

The Abundant Crops of Subjectivisation and the Difficult Arts of Institutionalisation: Building Transformative Collaborative Spaces of Urban Labour in the Context of the Mares de Madrid Initiative



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Introduction: Questioning the Transformative and Institutionalisation Outcomes of Collaborative Urban Labour Spaces

The reinvention of place and spatial relations has been quintessential to the development of contemporary social innovation practices, new urban movements and neo-municipalist discourses. New coworking spaces and spaces of labour at large have played an important role in the shaping of their imaginaries and projects. In this contribution, we will present and discuss the coworking spaces and broader labour-based collaborative processes promoted by the “Mares de Madrid” (MdM, hereafter) initiative started by the city of Madrid under the tenure of the progressive, neo-municipalist coalition of Mayor Manuela Carmena between 2015 and 2019. Funded by the EU Urban Innovative Actions (UIA) programme, MdM built on the legacy of a variety of grassroots, collaborative practices that developed in the city as alternatives to austerity policies put in place by the state in response to the 2008 great recession. MdM aimed to create neighbourhood-based and labour-intensive economies focusing on mobility, recycling, food, energy and care through the start-up of social and solidarity economy (SSE hereafter) entities to be incubated in new collaborative workspaces reclaimed from abandoned buildings. We will examine this case moving from an institutional perspective, looking at how practices such as the ones conveyed by Mares MdM can be activated, produce changes within the local system and eventually consolidate in the long term through processes of *institutionalisation*.

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MdM positioned itself at the crossroads of a variety of contemporary processes and forces, allowing us to look at its trajectory across a variety of critical analytical dimensions while contributing to a variety of debates. In the 2010s' Madrid's context, new social and urban movements led among certain social groups to new processes of subjectivisation, to be understood as "existential forms of resistance and assertion of subjectivity (...) and an individual search for alternatives to counter the effects of systemic forces" also through the creation of new "living constructs", i.e. "activities that reinforce the construction of (...) personal identities while, at the same time, sharing in the creation of a collective identity" (Farro, 2014, p. 23). Neo-municipalist political discourses and projects have offered these processes a credible trajectory of expansion, if not hegemony, and a platform to experiment with and nurture such new living "constructs". Transformative social innovation frameworks have supplied a wide variety of epistemic communities, elements of knowledge, tools and ways of doing essential to their actual codification and implementation. Finally, coworking practices have offered a term of reference for designing new communal spaces and articulating spatial and scalar arrangements from the single building to the city and beyond. These processes and forces are not intended as a causal, diachronic chain but rather as a complex, multi-layered process in which every single element has provided multiple, mutual, retroactive feedback to initiatives such as MdM. Resulting from these processes and forces, this initiative's trajectory can be observed at various interconnected scales and axes.

On the one hand, we can look at how it changed entrenched balances of power by redistributing it between different social groups and between established formal institutions and other actors. On the other, we can look at how it advanced a new spatial imaginary able to generate rescaling from the very micro-level – that of the single facilities it created – to the neighbourhood and urban/metropolitan levels. The varying degree of MdM success in assuming a transformative position across scales and along these axes signals the level of effective institutionalization it achieved. By institutionalization, we intend the change of patterns of interaction based on the transformation of values, rules, procedures and actors involving the political and policy realms as well as civil society (Sánchez-Hernández & Glückler, 2019). Naturally, the institutionalization of a practice depends on various factors that deal with the characteristics of the governance and regulative system and the social and urban structure. The contribution is organised as follows: first, we review relevant literature on social innovation, neo-municipalism and coworking spaces; second, we present MdM's context and main components; third, we look at workings and spatialities of the MdM's facilities; fourth, we discuss the materials presented; and fifth, we draw some conclusions and formulate some further research questions.

Common Questions for Different Debates: The Quest for Transformation and Institutionalisation in Social Innovation, Neo-municipalism and Collaborative Working Projects

To be considered “transformative” social innovation (SI, hereafter), practices have to “challenge(s), alter(s) or replace(s) dominant institutions in the social context producing an irreversible, persistent adjustment in societal values, outlooks and behaviours” (Avelino et al., 2019, p. 196). Westley and Antadze (2010) define SI as “a complex process of introducing new products, processes or programs that profoundly change the basic routines, resource and authority flows, or beliefs of the social system in which the innovation occurs” (p. 2). Transformative SI practices are the ones able to rearticulate the economic realms based on new social and territorial logics and needs (Brody et al. 2021), putting into question inherited development patterns in ways that can be both radical and incremental (Bauler et al. 2019). They also empower marginalised social groups and challenge power asymmetries while introducing institutional changes in governance systems (Smith, 2017). A “multi-actor perspective” (Avelino et al., 2019) in the analysis of SI practices has illuminated the emergence of instances of so-called bottom-linked governance (Medina-García et al., 2021), to be understood as “new forms of democratic governance collaboratively built between initiatives and activists, their scalarly dynamic networks and state institutions and agencies” (Moulaert et al., 2019, p. 4). These arrangements can combine a variety of forms of democratic innovations, from co-production models of design and supply of services to deliberative arenas. As they have been characterized by a quest for new sources of local political legitimisation, neo-municipalist political projects and discourses have commonly been platforms for the experimentation and spread of such innovations. They have done so in inherently spatial ways, rethinking scalar arrangements to enhance local participation and deploying new ideas regarding the organisation of production and social reproduction in the urban space. New municipalist experiments have also prefigured “alternative regionalisms” attempting to challenge state-regulated capitalism and incubate alternative economic spaces (Thompson, 2021). The neo-municipalist wave in Spain articulated claims on the overall functioning of the political and economic system at the national and European levels with expectations of a change of entrenched urban development models and the ways in which production and social reproduction are organised in cities. Both SI, grassroots practices developed in Spanish cities in the context of the so-called 2011 indignados/15M movement and the following neo-municipalist political projects have been characterized by the protagonism of a young, highly precarized and skilled workforce – what we can define as the urban cognitariat – whose prospects have been put even more into question by the impacts of austerity on employment, welfare and education. Such forms of collective action became the source of relevant processes of subjectivisation for this social group (Farro, 2014), while its mobilisation in neo-municipalist political projects has also represented a way to channel the largely untapped

reservoir of collective intelligence they represent into forms of policy co-production (Coppola, 2018a, b, c). SI initiatives and neo-municipalist projects have also addressed issues related to the ways and spatialities of urban labour experimenting with new types of coworking practices. Traditionally, coworking spaces have been understood as the sharing of the workspace between individuals working independently, who are heterogeneous by occupation, sector and organizational status and affiliation and develop mutual relationships either spontaneously (Gandini, 2015; Orel & Dvouletý, 2020) or as the outcome of specific activities and tools (Parrino in Gandini & Cossu, 2021). In this regard, their nature of platforms aimed not only at overcoming the solitude of post-Fordist, creative and independent urban workers but also at responding to “individualised worker’s demands for autonomy, recognition and social belonging” (Merkel, 2019, p. 529). Coworking spaces acted as informal mechanisms for the development and circulation of tacit knowledge embedded in knowledge-intensive working practices (Moriset, 2013) in the context of de-structuring labour relations. As “urban socio-material infrastructures” that “organise interaction within them but also with one another, enabling networks of communication”, they can also provide a platform for economic, political and social action” (Merkel, 2015, p. 123). How these essential qualities are theorized and performed surely also depends on the political discourses and narratives of the “community” within which coworking spaces are embedded and on the local, institutional and regulative contexts (Spinuzzi et al., 2019). As coworking spaces are finely “curated” spaces and practices, the ways in which the intentional creation of inter-connections between people, ideas, objects and places is made are critical. Building on the three strata definition of the creative city of Cohendet et al. (2010) made of “underground” (skilled individuals), “middle-ground” (epistemic communities and communities of practice) and “upper ground” (institutions and organizations), Gandini & Cossu (2021, p.435) locate coworking spaces in the middle ground, also noticing how their role of mediation include relationships with neighbourhoods. The existence and nature of this relationship have become of particular importance for discriminating between coworking practices compatible with forms of “collaborative individualism”, commonly mobilised by real-estate promoters and corporations, and “resilient coworking practices” attempting to “blending entrepreneurial logics with forms of political and social activism” (Gandini & Cossu, 2021). The latter work proactively to maintain a closer relationship between the space and its local context, producing outcomes that do not reproduce the individualised ethos the neo-corporate model engenders while promoting a community discourse based on social impact (Gandini & Cossu, 2021). Location is vital in this regard. Coworking spaces’ location patterns often resemble those of service industries in urban areas, with so-called creative clusters representing a preferential location (Di Vita & Mariotti, 2017). As a policy tool, coworking spaces have been deployed to create variably scaled economic clusters or to achieve wider societal goals such as the “urban regeneration” of peripheries and a better linkage of their lower-income residents to economic opportunities. When comparative costs drive locational choices outside of already developed areas, coworking spaces are deemed to facilitate gentrification, supporting the symbolical repositioning of less central areas. At the same

time, locating coworking spaces in outright peripheral areas incurs a risk of insulation from the local context. These different streams of literature provide relevant elements for the analysis of MdM's context and development that we will present in the next section.

Mares de Madrid in Its Context: From New Social Movements to Neo-municipalist Politics

In 2015, ending a decades-long political and electoral hegemony of the neoliberal, conservative Partido Popular (PP), a progressive political figure – Manuela Carmena – was elected mayor of Madrid. Her victory was the outcome of wider political processes involving the entire country. Starting in 2014, indignados/15M movement's activists formed new progressive urban electoral coalitions in connection with the national rise of *Podemos*, a new “left populist” political force. This convergence was presented as the embodiment of a new political practice of “confluence” (*confluencia*) between parties and organisations, ordinary inhabitants and grassroots groups. This was the outcome of a process of “overflow” (*desborde*), meaning a new, unpredictable logic of collective action leading to innovative self-organised forms of protest – such actions in defence of public education or health-care – and innovative institutional initiatives (Rubio-Pueyo, 2017). The creation of *Ganemos Madrid* and its confluence in a larger electoral cartel – *Ahora Madrid* (AM, hereafter) – was one of the main events in this process of political restructuring deeply rooted in previous patterns of social mobilisation. AM's programme had some key, defining characters. First, moving away from a conventional framing of administrative and policy realms, the coalition advanced new thematic priorities underlining the mutual connections between various issues such as inequalities, unemployment, the environment, neighbourhoods, gender, and citizens' participation. Second, besides using primaries to select candidates, AM proposed a participative approach to draft its platform integrating neighbourhood assemblies and online participation tools by following a cooperative open-source logic (Rubio-Pueyo, 2017). Third, the transformation of urban governance through neighbourhood decentralization, increased accountability and direct participation was paramount in the coalition's discourse. These elements resounded with the key elements of the processes of subjectivisation that wide components of the “cognitariat” (Rubio-Pueyo, 2017) experienced in the context of the indignados/15M movement. AM's success proved the maturity and relevance of these subjectivisation processes and the possibility of linking the interests and self-representation of the cognitariat with the ones of the more traditional working classes and the peripheral neighbourhoods in which these lived. Once in power, the new coalition promoted various grand strategies embodying a decisive change in local political discourse. A specific commissioner for neighbourhood's participation was appointed, the local districts' role was strengthened with the formation of local, thematic working groups channeling

policy proposals towards the city, and a “territorial cohesion fund” (“Fundo de reequilibrio territorial”) aimed at increasing the allocation of city funds to more disadvantaged neighbourhoods was launched. Also, a participatory budgeting initiative, the Decide Madrid initiative, was implemented (Feenstra & Tormey, 2021). The city launched a new SSE strategy aimed at supporting new cooperatives and social enterprises while pursuing social and systemic innovation through the experimentation of co-production of municipal policies. The strategy pursued the creation of SSE territorial, neighbourhood-based ecosystems, and a comprehensive support system for creating new businesses (Arampatzi, 2022). Following a wider trend of politicization of care at the crossroads of recent feminist movements and grassroots social practices grown during the great recession, the new administration launched a “City of Care’ strategy” – La Ciudad de los cuidados – as one more cross-sectoral policy aimed at influencing health, education, culture, and environment policies (Martinez & Gasperi, 2021). The plan “sought to implement pilot projects and prototypes to be tested and improved at the neighbourhood level and from a community perspective” (Martinez & Gasperi, 2021, p. 23), favouring the collaborations between care providers and the care demand and the innovative use of public facilities. Governance innovation and hybridisation were one of the goals, as the social-public partnership model it promoted intended to be an alternative to new public management style public-private partnerships that, also in care, had been quintessential to decades of neoliberal governance in Madrid. In many ways, the MdM initiative acted as an ambitious pilot project engaging with the multiple trenches from which the neo-municipalist administration was attempting to change local equilibria while mobilising social groups and activists’ network that had been critical to its electoral success. In this sense, it appeared not to be an insulated, opportunistic project aimed at simply capturing EU funding but rather the most comprehensive, integrated attempt to embody in one single initiative a variety of themes at the centre of the neo-municipalist discourse: a condition that fuelled its potential but that also made it dependent on the success and institutionalization of other key policy and regulative changes.

Skilfully Planning Transformation: Governance, Frameworks and Tools of the Mares de Madrid Initiative

MdM pursued a variety of objectives at once: the prototyping and co-designing of new functions for disused public buildings, the fostering of territorial economic innovation processes and ecosystems based on the adoption of SSE models and the creation of new and better-quality employment opportunities in working-class, high unemployment neighbourhoods (Mares de Madrid, 2019). The centerpiece of the initiative was the creation of new facilities called “Mar” located in the neighbourhoods of Centro, Villaverde, Vallecas and Vicálvaro, each of them characterized by a certain degree of concentrated social disadvantage and potential specialisation in

one of the sectors of mobility, food, recycling, energy and care. The Mar was to become the most advanced prototype of the multi-purpose territorial facilities envisioned in the mentioned SEE strategy, including spaces for individual and group work, collective and neighbourhood-based activities of different sorts and production. In line with UIA requirements, MdM moved from a partnership stretching across scales – from the city to the region – and across different types of actors, state entities, civil society, professionals and companies, with at the core a strategic relationship between the city administration and a set of entities with variably intense ties with indignados/15M movement and grassroots practices, including the cooperatives *Dinamia*, *Tangente*, the architecture firm *Sic Arquitectura y Urbanismo* and the NGO *Vivero de Iniciativas Ciudadanas* (VIC). MdM governance model embodied that new way to conceive governing the city along the lines of a new so-called “public-social” collaboration, encompassing on virtually equal footing the city administration on one side and civil society and SSE actors on the other. The initiative was governed by a board including all coalition participants – the Mares coordination – with the most relevant tasks being carried out by the mentioned cooperatives and associations and city officials focusing instead on the more regulation-burdened tasks of procuring the works for the renovation of the four buildings. The collaborative nature of the endeavour was also visible in the key role assigned to SSE partners in the management of the new facilities. This approach drew its legitimacy not exclusively in the political discourse of the new city administration but also in MdM’s very high degree of organisational complexity and innovation that, as such, implied a high degree of flexibility, learning-by-doing and cultural capital hard to find in austerity weakened, ageing public administrations. MdM was organized around a set of intermingled processes aimed at building evidence and capabilities among the actors involved toward creating new SEE businesses able to form highly specialised, innovative and inclusive ecosystems. All these processes were centred around specific, highly theorised devices mostly oriented at turning forms of tacit knowledge into strategic resources within the framework of a new, intensively communicative and relational *milieu* participated by residents, entrepreneurs, activists and experts embedded in both local and supra-local networks. Such devices moved from a peculiar understanding of local development policy as a process in which policymakers had to act as activists engaged in constantly travelling between different scales and the demand and supply sides to construct a new economic sector. This represented a wholesome approach with ambitious and ramifying implications in policy areas as diverse as training, employment, neighbourhood services and welfare. Among these tools were the so-called skills laboratories (“laboratorio de competencias”), value chains (“cadenas de valor”) and practice-oriented learning communities (“comunidades de aprendizaje orientadas a la practica”). The “Laboratorios” were designed by *Vivero de Iniciativas Ciudadanas* and *Dinamia* based on previous experiences of collaborative mapping focusing on evictions and self-help practices (Gonick, 2016; Annunziata & Lees, 2016). The first step of the *laboratorios* was the co-creation of four “cartografias ciudadanas” (citizens’ cartographies), one for each neighbourhood, based on residents’ and local actors’ inputs on the formal and informal grassroots initiatives that

could be associated with Mares' five thematic cores. Later, the laboratories moved on to mapping existing, unaddressed social needs and the inhabitants' skills. Also, the so-called *Cadenas de valor* ("value chains") were visual representations of the system of relations and processes connecting economic actors participating in the same market from the raw materials' provision throughout the final consumption of a specific product. In reference to "circular economy" conceptualisations, Mares' "*Cadenas de valor*" also included so-called cascades, meaning how a product, once consumed, could make its return to the origin of the entire chain and suggestions regarding the development of "do-it-yourself" (DIY) and collaborative economies by allowing the conflating of different rings of the chain (as an example: repairing your bike, growing your food). The "*Cadenas*" were studied both at the sectorial level – mobility, food, energy, recycling and care –, looking at how articulated and complete were the productive networks in the four neighbourhoods. Representing both the current economy and the potential for transformation, the design of each "value chain" was organized around a matrix of relevant "badges", including products and services already present in the territory, the current role of the social economy, the services promoted by the public administration and products and services produced off the market. The "*Cadenas*" were built through workshops involving promoters of new SSE projects, local actors and established actors active in each productive chain. Coming to the latter tool, by "*Comunidades de aprendizaje orientadas a la practica*" ("practice-oriented communities of learning", CAP), the Mares initiative understood "groups of people who share a concern or passion about something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact" (Mares de Madrid, 2019). Based on Etienne Wenger's theorisations (Wenger, 2004), CAPs were frameworks for research, generation, acquisition and deepening of knowledge oriented towards structuring the SSE initiatives Mdm intended to support. Knowledge was to be produced from the interaction between community members but also relying, when needed, on external inputs. In so doing, CAPs attempted to do what in workforce development policies was done through traditional formal education and training. CAPs had to be open-ended, and their domain could be related to a topic (e.g. childhood), to a know-how (e.g. how to manage teams). Their participants could range from individuals starting a project to established specialized actors or activists interested in building knowledge, not necessarily from a perspective of immediate economic use. All these processes were supposed to mutually contribute to the social production of new localised economic ecosystems made of an evolving social demand, forms of everyday knowledge as well as specialised expertise. The "laboratories" were supposed to generate new possible economic projects based on mapping local needs and skills. "*Cadenas*" were supposed to indicate niches for developing new economic projects and opportunities for collaboration and interdependencies between the value chain of a specific product with those relative to the other sectors involved in Mdm's operations. Finally, the CAPs were supposed to allow economic projects to tap into a large reservoir of expert knowledge left at the margin by an economic system that seldom involved the most educated, both formally and even more informally, sections of the population. All these processes

were initiated, at times completed, while the city was working on opening the four facilities.

Negotiating Space, Reshaping Scale: The *Mar* as Places for the Social Production of the Urban Economy

The opening of the four *Mar* spaces was a key objective of the initiative, as the materiality of the spaces was also set to embody the shaping of a relationship between all these sophisticated lines of work with real places – especially the neighbourhoods – and users. However, since the beginning, the choice to place the four new spaces in decommissioned public buildings proved problematic as rising costs, archaeological findings and other public procurement issues impeded the opening of the Mar of recycling in the neighbourhood of Vicalvaro and the Mar of Mobility in Vallecas. For the latter two, the city rushed to set up temporary solutions in the same districts, while the Mar of Energy in Centro and the Mar of Food in Villaverde were instead opened in 2019. Also, provisional spaces of a more productive nature – a makerspace connected to the Mar of Energy and a logistics space connected to the Mar of Mobility – were set up by renting private spaces. Since their gestation through a co-creational process managed by VIC, the Mar were supposed to be hybrid spaces combining functions, uses and social groups rarely cohabiting under one roof: a space of work and collaboration for the incubated economic projects, of early access for people interested in the SSE and in the five economic sectors, of learning and training, of organising and animating the relationship between the initiative, the projects and the community. Exclusively for reasons of conciseness, we will only focus on the Mar of Energy and the Mar of Food while setting aside the the other mentioned spaces.

The project of the Mar of Energy reclaimed a community centre built in the 1980s, creating a flexible space organised around three main functional areas. In the coworking area, participants in the specific economic projects shared an open space with no fixed places while having the opportunity to use reserved rooms for internal meetings, meetings with clients and with other projects or with the MdM support services. Social events, from training sessions to workshops promoted by local groups, took place instead in a collective space. Economic projects had to be assessed by the Mares coordination to be incubated within the Mar. The incubation contract lasted one renewable year to ensure its transitional nature and the ability to accommodate new projects continuously. Projects had to be coherent with the thematic concentration, even if cross-sectorialism and experimentalism were highly valued. Incubated projects involved highly skilled, mostly young individuals and included initiatives like La Corriente, a renewable energy cooperative; Solencoop, a cooperative specialized in the setting up of solar energy systems; and Socaire, an association focusing on energy with an emphasis on fighting energy poverty. The management of the space was produced in a rather flexible way through the

combination of formal and informal mechanisms that, besides their consistency with the goals of the initiative, were based on the aim of “building a sense of ownership and belonging among the regular users of the space” (Coppola, 2019). Each Mar had a coordinator appointed by the Mares coordination before the start of the initiative and was normally part of one of the promoting organizations. A Mar coordination committee met monthly and was participated by the coordinator, the members of the different working areas of MdM and the participants in the incubated economic projects. The committee shared an agenda for the use of the space while taking fundamental decisions about its planning and daily workings. At the same time, self-organisation contributed to the facility’s management, with users proposing initiatives and resolving daily issues – including general upkeep, the use of the kitchen, etc. – relying on a limited budget provided by the city.

The Mar of Food in Villaverde responded to a similar spatial design logic. However, it also included specialised facilities, such as a 150 square meters kitchen called the Gastrolab and storage space. Besides, there were coworking spaces like the ones of the Mar of Energy, a shared meeting space and a terrace open to users’ gatherings. In this case, too, the Mar coordination approved the incubation of the projects and, therefore, their access to the Gastrolab based on some essential criteria: the project’s maturity, social impact, and ability to strengthen the Mar’s sectorial specialisation. Projects were grouped into three main families: the *pre-viveristas*, i.e. informal activities with a minimal level of planning; the *viveristas*, i.e. formal activities close to marketisation; and finally, initiatives aimed at the involvement of the neighbourhood. The Gastrolab had its own coordinator, who was also responsible for the training of economic projects’ members in the management procedures, health and safety rules and the sustainability of the productive processes. The overall goal of the Mar of Food was to support new SSE economic projects all along the entire food chain with an emphasis on local, sustainable, fair and healthy food. At times, this implied – as also happened in other sectors – to push individual projects to become collective projects and promote collaborations between similar projects that could, in this way, increase their scalability. These aggregation processes could happen before and during the access to the Mar, being both a precondition and an outcome of using the space. Furthermore, the Mar of Food also facilitated formalising informal economic practices. Projects supported by the Mar of Food included La Osa, a cooperative supermarket; Hortesana, an agricultural cooperative; and Las Hermanas Budares, a food production cooperative formed by women with a Venezuelan background.

In both cases, the relationship with the surrounding community was the object of great attention and reflection by the coordinators and the project coordination. The relation between the Mar as a “community place” open to all and a specialised place for the development and clustering of economic projects and, more in general, the tension between a territorial and a sectorial understanding and operationalisation of the initiative were one of its most complex challenges and, as such, had to be continuously negotiated. The overall aim of the “Agitacion economica” line of work was to orchestrate the active involvement of an extensive series of actors across territories and sectors in support of the economic initiatives. The first step was the

mapping and outreach to key actors, including district governments and local employment boards. In the case of the former, the focus was the establishment of so-called "mesas public-social" – collaborative schemes between the districts and actors of the SSE – with the identification of potential public procurement innovations. The rationale of the four neighbourhood strategies designed by the team was, in general, the development of a "social market" at the local level: local actors could support the creation of local demand for the services of the incubated economic projects while acting as a gateway to a certain social group – i.e. migrants, the elderly, unemployed – or for sensibilisation activities regarding the SSE. Neighborhood conditions, in this regard, varied greatly.

For the Mar of Energy, the main risk was, in fact, "to die of too much success" (Coppola, 2019) as its central location and the presence of the young cognitariat and "consumption aware" middle classes exercised a positive pressure on the new centre, making it a good starting point for the set-up of many of the economic projects incubated. Outreach to the population was one of the key activities of the Mar by building relationships with trade associations and local groups and participating in local fora and organizations, employment boards and schools, as well as building a market for the products and services offered by its economic projects. By the end of the initiative, the Mar of Energy had become a pivotal location for people interested in energy transitions by hosting initiatives, facilitating exchange and collaboration between economic projects and activists and animating outreach initiatives and learning based on the deployment of the tools we mentioned. In Villaverde, the strategic location of the Mar along its main street, its design and aesthetics made it an evident presence, although, differently from the Mar of Energy, the social composition of the area did not make new links based on consumer awareness as easily as in Centro. Open-house days were organised to inform residents about the Mar's activities to overcome the problem.

By its closure in 2019, Mares de Madrid had opened two long-term public facilities and had involved 559 economic projects, supported 332 in a tailored manner, incubated 91 and directly contributed to the foundation of 48 new businesses (Mares de Madrid, 2019). The elections taking place the same year saw the return to power of the PP with, this time, critical support of the recently formed far-right party of Vox. This political change happened at a critical juncture of MdM's implementation as, with the ending of EU funding, its consolidation had to be decided. Its fate widely depended on the positioning of the new conservative administration with the broader change in political discourse promoted by Carmena's administration through that variety of grand, although highly narrative, strategies we mentioned. Although some financial support for SSE enterprises continued, the new administration sidelined the implementation of the SSE strategy: the planned "Observatory of the Social and Solidarity Economy" was not put in place, and the offices for the support of the SSE, the "Oficinas de la Economía social", were closed (Coppola, 2020). In this context, as the Carmena administration did not manage to launch a new procurement process before the elections, MdM managing entities found themselves no longer in charge of the Mar spaces that all lost their coordinators and staff. Only the Mar of Energy and Food – although not the Gastrolab – stayed open to a

limited number of projects previously incubated but with no support and the insertion of other non-SSE projects supported by Madrid International, a mainstream start-up incubator.

In the longer term, the city included the Mar in the framework of a more comprehensive policy aimed at creating more traditional “innovation ecosystems” while erasing their sectoral focus and limiting the quota for SSE initiatives to a maximum of 25 percent. The management of these spaces was decided by procurement processes open to all kinds of companies in the perspective of a more formalised, top-down governance, including universities and business actors. Among the activities required within the procurement call were also devices introduced by Mares. However, there was a change in focus from establishing connections among incubated initiatives and the neighbourhoods towards establishing connections with larger companies or investors (Coppola, 2020).

Discussion: A (Too) Great Transformative Ambition and a Failed Institutionalization

Starting with the first axis of our analysis and looking at it against the legacy of Madrid’s long-term neoliberal governance and regulatory model, we can say that MdM has been a relevant source of innovation in policymaking and governance models and of empowerment of specific social groups. MdM’s management was mostly directed by a relatively younger, high-in-cultural capital urban cognitariat that was long marginalised in the city’s governance and regulative system before the advent of the neo-municipalist administration. Although on several accounts, this social group was in a more privileged position than the working classes that the initiative intended also to serve, it was exposed to high unemployment and precarity further dramatised by the effects of austerity . Other social groups were involved and empowered as well – a variety of economic projects included individuals with backgrounds with ties with low-skilled immigration and the working classes (see the case of the Las Tres Calles cooperative in the area of care in Coppola, 2018a, b, c), but they were certainly in a lesser central position in MdM’s operations. This outcome is largely explained by the previous subjectivisation processes that involved the urban cognitariat. These represented a pre-condition for MdM’s design and legitimisation as a policy tool while arguably becoming the most critical resource throughout its implementation. The overall initiative and the Mar spaces were highly selective and curated environments that proved able to accommodate the demands and imaginaries of new living environments this social group brought (Farro, 2014) while managing to advance a clear transformative reading of the role of coworking spaces and collaborative spaces of labour. By selecting projects based on a set of prerequisites – the first being collective SSE economy projects – and pushing them to scale up through collaborations, merging and articulating with local needs and demands, MdM’s management framed coworking spaces as spaces

aiming not solely at improving working and living conditions for the cognitariat, but more broadly at the construction of alternative economies through the design and activation of a variety of complex organisational processes. Accordingly, the MdM's management model combined relatively top-down dimensions leveraging the new innovative managerial culture circulating in SI-related epistemic communities with more collaborative empowerment dynamics leveraging on subjectivisation processes that pre-existed MdM but were also further empowered in its context.

Moving to the second axis of our analysis, the spatial imaginary advanced by MdM and embodied in the opening of the Mar themselves was bold and transformational in many ways, openly framing and addressing processes of peripheralisation and polarisation shaping the urban and metropolitan context. On the one hand, it advocated for the location of sophisticated urban functions in peripheral neighbourhoods in a traditionally spatially redistributive manner. On the other, in more innovative ways, it advocated for a different understanding and operationalisation of space in the social construction of the urban economy. It did so by pursuing the establishment of neighbourhood-scale markets and systems of production. On one level, MdM was a relocalisation project – promoting a downward rescaling of certain economies – while on the other, it attempted a new form of upward rescaling by developing ties between actors based in Madrid and other local and supra-local actors to create new SSE entities able to enter in the city's procurement systems and disrupt entrenched equilibria and incumbent positions (see the case of collaboration set-up with Basque cooperative actors by the Mar of Recycling in Coppola, 2017). The challenges that MdM encountered in these rescaling exercises also point to the mentioned critical issue of the relationship between coworking spaces and neighbourhoods. The attempt of the initiative to create a framework for the circulation, blending and mobilization of the tacit knowledge embedded in different social worlds, the management entities and the new economic projects on the one hand and the local populace on the other has proved difficult. The mapping of local inhabitants' skills seldom led to economic projects, with most of the latter developing out of urban level, higher skilled patterns of engagement. This varied across sectors and spaces – as mentioned, initiatives in care and food had a more working-class and, at times, neighbourhood-based rooting – but overall, the results in this regard were limited. The initiative had a very structured, highly designed approach to this matter, and likely the long-term routinisation of many of the related Mares' innovative practices would have brought more results in the medium term. The deployment of key resources coming from SI managerial culture in such a short time was not enough to fill a gap in subjectivisation that characterised working-class groups and the neighbourhoods in most cases. The everyday functioning of the spaces was essential in this regard as it allowed the reproduction of processes of subjectivation that were linked to the creation of new collectivities around the management of the Mar itself and the creation of new networked economic projects. However, this process did not take place at the scale of the neighbourhood in the measure initially imagined. Rather, it happened mostly at that of the epistemic “middleground” that, as mentioned, has been considered particularly relevant by the literature on creative economies and coworking. These developments, which are

largely dependent on the wider social and urban structure in which the initiative took place, are to be put in relation to broader circumstances if we want to understand why the MdM's institutionalization at the political and policy level failed.

MdM was the outcome of a peculiar, transcalar convergence of circumstances: the eruption of new social movements at the national level, the spread of SI practices at the local level, a successive change in political leadership at the city level – the neo-municipalist turn – and the availability of opportunities of innovation for cities at the EU level. This powerful, temporary convergence allowed deep, intense experimentation that has also involved the reframing of public conceptualisations of urban services, the labour it implies, the spaces in which it can be nurtured and the role that institutions play in their structuring. However, especially in Madrid, the neo-municipalist platform had to be implemented under significant institutional constraints that included unknown (to new leaders) and slow bureaucratic procedures, legal limitations, misalignments with higher levels of government and austerity measures that impeded spending and recruitment (Mota Consejero & Janoschka, 2023; Blanco et al., 2020). Despite such constraints, MdM was implemented in a very experimental manner by incrementally defining a set of highly codified practices and procedures that came to represent a parallel formality to that of entrenched city procedures and routines (that had to be recognised and frequently attended). However, the political leadership was not able to give way to a variety of deeper changes in regulation that would have improved chances of institutionalization even under conditions of political change: in particular, it failed to launch a procurement process for the longer-term management of the Mar spaces based on the initiative's practices that would have institutionalised MdM's innovative governance model; to enact a substantial review of procurement policies that would have opened up market opportunities to the SSE economic projects incubated by MdM while embedding them in city procedures; and to effectively execute its decentralisation and participation policy that would have strengthened the possibility of strong integration between the Mar and the neighbourhood level (Coppola, 2018a, b, c). These failures signal the inability of the municipalist leadership to move beyond a phase in which political intervention was organized around the coupling of highly narrative interventions (the many overarching strategies presented by the administration) with the activation of temporary, loose spaces of policy experimentation (the UIA initiative) in favour of a more stable, regulation-intensive institutionalization of change. The reasons for the lack of this ability may be manifold – lack of political resources, too high regulative barriers, lack of support from a variety of actors and social groups – but they seem, however, to have played an important role in the failed political and policy institutionalization of the practices advanced by MdM. Institutionalization happened, but it was mostly at the economic level, with the lasting of several of the economic projects incubated by the initiative. The spaces in which they were incubated – that represented a recognition and institutionalization of the “living environments” brought upon by the cognitariat in the context of their previous processes of subjectivization – were instead largely normalised, coming to represent a case of failed long-term institutionalisation.

Subjectivization, Scale and the Forms of Institutionalization: Three Open Questions for Further Research on Collaborative Urban Labour Spaces and Urban Change

Progressive political strategies and their relationship with inherited governance and regulative environments, subjectivisation processes of certain social groups and their relation to broader class and social structures, resources circulating in epistemic communities and their availability to grassroots practices, inherited urban social geography and their ability to support rescaling processes: all these elements appear to be relevant in the making of local assemblages of transformative practices such as MdM and in defining their chances of institutionalization. The case of MdM proves that, unsurprisingly, such assemblages are widely mediated by local conditions and that some general questions related to the transformative potential of coworking practices and the like have to lead to profoundly context-sensitive analysis. In conclusion, we suggest three main potential research avenues that arise for the analysis of this case and that we consider relevant for the variety of debates we have engaged with.

The first issue revolves around the complex relationships between these practices and the local scale. Focusing on neighbourhoods as spaces not just for planning and regulating social *reproduction* but also for social *production* opens a range of tensions that are of great importance. If the issue of the impact that such spaces can have on the valorisation of peripheral areas has become a common concern in the literature, that of the complex relationship between policies intending to cluster certain economic activities characterised by a high degree of innovation – and more specifically social innovation – and the actual social composition of these neighbourhoods keeps being largely unaddressed. Spatial proximity does not necessarily lead to social proximity, as class identity and belonging and sectoral specialisation dynamics are principles of social organisation in cities far more important than simple spatial proximity. Unless a more robust, long-term institutional infrastructure striving for spatial equality is put in place in neighbourhoods, the creation of cross-class urban alliances and living environments between the cognitariat and the working classes will be hard to achieve through innovative, transformative practices. This is a relevant question on which the overall collective desirability of their location in peripheral areas depends.

The second, deeply related issue revolves around the role of subjectivisation processes. As the production and negotiation of social identities become increasingly central in the governing of the city – and more in particular in urban regeneration and innovation initiatives (Coppola & Lucciarini, 2023) – the uneven involvement of social groups in these processes becomes a key factor for the analysis of the trajectory and outcomes of transformative practices. As we have seen in the case of MdM, subjectivisation processes are critical both as a precondition of these practices and as a continuous, self-feeding outcome of them. However, if the transformative nature of a practice lies in its goal to include and mobilise disadvantaged social groups, this may be very hard to achieve, especially in the short term and

notwithstanding the very intention of its promoters. Even if feeling responsible for broader social change, cognitariat's entrepreneurial subjects are already extremely busy enhancing complex relations among themselves to adequately support the subjectivisation of other disadvantaged social groups. In simple terms, while leveraging existing subjectivisation processes may be a recipe for success, manufacturing new ones, especially among working-class groups, may prove very difficult. This is indeed a relevant issue to further advance the research on the collective, community-like effect of specific ways to organise transformative coworkings, urban entrepreneurialism and self-employment.

The third issue revolves around the need to refine and articulate what we mean by institutionalization. The case of MdM shows how ambitious, transformative practices imply a multi-layered and multi-scalar understanding of institutionalization, looking both at the level of grand political discourses and policy decisions – that is by far the most attended by researchers – and at the more obscure but decisive level of local policymaking that encompasses things such as internal routines, offices' organization, partnership design and public procurement procedures. All these layers come with different scales – from the neighbourhood to the state – and temporalities that can act as many points of resistance to change, notwithstanding, in a certain measure, the level of political commitment. This pushes us to consider institutionalization as a complex game with multiple intermingled entries that transformative practices have to be able to navigate skilfully. At the same time, it also pushes us to not limit our sight to the higher political and policy levels of institutionalization as if, even if they do not manage to enter from the main door of policy directives and procedures, the outcomes of transformative practices can institutionalise in other realms, such as the urban economy and civil society.

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