral relocations and they were not exclusive of traditional households constituted by a couple and their children. From the late nineties, the arrival of new residents, generally young professionals without children, has changed the social profile of several central districts.

The recent statistics of house moving indicate a renaissance of the 'living in the centre' ideal: from 2004 to 2007, 63.1 of those who lived in the centre and moved house did not leave the centre. In 2005, more than 3 million people lived in the city centre. However, the centre's (particularly the city centre's) gradual demographic recovery is explained largely by the presence of foreign immigrants, who arrived in the late 1990s and settled in the most depreciated areas of the oldest neighbourhoods of the centre or in the working class suburbs. They did so not because of social status but because their communities lived there and because those areas were easy to reach. Therefore, in 2011, almost 55 per cent of foreign

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<sup>4</sup> Whereas, in the United States they moved 7 times on average (Leira 2014: 29).

registered residents lived in seven central districts. According to urban studies, these movements of population reproduced Madrid's historical topographic inequality. Leal and Domínguez underline that, even if we cannot talk about polarity *stricto sensu*, 'the map of settlement of social classes in the Madrid region clearly differentiates, for some decades now, the Northwest from Southeast' (2008: 714).

The recent history of the city's productive spaces also seems to reveal a dialectic relationship between centrality and peripherality linked to the processes of globalization. A bird's eye view suggests that there are only two districts, San Blas and Villaverde, with more than 10 per cent of industrial employment. Most of the workshops and factories built before 1960 were demolished during the last three decades and the areas left to decay. Some were converted into cultural centres, symbolically evoking the contemporary transition from manufacture to cultural industries, in terms of globality as opposed to profitability (the industrial GVA of Madrid is the second in importance behind Catalonia), for manufacture is no longer what links a city with the wider world (Hannerz 1998). Looking out from any flat roof in Ronda de Atocha, one sees the Price Circus cupola in the former factory of the PACISA cookies, the self-managed Tabacalera in the tobacco factory, the Medialab Prado in the Belgian Sawmill and Matadero, a centre for contemporary creation located in the former abattoir of Legazpi. Nonetheless, industrial land kept expanding doubling its size between 1980 and 2005 (Cervera 2014: 281) and including new industrial landscapes in the form of scientific and technological parks (the first one, Tres Cantos, opened in 1988).

Opposed to this industrial activity in the urban scene, Madrid's current panorama could be seen as the best metaphor for its transition to a service economy. Both the skyline (in visual terms) and the services (in economic terms) are currently seen as signs of modernity. Twenty years after the Picasso Tower (1989), the skyscrapers complex of Cuatro Torres Business Area (CTBA) opened as a vertical counterpart to Madrid's horizontality; in 2012, there were 15 million square meters for office space in the CTBA — more than in Paris or Amsterdam. Also the dynamics by which these tertiary spaces are located seem to be determined by a process of decentralization, for in the last two decades most office licenses were granted to businesses moving out of the city centre. However, while the most important banks have abandoned the nineteenth-century neighbourhood of the Bank of Spain, since 1999 more than 60 per cent of the establishments and of the people employed in advanced services were concentrated in the so-called Central Almond; that is, the city's economic heart (Méndez and Ondátegui 2007: 160). Of course, its permanence might be related to the agglomeration economies (Sassen 2005), but the true secret of its longevity might lie in the Paseo de la Castellana, the 'great avenue of power', as the writer Rafael Chirbes calls it in a short text dedicated to its genealogy (Chirbes 2004: 274). Thus, the Central Almond seems to persist as a symbolic fruit that feeds corporations and institutions in Madrid.

## Social Changes in the Madrilenian Labour Market

With reference to the number of people living in Madrid having grown to 3 million during the last three decades, we are warned that ‘the deep transformations in its [Madrid’s] demographic structure, *especially in the relationship between population and economic activity*, are hidden behind the apparent stability of the population total count’ (Bustos 2014: 87). Paradoxically, changes in the economic activities seem to occur at such speed that statistical classifications have not been able to grasp the reality of the contemporary labour market. In a sense, these statistical difficulties are a good indicator of change. According to the introduction to the last National Classification of Economic Activities (INE 2008), the most preeminent of these difficulties has been the ‘the lack of correspondence between the importance of the services sector in the economy and its classification’.

In the case of Madrid’s region, 75 per cent of the employed population works in the services sector; this percentage grows to 90 per cent in the city. The so-called *producer services*<sup>5</sup> stand out for their number doubled between 1980 and 1985 (Iranzo et al. 1993: 266); thus they became the most important activity in the services sector. Their growth matched the growth of their main customers, the corporations involved in the practice of global control (Sassen 1991; Leal and Cortés 1995). Notably, almost 80 per cent of the multinational corporations located in Madrid have moved there since 1985 and more than a quarter since 2000. According to the *Forbes Global 500: Cities* ranking, in 2006 Madrid became the 8<sup>th</sup> city in the world (3<sup>rd</sup> in Europe) for the number of multinational offices. It is the Spanish city with more foreign-firm offices: in 2012 they were 3.761 (almost 40 per cent of the total in the country), representing 44 per cent of the region’s business profits. In 2014, the *Global 500: Corporations* ranking reported that of the 500 largest multinational corporations 8 were Spanish and 6 of them had their headquarters in Madrid.

From a generational perspective, over the last three decades the number of top professional figures has grown considerably. The number of executives and managers has tripled, accounting for almost 7 per cent of urban employment; the number of ‘professional, technicians and similar’ have multiplied by 2.5 times, and currently account for almost 40 per cent of urban employment (their contribution to the whole employment growth is close to 90 per cent). In 1995, Leal and Cortés saw these figures as an indicator of globality, outlining that ‘it is in the frame of *this configuration of Madrid as a ‘global city’* that the concentration of ‘advanced services’ can be understood’ (Leal and Cortés 1995: 202-203). Classically, this phenomenon is seen to be linked to two factors: a highly qualified population and technological specialization. In this sense, Madrid concentrates the highest number of universities in Spain (15) and of enrolled students (42 per cent; the national average is 28.6 per cent), as well as a fourth of the budget and personnel in Research and Development. While concentrating, advanced services have also undergone processes of inner diversification that have engendered new occupations. Moreover, 1 out of 5 national jobs in creative economy is located in Madrid, representing more than 30 per cent of the region’s total employment (doubling Barcelona’s share) and having the highest specialization index in

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<sup>5</sup> This category lumps together different kinds of occupations (see Sassen 1991).



cultural employment (almost 5 per cent of employed population, while the national share is 3 per cent).

If we abandon the classic indicators of labour composition in favour of an analysis based on the *visible effects*<sup>6</sup> of the presence of these (proto)typical global work features, we discover the link between some recent urban transformations and these ‘expression specialists’ (Hannerz 1998). The heuristic potentiality of the concentration of cultural centres mentioned in the previous section becomes clearer if we pay attention to the emergence of co-working spaces for new corporate cultures in Madrid’s periphery (for example, the Hub Madrid next to Medialab and the Factoría La Nave next to Matadero).

Some identify places for consumption as ‘the best example of cultural change in Spain’ (Domínguez 2014). For *Le Monde* this is the case with the Fuencarral Market, inaugurated in 1998 as ‘the shopping centre for those who hate shopping centres’. It tried to set itself out as the core of the aesthetic avant-gardes in matters of design and fashion and was a milestone in the renovation of Chueca carried out by a gay collective in the 1990s. As things changed over the years, the area became an exclusive commercial hub (in 2015, the Fuencarral Market announced its closure) and a high-income residential area, making an interesting case of gentrification. Somehow, the gallimaufry of brands in Fuencarral Street seems to match the tensions marking the labour conditions of the so-called creative class, profoundly caught between fetishisation and precariousness (Cañedo, forthcoming).

Another revealing mutation is that of the Corte Inglés in Castellana Avenue. In the 1990s, it was a traditional warehouse, a grey concrete building covered by huge posters serving as the city’s calendar (‘Fantastic summer’, ‘Golden Christmas’, ‘Back to school’, ‘Time for sales’). Lately, this area has changed dramatically. It now includes a glazed skyscraper hosting expensive brands and many of whose floors carry exclusive names, such as ‘luxury street’ or ‘gourmet experience’. One could see in this transformation the evolution of the sumptuary consumption diagnosed by Sassen (1991).

However, the visibility of these features contrasts with statistical reality, according to which it is other features, like those discussed earlier, which arrived later but were prototypical of processes of globalization that have determined key transformations in the labour market. The Observatorio Metropolitano of 2007 states that the ‘subsidiary services’ account for the most important growth rates between 1995 and 2004.<sup>7</sup> Domestic work (126.1 per cent), commerce and repair (92.3 per cent), the hotel and restaurant industry (69.2 per cent) and personal services (87.1 per cent) were responsible for more than half of employment growth for that period. Only advanced producer services (98.4 per cent) and the building industry (83.5 per cent) presented similar growth rates.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> This refers to Sassen’s observation on the ‘extent to which they, along with the high-income workers, have become a very visible part of city life through distinct consumption patterns, lifestyles and high-income gentrification’ (Sassen 1991: 280).

<sup>7</sup> This period of time is particularly important because ‘the most critical change in the social structure took place during the second half of the nineties’ (Domínguez and Leal 2008: 711).

<sup>8</sup> For example, financial intermediation grew by just 5.4 per cent.

These data seem to indicate the existence of ‘many different work cultures, besides the corporate culture, involved in the work of globalization’ (Sassen 2005: 32), and, in the light of their demographic profile, they connect with two decisive factors in the transformation of the active population in Madrid (Duque 2014). The first factor is the extraordinary increase in female activity rate from 34.8 per cent in 1991 to 55.7 per cent in 2008; in absolute terms the number of employed women doubled (Leal and Domínguez 2008: 711). The second factor is the arrival of foreign immigrants, mainly from Latin America and Eastern Europe (De Prada 2008), which accounts for 65 per cent of the employment growth between 1991 and 2011. These groups have entered specialized sectors of the labour market. In 2007, more than 85 per cent of employed women in Madrid (representing more than 40 per cent of the employed population) were concentrated in four areas of activity: their share in the commerce, hotel and restaurant industry (47.9 per cent) and in producer services and financial intermediation (47.3 per cent) was similar to that of male employees; but they were the majority in education and public administration (61.4 per cent) and in domestic work (about 70 per cent). If the analysis is restricted to the services sector, women are the majority only in the sector of personal services (almost 80 per cent). As for immigrants, in 2007, when the migrant population was almost 25 per cent of the employed population in Madrid (whereas the national average was 11 per cent), more than half worked in the services sector and around 20 per cent in the building industry. Their presence (over 50.000) was significant only in personal services, the building industry, the hotel and restaurant industry and non-qualified producer services; thus immigrants seem to concentrate in low wage jobs (De Prada 2008, Leal and Domínguez 2008, Observatorio Metropolitano 2007).

These figures point to a *feminization* and *ethnicization* of certain labour sectors typical of global cities (Sassen 1991). This specialization is marked by important wage inequalities. According to the last survey of wage structure (2012), the female average wage is less than 80 per cent of the male one, which shrinks to 50 per cent in the case of foreign women.<sup>9</sup> This difference is even more striking when we compare the two paradigmatic features of the global labour market in Madrid, at the extremes of the average earning table. We find that the annual average earning of a non-qualified services worker (12,819.51 euro) — a sector employing a majority of women and migrants — is less than 25 per cent of the annual average earning of executives or managers (53,165.69 euro), a majority of whom are Spanish men.

### **From Pantries to Imaginaries: Migration and Tourism Reshaping a City**

The process of *dualization* or *segmentation* (Duque 2014, Méndez 2002, Méndez and Ondátegui 2007, Observatorio Metropolitano 2007), together with the differences in assets — especially fixed-capital assets — that I have described seem to have produced, *de facto*, forms of inequality (Leal and Domínguez 2008) which are spatially captured on the city’s map (Sassen 1991, 1997; Leal and Domínguez 2008). Take the Usera district, where the first concert of Lou Reed in Madrid took place on 20 June 1980, where the AC/DC had performed

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<sup>9</sup> The average annual income of foreign workers is lower than the annual average income and is 35 per cent less than that of Spanish workers.

some months earlier in the public TV building and where the Ramones would perform a few months later. This is a cultural milestone honoured by the writer Francisco Umbral in his column *Spleen of Madrid* (Umbral 1980). Almost 30 years after its entrance in the international circuits involving world-renowned bands, Madrid affirmed its status in the global music panorama hosting the Rock in Rio festival.

I suggest, however, that something as small as a micro-history starting point, such as Usera, can be seen as a globality analyser with the same analytic power than the so called 'biggest music festival of the world'. Second to the centre, Usera is the district with the highest proportion of foreign population: around a fifth of the registered residents are not Spanish; more than 25 per cent of them are Chinese and it is known as Madrid's Chinatown. These figures are even more eloquent if we take into account the fact that, when Lou Reed first visited the neighbourhood, there were a little more than 36.000 foreign residents in Madrid (45.000 in the whole region), barely 1 per cent of the population, and Spain did not yet have an immigration law. Currently, the demographic share of foreign residents in the city comes to 12.1 per cent, and there are 1.000.000 foreign residents in the region. If we include those who acquired Spanish citizenship over these years, Madrid is on the way to become a city where a quarter of the population is of foreign origin. Most began to arrive in 1996. In five years, the foreign population increased fourfold,<sup>10</sup> and five years later it became almost 10 times larger (20 times the total of 1980), reaching, as I have indicated, the million mark. Meanwhile, a profound qualitative change occurred. Until 1997 the registered foreigners in Madrid essentially came from the European Community (until 1985 more than half originated in the EU) and Morocco, with a small presence of Latin Americans. From 1997, the most important flows came from Latin America, Eastern Europe and China.

These figures can explain why I chose Usera as a 'psychogeographic' globality analyser, just like, say, Kilburn High Road (Massey 2012b). As one goes through Amparo Usera Street, one's senses are touched by smells, images and sounds that twenty years ago were unknown in Madrid. In less than two blocks there are two restaurants announcing 'bandeja paisa', 'tamales', 'sancocho', 'ají de panza' and 'silpancho'; three telephone booths where conversations are held in Arabic, Polish and Chinese, foreign languages that are replicated in several shop signs (a hairdresser, a restaurant, a travel agency, a lawyer's office and a supermarket). A bar offers 'doner kebab', another announces 'burguer', and there are three cold cuts shops (all with Spanish surnames on the awning) and several shops selling imported food. When I enquired, I discovered that the shops ran by Spaniards have gradually started selling previously unfamiliar products, from spices to cereals and vegetables, from meat cuts to electrical appliances (for example, rice cookers). Far from being casual, these conversations on the openness to 'the other's kitchen' can be read as analysers of a *personal* (Radice 2009) or *domestic* (Nava 2006) *cosmopolitanism*, belonging to an everyday experience of otherness which is globalization *too* (Beck 2002).

This openness in terms of products on offer was not exclusive of the districts with high rates of foreign residents or of gourmet markets, where it seems to be related more to cooking

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<sup>10</sup> In 1980 they were 365.000, eight times the initial number.

sophistication than to cosmopolitanism. The Día supermarkets, a Spanish chain founded in Madrid in 1979 that introduced the concept of ‘discount’ in Spain, have no establishments in Usera or in gourmet markets but they offer, among other products, dulce de leche, curry and plátano macho. Apart from the supermarket chains, 70 per cent of small format food shops in Madrid are managed by foreigners (the national average is 22 per cent) and sell products from their countries of origin.

The normalization of foreign food products cannot be explained in terms of foreign or gourmet consumers. The British owner of a tea shop that opened in Fernando el Católico Street in 1996 is convinced that the emergence of significant tea consumption in Madrid occurred when ‘people from Madrid started to travel, and they discovered what a good tea was, and they started to ask for it here. Here they couldn’t have a good tea; here tea was considered like a medicine, this is why you could not find it in herbalist shops. That wasn’t good’.<sup>11</sup> People from Madrid have increasingly started to travel: currently Madrid has the highest share of travellers in Spain; in 2011, 71.1 per cent of Madrilenians travelled, while the national average was 56.7 per cent. But people also travelled more to Madrid. While in 1980 Madrid hosted 2.7 million tourists (1 million coming from outside Spain), in 2012 it hosted more than 13 million, a third of which were from foreign countries. In these global times, tourism is producing cultural changes in Madrid, from its pantries, which currently stock a huge variety of tea brands, to the iconography of urban imaginaries. The artist Tom Lavin emphasizes in his video-essay *Madrid?* the city’s conversion into a global centre of touristic attraction through a ‘symbolic restructuring’, namely ‘zonification’ (Lavin 2015). Lavin identifies visually this process in the evolution of the touristic maps produced by the local government: the city is no longer a whole traversed by iconic buildings; it is, instead, a market of specialized zones destined to selective consumption according to tourists’ tastes and lifestyles. This conceptualization of the city seems to embody the conversion of experiences into products which is typical of advanced economies (Pine and Gilmore 1999). From ‘premium Madrid’ to ‘alternative city’; the tourist office website carries new ostentatious imaginaries of the capital.

### **Investing, Circulating, Moving: Madrid through its Flows**

The visibility of Madrid’s touristic image contrasts with the invisibility of its flows, which have suffered very important quantitative and qualitative transformations.

The Direct Foreign Investment (FDI) is the global form of capital flows. From 1988 to 1994, following Spain’s entry in the European Union in 1986, the FDI rose to 151.6 per cent. Then, the creation of holdings in 1995, which benefited from a privileged fiscal regime, and the amalgamation in 2001 of the national stock markets in a single one located in Madrid, allowed Madrid to get 59 per cent of the FDI made in Spain.<sup>12</sup> That amount represented 1.7

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<sup>11</sup> Mrs D, the owner of a food shop in Montréal, offers the same explanation to the emergent demand of foreign products (Radice 2009: 149).

<sup>12</sup> Catalonia, the next FDI destination, received 13.9 per cent.

per cent of the total worldwide FDI.<sup>13</sup> On the one hand, Madrid's status as financial capital explains the city's specialization in financial services, representing more than 10.8 per cent of the municipal GVA and almost 5 per cent of its employed population, both features doubling the national ones (4.6 per cent and 2 per cent, respectively). On the other hand, such a status has allowed a current trading volume of half-billion euro, more than 200 times the trading volume in 1984.

Compared to 1984, three times more elaborated products and two times more food and drinks have recently entered the region (Naredo and Frías 2003: 93). This can be explained by two processes. First, the rise of consumption in the region, whose commercial density (in terms of surface per 1.000 inhabitants) is three times the European and Spanish average. Second, and more importantly, the change in the flow of merchandise has to do with the enormous development of the logistic sector in Madrid; in 2008 the Madrid region accounted for 60 per cent of the international flow of merchandise circulating in Spain, for 33 per cent of the national one, for almost a fifth of national employment in this sector and for half the national billing and logistics total (De Santiago 2008). These processes benefited from a gigantic infrastructural network, from logistics centres (the Mercamadrid, the Dry Port of Coslada and the Centre for Merchandises Transport) to highways.<sup>14</sup>

The growth of commercial activities and road network has had an impact on a very important metropolization analyser; namely, urban mobility. Shopping trips are a good indicator of cultural changes and continuities in the contemporary city; according to the last Mobility Survey in 2004 (CRTCM 2005), 15 million such trips take place in Madrid daily. Back in 1988, the Mobility Survey of that year already underlined that 'the most prominent variations affected shopping and spare time mobility' (Táuler 1992: 87-88). Over the last few decades, these dynamics have affected several aspects. Shopping has decreased (daily trips have gone from 14.8 per cent to 6.8 per cent), especially regarding the purchase of food; in 2010, more than half of households purchased food just once a week or once a month, whereas only 14.6 shopped daily (formerly the most common frequency). This considerable decrease is an interesting analyser of the effects produced by the incorporation of women into the labour market, the expansion of packaged products, the development of online shopping and, essentially, the emergence of supermarkets and hypermarkets. In 1975, the opening of the first hypermarket, the Jumbo in Pío XII Street, marked the birth of a new culture of domestic consumption. The reports from the checkout workers on Jumbo's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary would support this view. One worker said, 'it was a crowd, a complete invasion. Nothing happened as we expected. People were used to the small neighbourhood grocery shops. They picked all the products and then had to leave half of them because they hadn't brought enough money with them; this caused very long queues at the cash registers'. Another recognizes that 'during the last two decades people from Madrid have acquired a "hypermarket culture" which facilitates my work' (Niño 1995). Following Jumbo, other large hypermarkets were

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<sup>13</sup> During that period, Italy got a similar amount of FDI.

<sup>14</sup> Road transport of merchandise has expanded to the point that Madrid is now the European region with more kilometres of highway per inhabitant (Gago 2014).

opened in the metropolitan area near the highways; they specialized in selling food, furniture (Leroy Merlin in 1989, IKEA in 1996), sports equipment (Decathlon in 1996) or electronic appliances (Media Markt in 1999). Shopping centres also started to appear. The first one, La Vaguada opened in 1983; it was followed by the more than 130 that currently operate in the region, a fourth of which is located the central town.

The location of large stores in the periphery, and the kind of shopping they offer, also relate to the issue of mobility. While in 1988 75 per cent of shopping trips were made on foot and 7 per cent by car, in the 1990s there were districts where the use of the car for shopping had risen to between 25 per cent to 50 per cent, reaching 74 per cent to 95 per cent in the more external metropolitan crowns (López de Lucio 2002: 30). Interestingly, from the nineteenth century, trends in mobility show continuity in the centre's commercial importance. The last Land-use Plan Revision underlined how trips made not for work to the central town would increase with distance from it, suggesting that the city centre attracted the suburban population for shopping, spare time or personal matters (Área de Gobierno de Urbanismo y Vivienda 2013). The centre has become a focus for shopping and, while the majority of antique shops are located there, the frenetic dynamics of obsolescence and renewal in fashion have made of it the district with more recently opened shops.

Finally, over the last two decades the information flow has increasingly affected Madrid, which now has the highest internet penetration in the country. According to the General Media Study (AIMC 2014), in one month almost 70 per cent of Madrid's population accessed the internet; this in a country where in 1996 internet penetration was barely 1 per cent and in 2000 was less than 15 per cent. According to the last Telefónica Report on the Information Society (Fundación Telefónica 2015), people accessed the internet to check emails, seek information on goods and services, read the news and, at least in a 66 per cent of cases, to use social networks. In a majority of the cases, access was gained through a smartphone, making this the leading instrument for accessing internet in Madrid, where 98.2 per cent of households have a mobile phone (the highest share in the country).

The evolution of electoral promises makes a very interesting analyser of this information flow in contemporary Madrid. In the 2003 municipal elections, the star promise of the governing party was the extension of the subway and its night opening times, whereas in 2015 the star promise was the extension of free wi-fi throughout the city. These promises seem to appeal to different urban imaginaries. On the one hand, they appeal to fantasies of unlimited mobility in time and space (Highmore 2005: 119) and of inclusion in urban life; note that in 2003 'not having a subway' summarized the real and symbolic distance from the city. On the other hand, they appeal to a fantasy of total connectivity that transcends both the space-time mobility of the body and the (real and symbolic) territory of the city, invoking a scale of chronotopic overflowing (Cruces 1997) which is par for the course in a global metropolis.

### **Synecdoche and Fetish, or the Difficulties of Portraying a Global Metropolis.**

When revising the literature on urban studies, globalization and metropolization, one finds it difficult to identify the *strategy of synecdoche* (Massey 2007) underlying the various sources, be they institutional publications or research productions. This determines the statistics and casuistry of what are chosen, in each case, as discriminatory indicators. A problem lies with fetishist pathos of many sources conforming to Madrid's globality painting a picture in keeping with what De Certeau said about the concept of 'city' serving 'as a totalizing and almost mythical landmark for socioeconomic and political strategies' (De Certeau 1988: 95). Take, for example, an interesting interpretation of the FNAC building in Callao Square. Emblematically, Gonick (2010) describes its appearance in Pedro Almodóvar's movie, *The flower of my secret* (1995), with the image of the protagonist right next to the FNAC sign reading thus: 'the new economy of multinational corporations appears writ large across the Spanish silver screen, meshed with the undeniably Spanish face of Marisa Paredes. Two Madrids merge into one: the Madrid of Almodóvar, whose profane imaginings of his capital city make frequent reference to its camp traditions of the bullfight and flamenco, superimposed upon the landscape of the 20<sup>th</sup> century corporate Madrid' (2010: 26). Even if this reading were possible, there are others, to be found not in the present but in the thick layers of the past, which can make of that place a chronotope for *other* spatio-temporalities, *also* constitutive of Madrid's globality. Long before Almodóvar's movie, the building was the core of a photograph taken by Cas Oorthuys, who portrayed the streets of Madrid in 1955. In the photograph, the building by Gutiérrez Soto houses the first Galerías Preciados, a traditional Spanish department store. The transition from it to FNAC in 1993 was repeatedly evoked by the participants in the exhibition held on this French shop's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in terms that raised questions on the lack of ambivalence in the abovementioned readings. Apart from representing a global multinational's landing where an 'undeniably' Spanish shop (the Galerías Preciados) was, for Madrilénians the arrival of FNAC also meant access to foreign literature and music on a scale and a variety unknown at that time to the general public.

This stresses to the importance of inscribing indicators and analysers into frameworks that problematize, as opposed to reifying, the concepts of globalization and metropolization. On the one hand, this implies treating them as effects and processes which essentially bring about a rupture of locality: 'items which make up the fabric of our everyday lives ... can no longer be located locally' (Featherstone 2002: 4). On the other hand, this requires linking them not only to a new organization of the economy, but also to a redistribution of cultural diversity (Hannerz 1998). Perhaps this is the epistemological potentiality of data and cases: if we want to build bridges between the 'yet diffuse' notion of global and the 'more known' concept of city (Sassen 2007), rather than cementing the syntagm 'global city' the interesting thing to do is to determine the tensions on which it remains standing.

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**Convenors:** Giuliana B. Prato, Italo Pardo  
and Michael Fischer

With specific reference to urban settings and the dynamic interactions between cities and regions, this Conference aims to contribute to increasing our capacity to understand important processes of agency in a worldwide context marked by a growing gap between citizenship and governance.

The Conference will stimulate reflection on the interplay between personal morality and civic responsibility, and between value and action. Anthropologists, and ethnographers more generally, have demonstrated the moral and cultural complexity of individual action and the ways in which misplaced or instrumentally selective moralities in policy and in the production and enforcement of the law encourage exclusion and widen the gap between governance and the governed across the world. They have demonstrated the impact

of rules and regulations inspired by concepts that are ambiguous, elusive, biased towards those in power, or badly defined or impossible to apply, thus compounding the perceived weak legitimacy of governance and the law in the broader society.

Ethnographic research has a unique contribution to make to our capacity to understand important processes of agency (individual and collective) and the ways in which agency is capable of influencing the system (Philip Abrams) and encouraging good governance that takes into account the needs and expectations of agency. Anthropological analysis of diverse ethnographies has brought to light the significance in people's life and to society more broadly of a *strong continuous interaction* between the material and the non-material (Pardo). Parallel to this, new anthropological research over the past decade has focused on the properties of the 'digital society' with respect to how people experience external changes, how they organize themselves and, in turn, enact new change (Fischer). Governance, at various levels, is increasingly recognising the relevance of intangible resources.

We propose that it is important to document how governance is evolving and to understand the extent to which public policies might pose obstacles to agents' full participation in society. Entrepreneurialism — intended in the broad sense of an agent's capacity to evaluate and access the available resources — makes one example of the many ways in which people may deal with these obstacles, motivating many simply to 'work around' them by becoming or

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The conference programme includes ethnographically-based contributions that identify the main gaps and obstacles related to the development of purposeful agency and the normative changes needed to encourage, rather than frustrate, agency and good governance, intended as governance that promotes and makes the best of the local resources and styles of citizenship.

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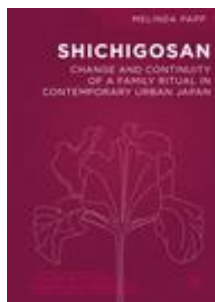
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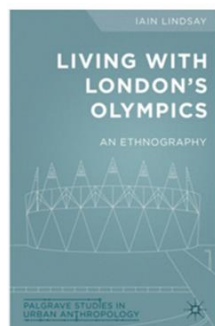
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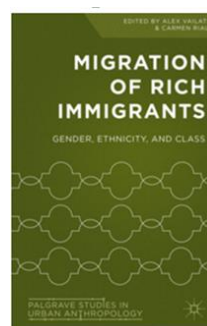


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