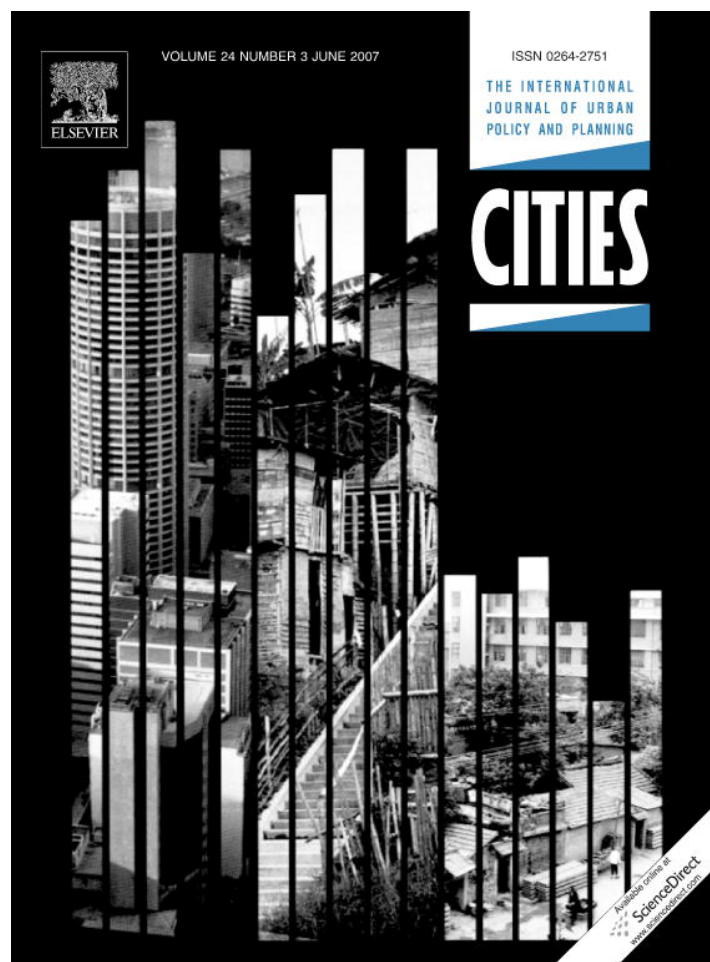


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# Madrid: Urban regeneration projects and social mobilization <sup>☆</sup>

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**Madrid is undergoing powerful urban changes. As in other big cities, the economic and territorial restructuring also means deep social changes. Madrid's socio-spatial configuration is becoming more segregated, with the recent evolution of the real estate industry one of the key issues of the process. In this context, different social groups have understood some of the urban projects implemented by the local and regional administrations as posing a danger to urban projects implemented by the local and regional administrations as posing a danger to urban segregation in the city. The article analyses social mobilization in a central neighborhood where an ambitious urban regeneration project is being developed. Since 1997, a social mobilization is in progress against a plan that could mean the first step of a gentrification process. A very diverse set of social groups (immigrants associations, squatters, ONG, cultural associations, etc.) joined to create the Red de Colectivos de Lavapiés [add diacritical] (Lavapiés, Groups Network). Over the last few years the evolution of the mobilization has favored a process of convergence with other social organizations and, finally, they have developed a critique of the overall transformation of Madrid, seen as excessively oriented towards middle class consumption and the city's tourist industry.**

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## Introduction

In order to understand the nature and extent of the transformations undergone by cities, an essential factor is the economic restructuring initiated in the nineteen seventies. From a social and spatial point

of view, economic globalisation has given rise to several processes having a direct impact on land use and, in a more general way, on the contents of urban planning policies (Marcuse, 2002). In this regard, as sustained by Kesteloot (2004), a study of the social and spatial configuration of cities is particularly important.

This article examines major urban renewal projects, the most obvious manifestations of the new urban intervention strategies. Numerous cities have in this way made far-reaching changes to their social and spatial structures over the last 20 years. The extent of these changes, and the impossibility of participation in their planning and design, have led to the creation of various social movements, united primarily by dissatisfaction with the emerging city model.

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The urban renewal project undertaken in the neighbourhood of Lavapiés (Madrid)<sup>1</sup> is considered in some detail. This was the most important project carried out in the historic centre of Madrid, an area subjected for over 10 years to an extensive process of rehabilitation, with important social and spatial implications (Lourés, 2003). It provoked a widespread response in a very socially heterogeneous neighbourhood, with one of the highest percentage immigrant populations in Madrid. The residents saw the project as a first step towards gentrification. Gradually, the protest groups created an urban discourse involving alternative city models. These groups formed links with other anti-globalisation protesters, defining their movement within the context of the social and territorial transformation of Madrid.

This analysis of the situation in Lavapiés effectively exposes the process of spatial re-structuring of the city, especially its central area. The local and regional authorities support a project which, they affirm, aims to put Madrid and its surroundings in the best possible conditions to compete in the European arena. However, a growing social opposition has questioned some of the principal measures. Lavapiés is thus appropriate as a place to study at first hand new social movements confronting the process of urban restructuring. It is also a district in which to observe the conditions under which a fragmented neighbourhood can organise itself and deal with social mobilisation. Very different groups with very different strategies have participated in the resistance, from the *okupa* [squatter] movement, with a clearly antagonistic political orientation, to the traditional neighbourhood association or newly founded NGOs.

### Urban restructuring, city government and social mobilisation

#### *Major urban planning projects and the social and spatial reorganisation of cities*

Global economic restructuring processes favour a certain city model. In the view of various authors

<sup>1</sup> The case study forms part of a broader investigation project that also examined other neighbourhoods (*Proyecto "Exclusión social y renovación urbana. Nuevas estrategias de desarrollo local"*, Programa de Cooperación Científica con Iberoamérica del Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deportes de España, años: 2000–2003) [Project "Social exclusion and urban renewal. New local development strategies", Scientific Cooperation with Latin America Programme of the Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, years: 2000–2003]. The author of this article was the principal investigator. From the methodological point of view, the investigation combined a review of secondary documents with a field study based, fundamentally, on qualitative techniques. I should like to thank M.L. Lourés for providing access to the contents of interviews carried out in Lavapiés between 1999 and 2002 as part of the investigation "*Patrimonio Histórico y Sociedad*" ["Historical Heritage and Society"], financed by the Comunidad Autónoma de Madrid and the European Social Fund.

(Brenner and Theodore, 2004), we can even speak of Neoliberal Urbanism, a model of urban development adapted to neoliberal demands,<sup>2</sup> in which the State fulfils an essential role by creating the necessary deployment conditions (legal, political, economic, etc.) and promoting new forms of local government.

In this respect, many major urban renewal projects promoted in recent years may be regarded as another component of the neoliberal "New Urban Policy" (Swyngedouw et al., 2004:199):

"While we agree that large-scale UDPs have indeed become one of the most visible and ubiquitous urban revitalization strategies pursued by city elites in search of economic growth and competitiveness, we also insist that it is exactly this sort of new urban policy that actively produces, enacts, embodies, and shapes the new political and economic regimes that are operative at local, regional, national, and global scales"

The strategic nature of these projects becomes even clearer upon examination in the light of current debate concerning the redefinition of scales. As sustained by Jessop (2004), globalisation is closely linked to processes that require different spatial scales. Thus, the planning policies considered here would form part of the strategies developed to connect local and global spheres. In general terms, the redefinition of scales favours growth of social inequality, with the creation and extension of new forms of poverty (Mingione, 1996) and increased urban segregation (Marcuse, 1998).

Major urban renewal projects are justified by the public interest in recovering obsolete architectural heritage (Couch et al., 2002) and, at the same time, by the need to represent the so-called new economy and the differentiated consumption demands of certain emerging sectors of the middle classes (Zukin, 1998). It would seem that rehabilitated historical sites contain distinctive elements that confer prestige and a touch of distinction. This applies not only to the rehabilitation of historical city centres, as in the case examined here, but also to abandoned industrial zones, ports and old markets located in old working class districts (Lourés, 2002). In this way, certain strategic city areas are gradually taken over and transformed, moving their populaces to other spaces and increasing spatial segregation.

#### *Urban restructuring and social mobilisation*

This model of urban development is provoking a growing degree of social response (Smith, 1996;

<sup>2</sup> As sustained by Harvey (2005), the globalisation process relies, basically, on the expansion of neoliberal policies.

Mayer, 2000; Degen, 2002; Simon, 2004). Mayer emphasises the need to pay attention to resistance processes that may be understood as part of a much broader social mobilisation against the negative effects of the economic globalisation process:

“The potential of these movements, which tend to go beyond particular community interests and which raise questions of democratic planning that urban elites concerned with interregional and international competitiveness would like to downplay, has yet to be studied” (Mayer, 2000, pp. 140–141)

Various kinds of movements could be included in this category; from movements against major infrastructure projects designed to improve the competitive potential of cities (new airports and extensions of existing ones, major motorways, etc.)<sup>3</sup> to movements against projects to renew certain working class districts. Sometimes, movements hinge around opposition to the carrying out of megaprojects aimed at economically and territorially restructuring certain cities:

“Movements have attacked the detrimental side effects of and the lack of democratic participation inherent in these strategies of restructuring the city and of raising funds, and they criticize the spatial and temporal concentration of such development projects” (Hamel et al., 2000, p. 10).

Construction of these new urban movements is a complicated task in the context of growing social fragmentation and the appearance of new forms of local government due to neoliberal urbanism. In this last regard, many local governments have implemented new citizen participation initiatives included within what Gordon and Buck (2005) call the New Conventional Wisdom, a number of recipes aimed at the “successful” transformation of cities. Basic components of this new frame of reference also include concepts such as economic competition, social cohesion and environmental sustainability. In recent years, debate concerning the extent and significance of these new practices has been intense, giving rise to strikingly contrasting positions (Fainstein, 2001; Mayer, 2003; Maloutas and Pautelidou Malouta, 2004; Buck, 2005).

From the perspective adopted in this article, use of these concepts to justify certain local policies responds, fundamentally, to the need to manage the social costs of the neoliberal model:

“It is this current conjunction which attributes a key role to such concepts as ‘social capital’, ‘third way’ or ‘social cohesion’, all of which imply a closer cooperation between local state, civil society and private sector, as well as the activation of local self organization” (Mayer, 2003, p. 124).

Inspired by such policies, citizens are invited to participate, but the terms of such invitations are severely circumscribed, aimed exclusively at achieving what is defined as “urban success”. As Mayer points out, the consequences for the development of social movements are very clear:

“Urban disadvantaged groups are thus transformed from potential social movements actors demanding recognition of their social rights into ‘social capitalist’, whose ‘belonging’ is conditional on their mobilizing the only resources they have as a form of social capital” (Mayer, 2003, p. 125).

Field studies reveal very different combinations of social groups, power relations and governing practices. This is why case studies aimed at in-depth examination of social mobilisation processes are so necessary. For example, it is very important to know how this new discourse is received by different social actors (NGOs, social movements, etc.), if there is room to share objectives and strategies between them and if, finally, the social movements taking place in this new context contribute to any reduction of social inequality in our cities.

Broadening the social base of the movements is another important strategic objective. To the extent that the New Conventional Wisdom discourse permeates social sectors, these set aside the possibilities of transformation deriving from their organisational potential, demanding recognition of their rights, to become individuals trying to assert their ‘social capital’, convinced that their inclusion within this competitive city model depends fundamentally on themselves and the development of their individual capacities (Mayer, 2003). In this type of scenario, the possibilities of convergence between movements critical of the neoliberal urban model and impoverished sectors diminish.

#### *Urban movements in Spain*

Throughout the nineteen seventies and the beginning of the nineteen eighties Spanish cities produced a significant cycle of social mobilisation. These mobilisations took place mainly, though not exclusively, in working class areas in outer suburbs. In the city of Madrid they achieved great intensity. Housing, local facilities and transport were their main concerns, although the extent of these movements can only be fully understood in all their complexity within the historic context of the Spanish political transition.<sup>4</sup>

These movements also affected various districts in the historical centre of Madrid. Until the end of the nineteen seventies, several areas were threatened

<sup>3</sup> *Reclaim the Streets* and the *Anti-Roads Movement* in the United Kingdom are other examples of this sort of mobilisation.

<sup>4</sup> The bibliography concerning this period of political change and social mobilisation in Spain is very extensive. Amongst others: Castells (1986, pp. 313–357), Alonso (1991), Alvarez Junco (2001).

with different intervention plans that would have involved the destruction of a large part of their architectural heritage. In the district of Lavapiés, the *La Corrala* neighbourhood association led resistance to these plans, at the same time promoting a programme of recovery of the cultural and popular identity of the district, badly damaged over so many years of Franco's government policies.

However, as happened in the rest of Spain, after the recovery of local democracy<sup>5</sup> and the consolidation of the new political system, urban mobilisation ran out of steam. The nineteen eighties were a time of profound crisis and major changes that led to a redefinition of not only their objectives, but also their composition, organisation and even forms of mobilisation<sup>6</sup> (Urrutia, 1992; Díaz Orueta and Lourés, 1995).

But this situation began to change slowly. Various sectors of the environmental movement began to focus attention on urban issues (traffic, transport, housing, pollution, etc.)<sup>7</sup>. Likewise in the nineteen nineties, the *okupa* [squatter] movement extended its activities, becoming implanted in the centre of Madrid. This movement, strongly linked through many of its most active members to the anti-globalisation movement, added their criticism of a model that promoted social segregation and inequality to the urban agenda<sup>8</sup>. Subsequent recognition of common interests between various groups and organisations, including even the remains of the neighbourhood associations, produced new alliances of broad social and political composition, albeit of little impact to date.

Even in cities such as Barcelona, usually identified as a model of democratic and egalitarian urban management,<sup>9</sup> there were various mobilisations in the early nineteen nineties against the city model created for the 1992 Olympic Games. These mobilisations were repeated with greater intensity for *Fòrum Barcelona 2004*. This is a particularly interesting case, as the protest campaign used arguments and claims coinciding with those expressed in other European cities against similar events<sup>10</sup>. But mobilisations have not been confined to Barcelona or Madrid. In fact, Valencia may well be the Spanish city

that has produced the greatest social response in recent years. There, various networks of associations opposed to several major urban projects have been created. These networks are called the *Salvem* (Torres, 2004). The biggest of all is probably *Salvem el Cabanyal* [Let's Save the Cabanyal], an organisation seeking to halt a municipal plan to open a new avenue involving the partial demolition of a protected popular district.

In general, these movements are interpreted as a new phase of urban mobilisation, clearly differentiated from previous eras. However, this is not entirely true. On the one hand, some of the older generation of militants are participants in these mobilisations; some, of course, in different groups than before, but in any case contributing their knowledge and experience. On the other hand, despite the new context, the basis of the arguments remain the same: a demand for greater democracy in local government, open to residents' opinions and participation, and also a demand for new local facilities (e.g. education centres) due to the re-accumulated deficit in many districts. Even the housing issue has reappeared as one of the citizens' major concerns, albeit with new characteristics.<sup>11</sup>

Of course, the mobilisations also contain new elements. These are not only due to participation by young people, who were until recently not so involved, or from the originality of some forms of protest, so much as their content. Spanish cities have also seen the growth of movements primarily opposed to the negative effects of the economic globalisation process. In Lavapiés all these realities overlap, and sometimes even conflict, evidencing an open process where citizens are not resigned to being mere spectators of the profound change Madrid city has been undergoing in recent years

### Madrid: The global city project

With a population of over three million people (3,092,759 according to the 2003 *Padron de Población*), the city of Madrid is the biggest Spanish urban concentration. Since 1983 the development of the Autonomous Community of Madrid has favoured consolidation of a metropolitan region, with almost six million inhabitants (5,718,942 in 2003). Extension and improvement of the road and motorway network and local railway have favoured explosion of the urban sprawl. Madrid has changed utterly in a very short period of time. Since the nineteen eighties, a discourse in terms of competitive potential and globalisation has been clearly enunciated by politicians of every stripe who have succeeded one another in city and regio-

<sup>5</sup> The first democratic local elections were held in April 1979.

<sup>6</sup> See Pickvance (1985) for a comparative approach to studying urban movements and the role of contextual factors in their rise and fall. A new reflection by the same author on urban movements: Pickvance, 2003.

<sup>7</sup> E.g., in 1989 with the slogan "*No te atasques*" ["Don't get jammed"], the environmental movement in Madrid, supported by various social and political organisations, very successfully campaigned for a popular referendum in Madrid concerning the traffic and mobility situation.

<sup>8</sup> On the squatter movement in Spain and its evolution: Martínez, 2002; Adell and Martínez, 2004

<sup>9</sup> Concerning the evolution of Barcelona and its urban development model: García and Degen, 2006.

<sup>10</sup> <http://barcelona.indymedia.org>.

<sup>11</sup> For these reasons a study of these new movements and their forms of organisation and action cannot ignore previous literature concerning urban movements: Kirby, 1993.

nal government. Their shared objective is to turn Madrid into an important element in the European system of cities. An attempt to remedy problems arising from its geographical position, isolated from the main European corridors, and its position as capital of a country with a middling economy, has turned on a wager in favour of economic diversification and quality of infrastructures, offering a sphere favourable to international investment.

Since the middle of the nineteen nineties Madrid has undergone profound changes in its socio-economic structure: between 1995 and 2004 the employed workforce increased by 42%. In 2004 the figure reached 2.4 million workers in employment. The *Instituto de Estudios Económicos* (2005) attributes this not only to the city's position as capital of the state, and thus headquarters of many firms, with major infrastructural development, but also to greater productivity, the level of workers' training and specialisation in the services sector, particularly the firms dedicated to handling information and knowledge. Furthermore, Madrid is the principal Spanish financial centre and the place chosen by most large multinational firms for their central offices in Spain.

#### *Development of a new social space*

Both local and regional governments have supported this process. Urban and territorial policies have boosted measures to consolidate Madrid as a city incorporated into the European urban system. The *Ayuntamiento* [City Hall] and the *Comunidad Autónoma* [Autonomous Community], together with major business groups, Chambers of Commerce, the main media companies, etc. formed a powerful coalition for growth (Logan and Molotch, 1987).

One of the main problems Madrid society has had to face in the last decade is a rise in the price of housing. During the second half of the nineteen eighties an increase in prices and weak housing policies caused housing to become almost unattainable for a very large number of citizens. A new phase of accelerated price increases began in 1997. As Roch affirms, this price increase has taken place in a territory with a huge stock of available housing:

“In metropolitan Madrid alone, where there are more than 300,000 empty dwellings and another 275,000 clearly underused, more than 40,000 new units have come on the market in recent years and available land has been zoned for another 800,000, which would comfortably accommodate Valencia and Seville together” (Roch, 2004, p. 32).

Roch links this situation to the development of a new social space in Madrid, characterised by hierarchical divisions. More and more, areas of increasingly homogeneous socio-economic composition

are appearing, strongly signalled by housing prices (Díaz Orueta, 2001). Family debt levels have continued to rise in recent years, reaching historic heights. This model, in addition to being enormously destructive for the environment, creates huge spatial segregation (Roch, 2003, p. 117). Some comparative studies confirm a greater tendency towards segregation in Madrid than in other European cities, linked to development of its particular real estate model. Preteceille (2000, p. 87), in line with Leal, proposes as an explanatory hypothesis the limited extent of public housing policies and the massive popular preference for privately owned dwellings.

The arrival of a major population influx of foreign immigrants has also had a significant impact on the housing market. This trend was first detected in the nineteen eighties (IOE, 1991), growing notably in the nineteen nineties. According to the *Padrón Municipal de Habitantes*, at the beginning of 2005 foreign immigrants constituted 15.2% of the city's population. The city and region have seen hundreds of thousands of immigrants from every corner of the globe settle locally. Their tendency is to reside in areas where the indigenous population has similar socio-economic characteristics, sharing many working class habitats. They also have a significant presence in those city centre areas where housing is available at an accessible price, as is the case in Lavapiés.

#### **Lavapiés: A neighbourhood in transformation in the heart of the city**

Lavapiés forms part of the central zone of Madrid. Traditionally it has been a very socially dynamic working class area, in contrast with other parts of the city centre dominated by the service sector. Like many city neighbourhoods, during the last years of Franco's dictatorship and the first of the transition to democracy, it was at the forefront of significant social movements, participating actively in the struggle to recover the historical centre from a physical, social and cultural point of view.

Slowly at first, and then on a massive scale, Lavapiés became one of the destinations of choice for immigrants arriving in Madrid. The existence of a rental market greater than in other areas of the city and prices that were clearly lower attracted these citizens. Proprietors without scruples have taken advantage of this situation to make fat profits, permitting large numbers of people to accumulate in small flats of very low quality or even using the “hot bed” system, whereby rent is payable by the hour on each bed in the dwelling. Their presence was clearly reflected in municipal statistics in the second half of the nineteen nineties. If in 1996 the number of local inhabitants was 28,418, by 2000 this number had risen to 29,662 (EDIS, 2000). A similar evolution could be observed in the historic centre as

a whole (from 122,615 to 130,473). Furthermore, this demographic recovery was accompanied by a rejuvenation of the age structure.

The living conditions of these new inhabitants of Madrid are not easy. In addition to the problem of accommodation, foreign immigrants enter a labour market in which instability and lack of secure employment are the rule. Difficulties in regularising their legal position are great, putting them in a permanent state of insecurity. The complicated measures needed to reunite families become another cause for worry.

A significant trait of the immigrant population in the district is their diversity of origin. Ecuadorians and Moroccans form the most numerous communities, but there are also significant numbers of people from China, the Dominican Republic, Colombia, the Philippines, Senegal, Peru, Portugal, Bangladesh, Cuba, etc. (Lourés, 2003). The commercial structure has changed very quickly, so that there are now many establishments connected with immigration (telephone centres, hairdressers, butchers, etc.) and a lot of wholesale stores run by Chinese people.<sup>12</sup>

Another significant player is the *okupa* [squatter] movement. As pointed out by De la Peña (2005), an illegal occupation carried out in Amparo Street in 1985 was the symbolic beginning of a new era for the movement in the district, mainly involving young people from various parts of Madrid who illegally occupied abandoned buildings. They perform social and cultural activities as a way of reclaiming public spaces, at the same time attacking the speculative investment aspect of the current urban planning model. Evictions in Lavapiés have been followed by new *okupaciones*, maintaining a constant presence in the district.

In addition, various professionals and artists connected with the worlds of music, theatre etc. have chosen the neighbourhood as their place of residence. These people say they are attracted by the cultural diversity of the area, its central position in the city, its historical character, its nightlife etc. For the most part, they fit the profile of what some authors have called “multiculturals” (Simon, 2004, pp. 220–223). They maintain a commitment to the neighbourhood and support mobilisations. Sharing a similar profile, some members of the gay community have recently taken up residence.

Although in terms of quantity these sectors have little weight, their presence is very important to the extent that it partially counters the stigmatisation suffered by Lavapiés in recent times. Different media have presented the district as a dangerous place, occupied by groups of delinquents who have turned it into a “lawless territory”. This image was

heavily reinforced by the terrorist bombings of 11th March 2004 in Madrid, as some of the accused had links with the neighbourhood. Without a doubt, there is an effort being made to convince the population of Madrid that Lavapiés is a dangerous ghetto in urgent need of cleansing. A similar process has been observed in other cities (Smith, 1996; Kesteloot, 2004).

#### *Lavapiés: Area de Rehabilitación Preferente (ARP) [Priority Rehabilitation Area]*

The local, autonomous [regional] and central governments signed a co-operation agreement in 1994 with the aim of boosting rehabilitation of the old quarter of Madrid and the dilapidated outer suburbs. To this end, several courses of action were proposed, notably the so-called *Areas de Rehabilitación Preferente* (Empresa Municipal de la Vivienda, 1999). As pointed out by Lourés (2003), this proposal should be understood in the context of the promotion of such entities in various European countries. At the same time, it formed part of a broader strategy to “heal” the centre of Madrid, rendering it fit for tourism.

A large part of Lavapiés was declared an *ARP* in 1997. A subsequent extension in 2003 applied the plan of action to a wider area. The nature of the project was multidimensional, including rehabilitation of housing, architectural improvement programmes, a social intervention plan and the creation of new facilities.

Nine years after the plan was initiated, the areas where the changes are most evident are the modernisation of infrastructures (sewers, gas, etc.), the architectural improvement of some squares and public spaces and the creation of new facilities. In this last regard, the construction of a new Associate Centre and Library of the *Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED)* [Distance Learning University, the Spanish equivalent of the UK’s Open University], the new Hall of the *Instituto Nacional de Artes Escénicas y de la Música (IN-AEM)* [National Institute of Scenic Arts and Music] and the restoration of the old Casino de la Reina and its gardens are some of the operations that have already been carried out. At the same time, and in parallel to the plan, the *Caja de Madrid* [Madrid Savings Bank] restored a large neo-Mudejar style building, turning it into a cultural centre (the Casa Encendida). All of these were operations proposed in a global key, more for purposes of middle class consumption and as part of the development of the city’s tourism industry, than to meet the immediate needs of the local inhabitants. At the same time, long standing neighbourhood demands such as construction of a new health centre or improvement of the local state schools, overwhelmed by new pupils, were postponed or ignored. The process underway recalls

<sup>12</sup> An approach to the ethnic business in Catalonia can be found in: Solé and Parella, 2005.

the Raval district of Barcelona, where urban renewal is promoted by means of flagship projects, forgetting the opinions and needs of the people living in the area (Degen, 2002).

In 2004 Madrid's *Ayuntamiento* [City Hall] approved a new plan for the centre of the city: the *Plan de Acción de Urbanismo, Vivienda e Infraestructuras para la Revitalization del Centro Urbano (PERCU)* [Zoning, Housing and Infrastructure Action Plan to Revitalise the City Centre]. It includes various projects already planned and proposes some new ones, in the context of Madrid's candidature to host the 2012 Olympic Games, which finally failed. Lavapiés is affected by a new extension of the ARP zone. With this third phase, to be carried out between 2006 and 2008, the entire district will be covered: all 70.82 ha and 22,278 dwellings.

#### *An urban renewal project without citizens' participation*

The inhabitants of Lavapiés heard of the ARP declaration as a *fait accompli*, without any prior channel of participation. On the one hand, the neighbourhood was pleased to have achieved a demand outstanding since the nineteen seventies (rehabilitation). On the other hand, there was obvious concern about the possible undeclared objectives of the project.

Reacting to the announcement, a number of groups and organisations, co-ordinated by the *La Corrala* neighbourhood association, intensified their links. Their central objective was to defend the rehabilitation of the district, but prioritising the most urgent needs of current residents.<sup>13</sup> Thus in October 1997 the *Red de Colectivos de Lavapiés* [Network of Lavapiés Collectives] was born, comprised of very diverse groups<sup>14</sup>:

- (a) The old neighbourhood association movement represented by *La Corrala*, which symbolised continuity from former periods of mobilisation.
- (b) New associations linked to various collectives of immigrants (Moroccans, Senegalese, Guineans, etc.).
- (c) Various manifestations of the *okupa* [squatter] movement.

<sup>13</sup> E.g. housing restoration grants, as proposed initially, were beyond the reach of many residents.

<sup>14</sup> The movement adopted a network structure, very flexible and operational, in the style observed in other cities. Without leaving the Spanish sphere, this form of organisation has also been used by groups such as the *Movimiento de Resistencia Global* and various territorial coordinators created in recent years against urbanist aggression (e.g. *Murcia no se vende* [Murcia is not for sale] – Murcia Region - or *Compromis pel Territori* [Commitment to the Land] –Valencian Community). A wide-ranging reflection on network organisation amongst current social movements may be found in: Juris, 2004.

- (d) NGOs (*Xenofilia*, *Paideia*, etc.) present in the district.
- (e) Environmental, Cultural, etc. Associations

The Network became consolidated as a meeting place or forum, aimed not only at the social and cultural development of the neighbourhood, but also “immigration, child defence, and all aspects of communal living and of habitability” (<http://usuarios.lycos.es/REDLAVAPIÉS/index-es.htm>). Over time, the groups most active within the Network have been *La Corrala*, *El Laboratorio* and the NGOs *Paideia* (integration of children) and *Xenofilia* (immigrants' needs). The immigrants' social organisations, albeit present in the Network, have focused on quotidian breadline survival in the context of total lack of job security.

From the beginning, the Network proposed as one of its principal objectives to utilise a number of unused publicly owned buildings as its Social Centre. There the activities proposed by its component groups would be carried out in a self-governing manner. This proposal became the *Proyecto para Equipamientos Sociales* [Social Facilities Project], presented to Madrid's *Ayuntamiento* in February 1999. The initial declaration said:

“Having evaluated the proposals made by the organisations making up the Network of Lavapiés Collectives, we undertake the presentation of an integral project (...) aimed at the following sectors of the population: children, adolescents, young adults, women, people on the breadline and immigrants, although, as explained below, the focus will not be sectoral but transversal” (Red de Colectivos de Lavapiés, 1999, p. 2).

#### *Local government and different ways of understanding the social mobilisation process*

Faced with the indubitable representative capacity of the Network and its capacity to mobilise the district, the Administration agreed to enter discussions, although always in a mistrustful way. Subsidies were finally given to a number of projects put into practice by various associations and NGOs. Selection of the projects to be financed created tensions between some groups in the Network who criticised the criteria used as unclear. By means of its grant policies, the *Ayuntamiento* introduced the seed of discord into the Network, taking advantage of the underlying differences between the projects proposed by component groups.

The groups with the most solidly critical political agendas (e.g. the *okupa* movement) understood the acceptance of subsidies and the agreement with municipal proposals as an opening to encourage a weakening of social mobilisation. In fact, some of the NGOs began to distance themselves from the Network. In the finished *Programa de Intervención Social* the proposal to use various buildings in the



district as a Social Centre were ignored. In June 2001 the Network coined the expression *Despotismo Castizo* [traditional despotism] (“*todo para el barrio pero sin el barrio*” [“all for the neighbourhood but without the neighbourhood”]) to refer to public involvement in Lavapiés:

“The almost clandestine inauguration, without the critical presence of the neighbourhood collectives, of one of the Plan’s star projects, *i.e.* the Casino de la Reina, is proof: having ignored the residents’ proposals for a self-managing community space, the authorities appear without notice and under cover to show their great “integral” projects to the docile press, without so much as mentioning that this is an empty space: empty of participation, empty of ideas, empty of content, but full of future grants for semi-public ‘social action’ programmes with office hours for tamed and uncritical entities” (Red de Colectivos de Lavapiés, 2001, p. 1).

#### *Combating neighbourhood fragmentation through social mobilisation*

Globally, and despite the distancing that has undoubtedly partially weakened the mobilisation fortress, the process used since 1997 has favoured stronger links between social groups living together locally. One of the Network’s objectives has been to make space for all the needs and points of view of all the inhabitants of Lavapiés, halting a tendency towards social fragmentation. For example, the Network prioritised working with immigrants, but without forgetting that many indigenous residents are elderly folk in very difficult living conditions. Numerous activities have been designed to bring together the social collectives sharing the neighbourhood.

In this regard, one of the most interesting aspects of the process has been the evolution of the *okupa* movement in its relationship with the neighbourhood and its integration in the Network. Traditionally, relations between the *okupa* movement and the neighbours’ movement have not been close, and on occasion they have maintained opposing views. However, the Lavapiés process has introduced a different logic. These declarations by the President of *La Corrala* show an increased understanding on the part of the neighbours’ movement of the *okupas*’ arguments:

“In *La Corrala* we are against buildings lying empty, above all if they are public buildings, although this is not to say we are in favour of squatters occupying any building they choose. With this outlook, our Association has participated in some activities they organise which could benefit the neighbourhood. The blame for “*okupación*” lies with the Administration for having empty public buildings, when we need such buildings here to set up a Youth Centre for the district.” (*Planeta Rastro* n°30, September 2000)

This convergence does not arise only from personal empathy between members and leaders of both collectives. In addition, the fact that the neighbourhood movement has also grown increasingly critical of urban policies adopted by the *Ayuntamiento*, and the willingness of a significant part of the *okupa* collective to cooperate with other groups, has resulted in a common outlook that is not exclusive to Lavapiés. Furthermore, the adoption of flexible network strategies has increased the possibilities of collaboration, allowing for maximum advantage to be taken of the different groups’ potential and producing a convergence between “old” and “new”, ultimately enriching for all.

The history of this process in Lavapiés cannot be understood without reference to the illegal 1997 occupation of the former *Instituto de Investigaciones Agrarias* [Agricultural Investigation Institute] building. From the beginning, the new social centre (*El Laboratorio*) was a reference point not only for the *okupa* movement, but also for the entire associative movement of the district and other movements in Madrid. *El Laboratorio* became a major focus point of social activity, available for use by other groups and very dynamic in its operation<sup>15</sup>. Four versions of *El Laboratorio* were set up in succession in the district, police evictions from each building provoking major demonstrations with a social presence beyond the *okupa* movement: environmental and neighbourhood associations, left wing political parties etc. Over time, the district has undergone other illegal occupations with a level of strong social acceptance. For example, *la Eskalera Karakola*, a women’s initiative that ended with eviction in April 2005, although in this case the Administration agreed to provide alternative premises. Another case was the Library known as *La Biblio*, from which squatters were ejected in January 2003. In 2005 it re-opened in the nearby district of El Rastro.

#### *New forms of urban social protest*

From the beginning the Network accompanies its readings and proposals with imaginative mobilisations. These new forms of protest are another indication of the diversity of groups and projects involved in neighbourhood mobilisation. For example, in November 1998 there was a Dereliction Contest, drawing attention to the deterioration of many buildings and the insufficiency of public proposals for their restoration. Between 30th November and 2nd December 2001, the Network promoted art in the social sphere, with exhibitions, videos, mural design and tours of the tenements, derelict buildings and empty dwellings.

<sup>15</sup> This does not mean that there were no strong internal tensions between the various sectors comprising the movement.

Participation in the ongoing demonstrations, assemblies, open air parties, debates, art exhibitions, workshops, guided tours of appalling living conditions, etc. has been strong. The social make up of the mobilisations has been heterogeneous, attracting a very mixed crowd of Lavapiés residents and support from people from other parts of the city.

*The Tobacco Factory debate: criticising the global city model in terms of a neighbourhood project*

The latest debate, very important for its symbolism, concerns the future of the old Tobacco Factory. This building, occupying an area of over 28,000 m<sup>2</sup> (26,000 in the case of the main building, 2300 for the two annexes) belongs to the *Ministerio de Cultura* [Ministry of Culture] and has lain empty since the cessation of production. In fact, the Network proposed using it to house various activities in its *Propuesta de Equipamientos Sociales*. However, the Ministry favours opening two temporary exhibition spaces and the possible installation of the *Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas* and the *Museo de Reproducciones Artísticas*. Although no definitive refusal of space has been made to date, there is little cause for optimism.

The *Red de Lavapiés* [Lavapiés Network] and a new Network called "*La Tabacalera a Debate*" ["The Tobacco Company Issue"], with a wider territorial ambit, mobilised to promote debate on the future of the building. The Network's declarations show with increasing clarity the links between these operations and criticism of the urban model chosen for Madrid, with references to the city's candidature for the 2012 Olympic Games and the new PERCU Plan:

"The future of the Tobacco Company is the yardstick by which to measure the effective content of the projects for Madrid designed by the administration: Are we faced with ideas intended to create a picture city, a sightseers' city, utterly indifferent to the needs of the city's inhabitants, aimed solely at attracting money from tourists and investors and filling the pockets of promoters and construction companies?" (*Red Lavapiés*, presentation at February 2005 conference).

After years of mobilisation, incorporation of a large variety of groups and militant participation of planning and social science professionals, the debate has become refined. Increasing reference is made to developments in other European and North American cities, the meaning of cultural economy in contemporary cities, urban marketing and competition, with explicit mention of the risk of gentrification. From the Network's point of view, the option of new museums and a cultural axis represents definite confirmation of an unwanted future. Thus, what started as a response to an urban renewal project has become a criticism of the impact of the economic globalisation process on Madrid, con-

verging progressively with other groups (environmentalists, pacifists, etc.) originating in other spheres of action.

## Conclusions

In Madrid, as in other cities, urban planning projects accompanying the globalisation process have provoked new episodes of social mobilisation. In Spain there have been few studies of this type of urban struggle to date, despite an increase in number and intensity. Understanding the characteristics of the phenomenon and interpreting them taking the theoretical and empirical contributions of others into account, should form part of the Spanish urban investigation agenda.

The case in point is of particular interest. It contains explicit evidence of the centrality of territorial scales and the way reflection about these is ultimately included in the discourse of social movements. Clearly, the major urban renewal plan undertaken in Lavapiés is founded on global logic, one more project promoted by the administrations with a view to transforming Madrid into a city that is economically relevant in the context of European cities. In 1997 the design of the plan was finalised, the aims clear, and therefore the *Ayuntamiento* did not open any channels for citizen participation. The response of the local residents, initially focused on the immediate consequences of the plan, was an unforeseen obstacle in a district that the local government considered socially fragmented and with little ability to mobilise. Over time, the mobilisation process itself showed that the logic of the district plan was not fundamentally local but quite the opposite.

Mobilisation was activated when the plan was implemented. In reaction to this urban intervention, a weak and little active social fabric found an element of cohesion that was initially put to clever use by the neighbourhood movement represented by the *La Corrala* residents' association.<sup>16</sup> In this regard, the administrations involuntarily energised a process of neighbourhood mobilisation that generated greater community spirit and mutual interest amongst the population of Lavapiés. Social groups and neighbours that had not previously cooperated in any activities began to do so. Thus, the mobilisation not only forced changes in some of the project's contents and brought the district to the attention of the entire city, but also became a determining factor in halting the internal fragmentation of Lavapiés.

However, convergence between the various groups making up the Network was not exempt

<sup>16</sup> Concerning the structures of political opportunities and their relationship with the appearance and development of social movements: Tarrow, 1998; Mc Adam et al., 2001.

from conflict. As explained above, the NGOs and some of the cultural associations accepted the cooperation offers from the *Ayuntamiento*. Their position within the Network was thus weakened, as many of the mobilised groups felt that by subsidising the NGOs the *Ayuntamiento* was not even partially meeting the needs of the district. Gradually, the Network became consolidated as a sphere of mobilisation against and confrontation of the municipal renewal project, while the NGOs regarded their objectives as achieved to the extent that municipal grants permitted them to carry out their activities. There thus clearly arose the problem posed by Mayer (2003): the movement's mobilisation capacity was weakened to the extent that the NGOs, and with them a substantial number of the poorest residents of the district, responded positively to the policies framed within the New Conventional Wisdom.

The significant role played by the *okupa* movement is a key factor in understanding its proximity to the positions adopted by the anti-globalisation movement. Illegally occupied spaces such as *El Laboratorio* were for years an essential reference point for this movement.<sup>17</sup> Personal contacts, joint activities, etc. helped interpretation of the urban process in Lavapiés in the light of arguments by critics of the globalisation process. Finally, opposition to that city model became one more expression of the struggle against globalisation.<sup>18</sup>

However, the indubitable specifics observed in this phase of urban mobilisations do not mean they arose without any connection to previous historical events. In fact, in this particular case, the role played by the old neighbourhood association, *La Corrala*, is very significant, activating and coordinating the mobilisation and recalling that rehabilitation demands had been outstanding since the nineteen seventies. In Madrid many of the old neighbourhood associations disappeared or survived symbolically, as was the case of *La Corrala*. Nevertheless, to the extent that in many areas they retain significant popular prestige, they can play a role as dynamo and empower new mobilisations. Perhaps their main problem is the difficulty of attracting new generations of militants, more interested in other movements such as the *okupa* or environmental movements. In any case, consideration of these urban struggles from a perspective of long duration should not be sneezed at, evaluating in each case the role played by the old associations, the aged militants, the more or less explicit references to other struggles in the past, the continuity of demands, etc.

Finally, the Madrid mobilisations, together with those taking place with similar motivations in other parts of Spain (the Autonomous Communities of Valencia, Catalonia, Murcia, Andalusia, Aragón, Asturias, Galicia, etc.), also draw attention to the democratic deficit observable in Spanish city governance. Almost 30 years after the first democratic local authority elections, and within a legal framework that formally includes ample opportunity for participation, social dissatisfaction nevertheless continues to grow. Local and regional governments display great facility in reaching agreement with the private sector in major urban developments that are profoundly changing the social and territorial structure of Spanish cities. However, the possibilities of affecting these projects or any discussion of their content and design are practically non-existent. It is therefore hardly surprising that in Madrid, as in other Spanish cities, urban movements consider lack of democracy as a prime motive for concern and protest.

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<sup>17</sup> Which in Madrid demonstrated an enormous capacity for mobilisation.

<sup>18</sup> Participation in these movements by some professionals and academics contributed new theoretical elements for analysis, and the results of their investigations also made a significant contribution to their evolution.

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