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SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND THE EVOLUTION OF THE CITY: THE PRACTICE OF SOCIAL INNOVATION AS EMOTIONAL COGNITION OF URBAN SPACE

RESUMEN

La ubicua explosión de protestas sociales urbanas en los últimos años parecen venir a contradecir el crecimiento paralelo de literatura académica que considera las ciudades bajo un paradigma de máquinas de producción de segregación, recordándonos que la capacidad de acción colectiva es inherente y constitutiva de la urbanidad. En el caso de las mareas ciudadanas de Madrid, las prácticas espaciales de protesta remiten a una dimensión particular del derecho a la ciudad, produciendo un espacio propio que desafía los regímenes espaciales del estado urbano de excepción permanente, que exacerban las dinámicas de

fragmentación, segregación y políticas de control del cuerpo. Los dilemas del conflicto, de la pluralidad y del acomodo de la heterogeneidad de la multitud marcan la agenda de movimientos nuevos sociales en extremo líquidos y descentralizados, que vuelven siempre, de una forma no poco paradójica, a las trazas físicas de la memoria en los lugares centrales, y que construyen auténticos espacios practicados, vividos y caminados a base de una cognición social emocional distribuida..

**PALABRAS CLAVES: MOVIMIENTOS SOCIALES -
DERECHO A CIUDAD – MULTITUD -COGNICIÓN
URBANA - EMOCIÓN**

RESUMEN

The ubiquitous upsurge of urban protests around the world in the last years seems to contradict the equally growing production of literature that deals with the city as a scene of conflict and a device for the production of segregation, reminding us of the collective agencies are inherent to and constitutive of urbanity. In the case of the *mareas ciudadanas* in Madrid, the spatial practices of protest defy the permanent state of exception that comes to dynamics of fragmentation, segregation and biopolitics. The dilemmas of conflict, plurality and the heterogeneity of the multitude set the agenda of these extremely liquid and decentralized

social movements. These movements return in a paradoxical way to the physical traces of the memory of central places of the city and construct and produce practiced spaces on the basis of a distributed emotional social cognition.

KEYWORDS: SOCIAL MOVEMENTS – RIGHT TO THE CITY – MULTITUDE - URBAN COGNITION – EMOTION

NEW URBAN QUESTION, SAME RIGHT TO THE CITY?

Recently we have assisted to a spectacular growth of urban protests around the globe from Arab spring to the *Indignados* and 15M in Spain, from Occupy around the world to flood riots. Some of these protests are among the largest in world history¹ and occur primarily in cities. Much has been written on the changes in the body of urbanity and, by extension, on the nature of urban public space in our cities along the course of this crisis. Times of austerity have come to change the face of many capitals and important urban areas and many scholars have echoed these transformations inscribing them in a long genealogy of conflicts, inherently belonging to

what identifies the category of the urban. Not surprisingly, many protests have an essential urban nature and reunite at once claims about general broader issues of democracy and justice with local urban questions about access to facilities and public goods and services (Negueruela 2013). The movement of the *mareas ciudadanas* in Madrid is a particularly enlightening example. Issued from the demonstrations of the 15M of May in 2011, an heterogeneously constituted and extremely liquid convergence of diverse social movements and initiatives, the *mareas* have structured the transition towards an active defense and reclaim of common goods and public services as they have along the way reconfigured the political discourses in the public sphere.

The tradition of critical urban scholars in the line of Harvey and Merrifield has identified a new urban question, as the capitalist system seeks

to solve its systemic problem of accumulation of capital through the plunder of financial capital in urban environments. Such new logics of economic accumulation and extraction reorganize the dynamics of the urban. Finding new areas of business in sectors which were previously considered a common good to be safeguarded by public property and control, this new urban question is surely changing the substrate where our life in common occurs. Public space is a new battlefield and scenery for urban social movements and urban struggles, and there is where we assist to the birth of new subjects that re-define the right to the city

Despite the concern for well-being, quality and richness of city life and even emancipatory ideals of many professionals, the projected public space, as understood and practiced by planning and government authorities, might already be

¹ rising in numbers from 59 in 2006 to 112 in mid-2013. (Ortiz 2013)

trapped in a structural framing that already channels and predetermines the overall effect of the practice of urban planning. As Sevilla timely shows us by applying Arrighi's theory of capitalist systemic cycles to a comparative analysis of different moments of transition in the history of planned social housing (one of the main forms of city production), social unrest created by the inequalities of the capitalist city made it clear the need to plan the new social subject that arose together with the development of fordist industrial production. The production of urban space followed the dynamics of social reproduction dictated by the logics of capitalist accumulation and therefore respected and reinforced the hegemonic forms of power. Within this landscape composed by the machinery of destitution, many resistances have been encountered and protests have marked the development of modern cities, like the paradigmatic case of the Paris commune, well studied among others by Harvey (2005).

As a disciplinary reflection, we should note that the very same structural forces of capitalist accumulation find an echo of their extractive nature in the frame, channels and outcomes of urban planning- and by extension of urbanism and architecture-, which fail to escape the reproduction of the social dynamics of destitution. Such aspects we best observe in cities in crisis and in the evolution of their model. The picture given by Harvey, Brenner, Sevilla, Elden among others portrays a scenario in which the contemporary city is built through an exacerbated process of speculation, and segregation through gentrification. However, as Merrifield has noted, nowadays the city has become the regulating environment in which our live and its experience (in all its domains, from entertainment to illness) is the

main merchandise. In short, the territorial logics of destitution are not only confined to the production of new urban fabric that reproduces social order (Sevilla 2010) but to the very space in which our daily live occurs, including our own bodies (Thrift). These different figures portray a scenario in which we see what the inherent contradictions of the hegemonic model of city production at work. The result can be said to be a general loss of accessibility to opportunities, a loss of public life and sense of community (Putnam, 2000). Such a particularly pessimistic diagnosis seems to find a wider call for the end of an age or of a kind of urban civilization. As if in resonance with these conclusions and extending them to the whole of the urban dimension beyond the specific acts of planning, Jacques Donzelot has recently come to say that "La ville ne fait plus société" (2010), in a clear colophon to the catalogue contemporary unmaking of cities in Europe (2012). Such commentaries of the loss of vitality and sociality of public life in cities analyses of the ways in which cities, as the physical realization of the urban mode of life, constantly seem to conjugate particular conditions of economic and social inequality and exacerbate the production at once of injustice and domination, de-structuration and control.

In the light of the social vivacity of cities and the way the social tissue constantly seems to redefine new forms of protest contesting segregation and redefining new discourses and practices of the right to the city, we can also tackle this from a slightly less pessimistic point of view. The city, as both a product of our social and cultural endeavours and an environment where our social lives occur, as both an ensemble of physical constructions and social networks; is still considered as the paradigmatic political space. The number and variety of subjects, interests, combined with its

accumulative historical processes makes the city the place for plurality, and with it, a stage for disagreement, dissidence, resistance and other varieties of conflict in different intensities.

If conflict and disagreement are somehow constitutive of cities, diverse social movements emerge primarily in cities and produce their alternative space in their direct actions, in their discourses, in their questioning of the spatial regimes of destitution. Can we interpret these protests in a Lefebvrian sense? These social forms of urban contestation seem to question existing regimes of power by establishing new social relations and networks of solidarity. In this sense they deny the spatial logics of destitution governing urban production (Sevilla). Through actions such as occupation and appropriation, combined with the enactment of new discourses and political images the actively produce a new space. I am not just claiming that they articulate alternatives model of city in their discourses or that they start to compose more sophisticated pragmatic measures nor to the concrete material spaces that these movements dispute to the hegemonic powers, but to the intertwined synthetic emotional fabric of embodied spatial practice which constitutes a new "world" with its own different logics of reproduction. This cognitive dimension of the protests render even more tangible the fight for the space of the city as several conflicting entities collide. As a particular subject is enacted, as an identity is unfolded, constructed, practiced, a new sovereignty emerges.

URBAN MALAISE AND THE STATE OF EXCEPTION

Behind the vanishing of the dream of public space is the reality of the implementation of a geography of fragmentation and exclusion that has its final

colophon in an urban state of exception. Both Spain and Argentina can claim to have experienced a weaker and more incomplete construction of the welfare state model compared to those of central economies (Navarro 2010). In Spain, the current crisis seems to have become the standard status of our everyday reality, and behind its cover of spectacle and shock, it is being used to redefine new power regimes in urban milieus by the instauration of a permanent state of exception. Under these premises, the massive privatization of public services and structures prior considered to be strategic and requiring public intervention through the state, does not only reconfigure the physical dimension of the metropolitan territories, but also their political and social aspects. It is done so through a steady deconstruction of the notion of inclusive public space; a process that has installed some southern European cities in what we could define as a state of stabilized urban malaise (Negueruela 2013), combining fragmentation and state of exception.

By now the crisis has not only been implanted into the real economy and therefore translated into the new scarcity that governs the mental landscape of the population, but also it has established itself as a permanent companion that seems to be here to stay. This situation seems to go beyond of the notion of crisis as structural to the capitalist system theorised by Marxian thought. In fact, we also assist to the combined phenomenon of militarization of urban space (Graham), authoritative technocratic governments and the implosion of public space, which seems to update the notion of permanent state of exception, as the predominant form of the life of modern nations, firstly elaborated by C. Schmitt (1921) and recently developed by G. Agamben (2003). A few years ago, the instauration



Figure 1: Barreras em el congreso.

of technocratic governments in response to the crisis raised a generalised wave of outrage; It was the sudden realisation of de facto loss of sovereignty of which the state of exception was the confirmation. However, the current situation differs greatly from what Schmitt articulated. He in fact despised the role of the technocratic civil servants to which Hegel ascribed the highest moral value as the “universal class” “executive machinery” of the state. With his theory, Schmitt searched for a renewed legitimacy of the *caudillo*, the leader of the masses based on the military

origins of such leadership (the fact that he won the battle, the confrontation). In this regard, Schmitt identified that the legitimacy of a democratic system disappeared or dissolved in the face of this other one that justified the state of exception as ways to define a new order. Our current situation in Europe does follow an interesting middle way in which it is the technocratic class belonging to the supranational organism and institutions (and some national ones in charge of their implementation) who seems to be reinforced as the new “caudillos”, with the instauration a state of exception based on the technical aspects of the solutions to be implemented. The technocratic-political class becomes the executor of the markets, as the real dictator to which democracy dissolves itself away.

Urban governance. This derive clearly seems to deny the principles of democracy, hijacking common good in response to the abstract notions such as technical reasons or the market and puts in place an emotional landscape of fear. The social movements of the 15M dare to tentatively propose a radically different urban governance. The intelligence demonstrated by diverse assembly movements in terms of urban management, responds to their and comes to counteract an landscape of fear that ends up as the colophon of social exclusion. The state of exception comes to deny the very subject on which it bases itself, that is, a unified demos that is epitomized in the strong and univocal figure of the leader. In this case the holographic nature of these leaders:) What is left is Thais is way such social movements threading diverse associations, initiatives, with their apparent petty attention to local issues of inclusion, constitute a reconstruction of the urban-social and a reconstitution of social centrality.

² The current Spanish PM, M.Rajoy has become notorious for giving press conferences through a plasma screen and not accepting questions.

It is interesting to note how this authoritative derive follows the recent the evolution of technology and how, paradoxically, the promise of smart cities and big data seems to risk becoming just big brother as it rests on few hands and the interest of the accumulated big capital is at odds with a clear redistribution of wealth and opportunities... the variety of actors, even the approaches that seek to analyse the urban beyond its social dimension and approach it as a multiplicity of processes..

This particular urban version of the state of exception has an effect of reinforcing the peripheral condition of citizens, which, regardless of them inhabiting or practicing the urban city centre, cannot access

The current rise in insecurity that the city of Buenos Aires is experiencing is now being cultivated as a mental landscape that builds up the perception of an authoritative hand that would come to control public space. Also, the fragmentation reached by decades of suburban gated communities development exerted its influence in the city model with the contagion of its logics to the conception of an urban centre as a service and retail provider that maximizes revenue due to congestion and mobility. A report from the Ministry of Urban Development of the City of Buenos Aires in the year 2010 talks of more than 32.400 abandoned plots and buildings and the deficit in affordable housing continues to grow every year. The legitimation of the control of urban space might pass by the association of diverse illegal practices (among them the occupation of public land) and the loneliness of an atomized urban dweller traversing a city that has become a fragmented geography. Also, the general sense of impunity given by power figures might also reinforce them as authoritative leaders. These logics of reproduction are challenged then by movements

that offer informal networks of solidarity, and which give use to empty or abandoned buildings and neglected public property. The implication of the inhabitants in the care and management of urban space as a common good through radical democratic spatial practices still offers us a model of urban governance worth of considering.

In Spain, Amnesty International has come to denounce the atmosphere of repression (2013) that accompanies the new Law of Citizens' Security increasing the pressure on civil pacific forms of protest³. Has exacerbated the atmosphere of repression. This derive only makes it even more evident that whatever remained of public space does not embrace the necessary plurality to guarantee the access to a common urbanity.

URBANITY, PUBLIC SPACE AND THE BIRTH OF NEW URBAN SUBJECTS

As forms of contestation and protest demand a right to the city we must ask ourselves: The right to which city? If the nature of urbanity, despite its slippery nature and its seemingly ambivalent potential, can be considered to play an in-substitutable role, the degree to which its deterioration is followed by the emergence of new ways of urban sociality is not satisfactorily accounted for in the literature. This is perhaps due to the shifting substance of public space as the necessary articulation of density, difference and democracy.

The essence of urbanity has long preoccupied thinkers, and together with diversity and density (Lévy Lussault 2003), accessibility has been a key to define urbanity. Already Manuel Castells identified the value of use of the public goods, that is the accessibility of the infrastructures and services, at the core of the vindication of urban

social movements.

From a quantitative geographic perspective, Marcus and his colleagues at the University of Stockholm, have developed the concept of Spatial Capital, by which he defines urbanity as accessibility to diversity. Accessibility as the potential to develop social networks and different social solidarities has been said to pass through the relation of spatial configuration and co-presence (Hillier 1996). Marcus proposes urbanity as accessible diversity under the term Spatial Capital, where spatial diversity is measured as the amount of accessible plots within a radius of three axial lines, and spatial integration and capacity overlaid in one map, showing the continuous variations of spatial capital (Marcus, 2010).

On the other hand, mixity has been the coined term that came to define this paradigm of urbanity for architects and planners. Mixity is not only identified at the root of urbanity by many thinkers (Lévy Lussault 2003), but has also been, for the last decades, a well repeated mantra of our design and planning disciplines (Donzelot 2011, Bianchetti 2011). Understood as one of the main ingredients of urbanity along with density, it is invoked with the hope that it would accommodate the necessary heterogeneity to spring the vivacity and richness that are synonymous of full urban life. Mixity would then come to be a sort of secret recipe for the ungraspable richness and essence or urban life, the secret of all great urban centres that the community of planners and designers seek to reproduce. Not without reason, the lack of mixity is often associated to the drawback of suburban tissues that are considered unsustainable in ecological and social terms, as producing territorialized social segregation that is very difficult to overcome. But the secret has always remained to know how to articulate

³ 1.117 procedures against demonstrators in Madrid in year 2012

this mixité. Accompanying mixity, public space appeared as the necessary buffer that would help to regulate and accommodate difference into democratic variety, and help conduct a life in common. This aspect of public space as a stage for negotiation of difference explodes not only after reaching certain limits of inequality incapable of assimilating, but also when the credibility of the discourse is contradicted by an embodied malaise by the population.

However, today the project of public space so celebrated by both architects and planners as a sort of essence of the dense and varied city has capitulated to future as a fragile theme park surrounded by leaky fences, suffering from the militarization of urban space and policies of control. The development of a new suburban tissue continues to plague the growth of cities worldwide. In Buenos Aires this suburbanization occurs nowadays at the centre, with the well-studied typologies of the *torre-country* and the *condominio*, sold as modes of living that reproduce the suburban values of the gated communities at the core of the city. However, this is no longer just happening in the suburban forms of city fabric, it is affecting the core of what was meant to be place of maximum urbanity, see centrality in a lefebvrian sense, and the buffer for social difference. The policies of social control through the body are now implemented in any part of the city. Mobile technologies make it easy to instill all sorts of social rules and hierarchies independently of your location. Public space is, therefore, interfered by the potential censorship of misbehaviour at the minimum physical and temporal scales. Urbanity is now not just a projection of expected behaviour, it is also actively policed. This channelling of public and private ways of conduct imprints an impoverishment of the space for difference, which is also increasingly

limited to cosmetic appearance. Contemporary hyper-mobility seems to postulate that the landscape of urbanity is reconfigured away from communitarian logics of space into a new field where diverse options are ordered in individual constellations of preferences. However, given the increasing ubiquity of control and censorship, it seems that real difference is not supported by the set of preferences which made available only through options of consumption. This fact, together with boosting social inequalities, make public space implode by vacuum and leave room of urban space for new struggles that unmasked the dimension of conflict at the core of the city.

The projected role of public space as buffer of conflict and a catalyst for negotiation of difference unveils its nature of an ideological construction (Delgado 2011) that has provided a succedaneum of urbanity. This channelled sociality in the form of collective experiences has provided more of a spectacular mirage of experiencing urban life than a real encounter of difference constituent of commonality. All sorts of intense collective or individual experiences rendered transactions of provided more of a limonoid phase (Turner___).



Fig2: Evaristo Villa Cartón.
Carlos Sampayo y Francisco Solano López (1980).

The shrinking field for sociality unveils the increasingly evident contradictions of a project of public space supported by a network of physical structures of public space, which were projected for an audience of citizens indoctrinated in the dance of democratic equality. Such choreography is no longer valid and increasingly reveals the resurfacing of an ancient opposition between the category of public (as collective political strata of citizens, but also with its appeal to the idea of an audience of passive public, of “auditorio” and that of the multitude (the foul, *la turba*) of undifferentiated individuals that gather and act according to supposedly irrational impulses (Delgado 2011). Such indiscipline has traditionally been deplored as primitive, as evil and even as feminine in its hysterical character (ibidem). It is in this opposition that we can better appreciate the moral economies motivating the revolts of apparently un-combinable citizens.

MORAL ECONOMIES AT THE CORE. RIGHT TO THE CITY OF THE MULTITUDE

E. P. Thompson developed the concept of moral economy in the 60s, analyzing food riots in 18th century England and thus helping to restore a certain historical attention to the mob as a subject. Thompson concluded that there was a notion of universal justice motivating the crowds to revolt, following what he calls “a pattern of social protest which derives from a consensus as to the moral economy of the commonweal in times of dearth” (Moral Economy 247).

A parallel underlying common or shared feeling of justice seems to be at the base of recent urban protests like those of Buenos Aires in 2001/2 and of Madrid from 2011 until today. Despite the different historical and socio-economic contexts, when analyzing discourses and motivations of the protestors, we can note a constant

reference to the lack of justice and democracy, always accompanied by the deterioration of the accessibility to goods and services that are considered a commonwealth. However, the emergent collectivities are, this time, not only the uneducated lower classes of 18th century England countryside, but an even more complex and heterogeneous amalgam of urban populations. In this case, in the XXIst century context of neoliberal policies and dis-governance, the mob or *la turba*, seems to be better portrayed by the figure of the multitude (Negri).

In Buenos Aires, the economic recuperation in the decade after the *corralito* crisis seemed to have changed the course for a new social convergence. Growing economy, new social policies for inclusion and development broke the tendency of few decades of increasing inequalities and social polarization following neoliberal economic policies. However, the massive occupation of public land by . It was the urban dimension that came to shatter the mirage of a change of model. The numbers are merciless and depict a growth of inequalities and a rise in informal deprived settlements, *villas miseria*

URBANITY AS THE COLLECTIVE EMOBILED POLITICS OF FEELING.

An analysis of the evolution of the urban protests and the birth of novel social movements in Madrid sheds some light on the pattern of their spatial organization. At this point an analysis of the agency of these emergent collective subjects, in the form of social movements, cannot rely solely on the behavioural aspects, setting them apart from the physical material conditions of the urban context that frames them, nor can it differentiate too radically their rational individual component from their embodied collective emotional energy. Regarding the role of the urban tissue, the

spontaneity of the protests soon overflows the confined limits of time and space that a regulated public space of the city allows for such happenings. On the 15th of May 2011 in Madrid, after a massive demonstration denouncing the lack of real democracy and the deterioration of living conditions, protestors, in a tentative open assembly, decide to stay overnight in the square of Sol. As in the case of the protests in Buenos Aires following the *corralito* of late 2001, with their *caceroladas* and *piqueteros*, social contestation in Madrid has been able to gather different classes of individuals, previously unconnected, under a common shared urge to react. The reunion of such heterogeneous classes and individuals in these protests constitute a convergence of previously atomized and segregated citizens, upon which a long strategy of urban fragmentation and control has been exerted. The convergence imprints the re-cognition of a collectivity and marks, with an unleash of emotional the foundation of a subject. We can observe urban social movements do use space in a way that is constitutive of their coming into being. In particular, spatial practices, beyond the punctual act of protest, are constitutive of the birth of the movements, and continue to permeate their basic core of actions. These are the practices of stopping, opening, staying, which are then translated into concrete actions of camping, occupying, and squatting. Such actions are also related to the practices of self-management of space in the form of participatory open assemblies, which has been identified by Martinez (2010) as the key aspect that links movements like 15M or OWS to the squat movement.

It is in these forms of spatial and political organization that we see the configuration of new collectivities turned into urban subjects as Social and personal identities are differently yet typically overlapping. Current debates point at the

shared attributes and experiences as constituting a collective “we-ness”, which is spatialised in a corresponding “we-space” (Krueger 2010). Embedded in this collective identity is the corresponding collective agency, usually enacted through a spatial communion with a certain “collective effervescence”(Durkheim 1912), but deprived of its hysterical connotations that were the rule until recently. Such forms of practice of collective spatiality point towards a pre-reflexive, yet fully intentional, enacted and emotional base for agency.

The relevance of the *mareas ciudadanas* in Madrid resides in the fact that, it has created loose networks of aid that do not respond to strong affiliation, as in the case of the community principle, but, instead, to a notion of perceived injustice that touches a common right and mobilises a momentary reaction of volunteers responding to a variety of motivations. It thus redefines the once static geography of urban housing as a new pulsating milieu where the collective articulation of concrete resistances allows for a construction of a new imaginary. In this line, the role of space in enacting collective agency stressing the importance of the flexible geographies of social networks and of spatialized rituals has already been researched and stressed (Bosco 2010).

Since then, the nascent field of emotional geography (Bondi et al 2007) has added to the study affective dimension of cities but does not seem to have been clearly encompassed by other fields in urban sciences and studies. Already in 2003 Nigel Thrift reminded us of the emotional dimension where all political dimension, and especially the contemporary one, is played. Spinks tells us that the political is “produced by a series of inhuman or pre-subjective forces and intensities” (2001, p.24), which implies two important

consequences: (1) the domain of the political gets extended, surpassing the individual and even the social, and (2) it becomes a matter of affect and immediacy rather than reason and calculus. Moreover, the affective emotional basis of all that is political, and the spatial dimension of all that is affective, turn cities into affective or creative realms (Thrift, 2004). Perception of a situation and response are intertwined and assume a certain kind of response ability. For this precise reason, we turn to urban protests and social movements as urban phenomena of collective agency, which are in themselves emotional and respond to a given situation by re-acting and producing space. Emotions are nowadays assumed to play a constitutive role in enacting human action, particularly, in the enactment of collective agency, such as in social movements. Emotions can be both means and ends, often fusing the two, for they motivate individuals, are generated in crowds, and shape stated and unstated goals of social movements (Jaspers 2011). Cultural models explaining individual or collective action (e.g., frames, identities, narratives) are miss-specified if they do not include explicit emotional causal mechanisms, yet few of them do apart from some structuralist theories (ibidem)

The emotions generated by and in crowds were already described by Durkheim as “collective effervescence”. He regarded it as a product of what he called moral density that creates a collective consciousness fusing cognitive and moral unity (1912). For Durkheim, the transmutation of the initiating emotion into something else through the consciousness of being entrained within a collective focus of attention plays a role in enacting collective behaviour. More recently, Randall Collins sees emotional energy as the main motivating force in social life, (2004). If collective social action, is stabilized in the form

of emergent social movements and constitutes a new subject capable of redefining the politics of the city is because it manage to unleash a strong collective recharge of emotional energy through mutual recognition and solidarity, breaking with the dynamics of destitution implemented by the phenomenon of urban fragmentation and social segregation.

Against the tradition, from Le Bon to Zygmunt Bauman, which disregards protestors as immature and or irrational, Castells stresses the importance of affective intelligence in social movements as operating an affective emotional transition (Castells 1984). Also, Eyerman situates emotion as the prime mechanism of social movements for moving, for engaging and mobilizing, as he stresses the importance and role of the body and its spatial performance as a place and medium for this agency (2006).

LIMINAL PHASE, POLITICAL FICTION AND THE RECONFIGURATION OF SPACE.

Elaborating on the study of the rites of passage of Van Gennep, Victor Turner identified the emotional transition operated in many rituals as happening through a liminal phase of transition, in which the normal established order is suspended opening a space for new configurations (1982). Strong collective gatherings such as demonstrations can operate this passage. According to the further definition by Turner (ref) liminality is the phase where social order and composition is suspended; hierarchies of social structure and even perceptual reality are altered. Now, I consider that social movements, like those described in the cases of Buenos Aires and Madrid, issued from strong protests following exceptional circumstances, do constitute a particular form of ritual in which the strong emotional unleash performs a liminal phase. In both cases we can

appreciate a clear change in the set of actors and subjects in the urban and political scene before and after these movements. Many protestors and members of assemblies, in both case studies, have expressed the transcendence of their experiences in redefining their identity: “I cannot conceive my life without the assembly”, or “It was the most intense experience of my life, “I am a different person now, we are here and this changes everything”.

As in the theory of the political fiction of Jacques Ranciere, the gathering at once denies a given political frame and marks the birth of a newly constituted group which previously lacked a clear identity. Ranciere identified the political fiction as operating three simultaneous steps: it creates a name or collective personage, reality and interrupts reality, understood as the legitimizing frame for ordering and thinking our life and our society, producing a new one. It is important to note that according to him, this new name or collective personae does not reflect a previous subject. On the contrary, it is the creation of a space of subjectification.

I would argue that the setting up of a new political scene, in the case of Madrid as it was the case with the social actions in Buenos Aires after the *corralito*, constituted a that real suspension of the reality, as understood by Ranciere thanks to the liminality performed by their strong emotional charge. In this sense they refund, through emotion, a space of commonality far from the liminoid (Turner) experiences of the emptied out project of public space.

Moreover, and despite the previous networks of activism, political discourses and set of urban activism, the political fiction ignited by these movements is firstly an emotional cognition. It reunites in a pulsating maelstrom of indignation where a recognition of the other opens up a

field of unavoidable drive of solidarity. In this re-configuration new forms of discourse, new vocabularies and different forms of political presentation are created along as they are practiced. The mechanisms of assembly as a self-management of both space and politics mentioned above are a good example of to what extent these practices and creations are eminently spatial. The reunion of difference, the density of affect, the drive for accessibility to decision and experience that marks the shift from the mirage of public space as the re-presentation of democracy also entail the essential urbanity of these forms of urban movements. Urbanity is therefore, refunded as a bodily presence, and its fleshy imperfection and variety require new words and steps. Not in vain Nigel Thrift and other scholars have clearly identified the affect and emotion to be the pre-reflexive dimension where the political is played, displayed and disputed nowadays (2003).

As Falleti (2006) has shown, these particular instances of urban struggle and collective becoming follow a process of nascent state (Alberoni 1968) by means of their strong emotional implications in participants. Defined as the creative force of social movements (also of couples, groups or community) that puts in place a new order that questions existing institutions, implying a re-structuration of power and of conflict. It enhances or facilitates the re-composition of an alternative solidarity and the revision of values and beliefs. This birth of a new subject involves a process of recognition (Honeth 1997) which played a strong role in these events, as expressed by many participants: "... people came from diverse places, masses of people. We suddenly stopped there and we greeted each other we started to applaud ..." (...) "it's us, it's us!! This act of recognizing oneself, each other, there is a new subject" ⁵

5 Interview extracted from Falleti 2007. Translation by the author.

In this case, the tentative assemblies and the tides of citizenship are declinations of the multitude referred to by Negri and Hardt. The new collective subject or reunion of heterogeneous individuals in a common and conscious multiplicity, has its own spatiality that displaces established actors and enters in conflict with them as expressed in the slogan "Que se vayan todos!"⁶. Not surprisingly thus, this multitude asserts itself as a new sovereign subject by constituting a *we-space* (Krueger 2007). It reclaims different modes of governing the urban following the pulsating moral economies of the commons. Undoubtedly liquid (Bauman 2000), as it reunites temporarily at once heterogeneity and commonality, their momentum could be seized to practice urbanity differently. The 15M and its assemblies have changed the way Madrid conceives urban space, have also altered the political vocabulary and what kind of ethical conduct is expected by citizens; in Buenos Aires, the *caceroladas* irrupted with political force and changed the content and forms of political accountability. Also, reunions in the *asambleas barriales* broke away with the logics of social segregation and centric middle classes imported techniques of deliberation and self-management from the occupants of the *villas miseria*. All these *moments* were the *space* of the multitude.

As a brief note on the physical urban form, the places of encounter where these movements happened and gather are loci of multiple becoming, where "social practices and trajectories meet up with moving and fixed materialities and form configurations that are continuously under transformation and negotiation" (Simonsen 2007). Squares, streets, parks, streets and urban interstices should not be considered as fixed locations with given attributes but as places that provide an accessibility to diversity that, in turn,

6 Slogan developed in the protests against the corralito in December 2001 in Buenos Aires

offers the affordance for a practiced urbanity. Such urbanity needs to embrace the challenge of negotiating multiplicity that entails the unavoidable fact of having to get on together, as in the notion of *throwntogetherness* put forward by Massey (2005)

The challenges of inclusion of enduring difference, of accountability and of respect to individual space and preferences remain still strongly undefined in these collective spatial moments. The evolution of the assemblies also show disconnection and demotivation due to unbridgeable differences caught up in dialogic traps of political dialogue, thus resulting in people dropping out or losing energy and focus (Falleti 2007) Innovative forms of socially constituted identity and spatial management require also acute forms of assessment and evaluation. The fleeting and dynamic nature of these urban movements and often their inconsistency and mismatch between utopian hopes and factual limitations for bigger transformative actions usually prevent any further development of a more defined set of spatial practices. However, as alternative discourses on the nature and management of the commons evolve and start to include socially constituted space and collective or intersubjective consciousness, the current limitations might be overcome. Particularly promising is the potential of concepts such as *sumak kawsay* (quetchua for good living *saber vivir*)⁷ to be applied to an urban dimension. An analysis of the downsides and of an urban governance by the multitude will still have to wait for the moment these urban struggles make it to reverse the commercial logics political and economic institutions status quo.

7 Recently this has been the central focus of a Government supported Project in Ecuador, seeking an evolution towards an economy of common goods See: Flok Society

URBAN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AS EXTENDED MIND.

Can affect be claimed to constitute intelligence? How far can we go in claiming affect as a forefront for urban politics? Urban movements such as the pulsating tides in Madrid or the temporal reunion of diverse subjects in a *cacerolada* entail a particular form of spatial social intelligence, but to what extent can they be expected to propose new forms of urban governance or even to perform a reliable form of spatial management? As daring as it may seem, affect is nowadays not only recognized to play an ineliminable role in cognition and rational reflective operations (Damasio, 1999; Davidson, 2000), but also to constitute a particular kind of intelligence itself (Thrift). From radical embodied cognitive science, Extended Mind thesis (Clark & Chalmers 1998) addresses the division point between the mind and the environment by promoting the view of active externalism. It proposes that some objects in the external environment are utilized by the mind in such a way that the objects can be seen as extensions of the mind itself. Specifically, the mind is seen to encompass every level of the cognitive process, which will often include the use of environmental aids (1998). This process, defined as coupling, is understood as a form of reciprocal causal interaction with the external item that reliably leads to enhanced cognitive performances—ones that the agent on its own would be incapable of carrying out (Slaby 2013). The theory originates from the theory of Distributed cognition (Hutchins 1995). As the field stands today, DG is a broader conception that includes phenomena that emerge in social interactions as well as interactions between people and structure in their environments. This thesis has several key components of which the most relevant for the research of urban social movements

is the embodiment of information (embedded in representations of interaction), which brings about the coordination of enaction among embodied agents.

From these theories we learn that the off-loading of cognitive tasks into the immediate environment has been used by humanity all throughout evolution into our current societies. These forms of extended cognition are already there and pushed even further by technology. Social media now can inform collective moods and regulate the evolution of trends, opinions or even spatial gatherings. However, this phenomenon is not limited to the interface of technology. Collective forms of gathering can in fact perform and collective agency is also informed by a distributed memory and collectively informed imaginary. The central claim, which remains to be further tested, is more daring than this, I propose that particular social movements do constitute a form of extended mind encompassing emotion and affect as a collective cognitive process.

Recently, Krueger has argued that and urges us to pay attention to what sort of role these shared action-spaces themselves play in driving various social cognitive processes. “Within *we-space*, agency does not emerge atomistically from a single source (the individual acting agent) but is instead distributed across the temporally-extended dynamics of co-regulated interaction.” (2011).

However, embodied social behavior encompasses, as we have seen, affect and emotion as unavoidable milieus, which invites us to accordingly consider this dimension of intersubjective feeling as constituent of and extended form of cognition. Recently, philosopher J. Slaby put forward the theory that atmospheres, as socially constructed and resonant ambiances, are a form of extended emotions. He acknowledges that the “affective dynamics pertaining to a group profoundly

transforms the individual group member’s emotional experience” (2014). Consequently he further asks himself whether this process could endorse the constitution of entirely novel emotional processes. As emotions are matters of active striving and thus intentional, this hypothesis resituates intentionality in the pre-reflective milieu of instant politics and urban micro-politics that Thrift warns us of (2007).

The phenomenal coupling not only with the external physical environment but with the emotions felt and displayed by others set a collective emotional atmosphere in which our own individual body becomes a “felt-resonance board for emotion” (Froese & Fuchs, 2012) This *attunement* works us out, so to speak, making us specially prone to experiencing empathic responses and sharing emotional images and the messages and cognitive frames they entail. But this coupling is an active (enactive) process and the resulting collective emotion is an intersubjective novel entity that carries its own meanings and informs the intentionality of the group. As such it can be claimed to be a collective emotional cognition of the environment, with the body as the *we-space* where this becomes sensible and tangible. In example, the emotional transition experienced by the participants of the demonstrations of the 15M, set the liminal phase by which the urban space that was perceived by many individuals through regime of exclusion, was suddenly re-cognized as a field of potentiality. In the words of I came here with rage, blind of indignation, but I do not know what has happened, look at all those smiles, everybody seems to have fallen in love”⁸. This newly constituted spatial dimension of the “I can” entailed its new constellations of hierarchies and ethical

⁸ Carolina Beltran. 06-08-11. From Interviews with participants in the demonstrations of the 15M movements carried by the author.

mandates, informing in turn the creation of new collective political images and their consequent new vocabulary. A similar thing happened in Buenos Aires as participants of transitioned from the indignation and desperation of the initial into the creation of and even of new aesthetics.

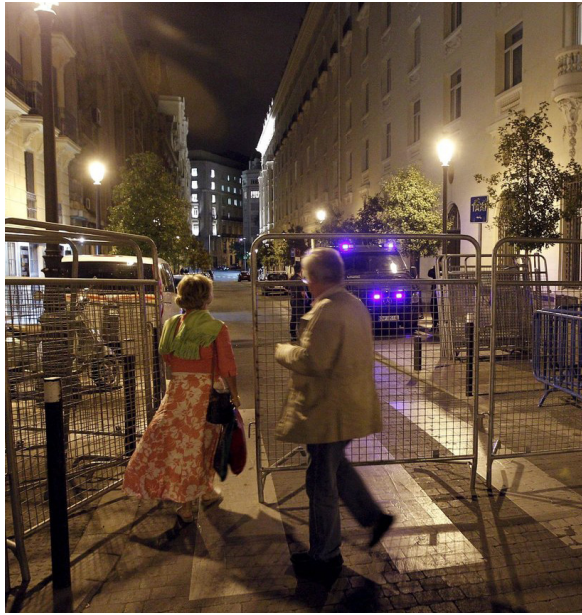


Figure3. Emocion 15M
Fuente: Juan Carlos Monroy

Affect is therefore intertwined and inseparable from “rational” cognition (Damasio), politics and intentionality are phenomenologically played at the interval of the immediacy of emotional response and the pre-reflexive. The potential of the application of this idea to urban social movements lies in truly integrating the dimension of emotions in the reflection on the causes and relevance of social forms of urban contestation. Similarly, It contributes to bringing theoretical discussion on distributed cognitive processes back to the dimension of the sensible, situating social

agency in experiential and phenomenological space. This, in turn, can help us to talk about the city as experienced by the urban dwellers and why the dynamics of at the everyday life level do matters to our disciplines and to the future of cities. Furthermore, it can help to restore in our analysis the mutually constitutive dynamics of environment and the social beyond either mere observations of the effects of a global scale whose complexity we cannot deal with or voluntaristic celebrations of acts of protests.

CONCLUSION

Locating and situating the spatiality of the practices of social movements at the heart of their liminality or emotional transition, can hold the key to the understanding of how the degree of urbanity of the environment is linked to the emergence of such forms of social innovation. Gathering to protest in central places, which carry the symbolic political connotations help the atomized and segregated individuals retrieve a centrality of attention and utter their discontent in a politically symbolic central place. It also makes them encounter each other physically. Through the spatial rituals of marching, meeting, resting, and of simple *being there*, not only they defy an imposed contemporary dis-urbanity based on hypermobility, but also help them recognize the space of the city and, through the unleash of emotional energy, transform their indignation and desperation into a proactive propositional predisposition. Then, they occupy factories, they articulate discourses, they create assemblies and interact with their urban environment without accepting their role as passive audience among the ruins of the modern project of public space. In doing so, they actualize the myth of the open city, but also reminding us that conflicting sovereignties are here at stake.

We have seen how emotion is not solely a result nor a cause of the gathering, how it performs a liminal phase and re-foundation of a new collective becoming as a nascent state. Moreover, we have considered how this process is essentially spatial as emotion is a form or embodied cognition. This realization pushes us forward in considering the structural coupling of social aggregates with urban physical environment. Such collectivities of protest and alternative perform cognitive tasks that go beyond mere social aggregation and constitute a veritable embodied emotional cognition of our urban environments.

The concept of the right to the city is reinterpreted as an emotional pulse of the right to encounter, the right to recognition and social construction of a we-space. Furthermore, these social movements, from spontaneous protest to assembly it is reasserted as the right to the sovereign decision on the city they want with full political relevance, however tentative or irrelevant their capacity of active propositional modification of the environment might seem. They exercise the right to centrality by the configuration of new subjects, therefore with a new identity and a new imaginary. By doing so, they reconfigure their world, placing themselves at the centre and re-imagining the nature of the city as a common good that requires radically democratic ways of decision. Finally, through the *presential* dimension of a bodily distributed emotional cognition, they give signs of a developed, if not always consistent, spatial intelligence.

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