

Palgrave Studies in Utopianism

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Utopianism is an interdisciplinary concept which covers philosophy, sociology, literature, history of ideas, art and architecture, religion, futurology and other fields. While literary utopianism is usually dated from Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), communitarian movements and ideologies proposing utopian ends have existed in most societies through history. They imagine varied ideal beginnings of the species, like golden ages or paradises, potential futures akin to the millennium, and also ways of attaining similar states within real time. Utopianism, in the sense of striving for a much improved world, is also present in many trends in contemporary popular movements, and in phenomena as diverse as films, video games, environmental and medical projections. Increasingly utopia shares the limelight with dystopia, its negative inversion, and with projections of the degeneration of humanity and nature alike. This series will aim to publish the best new scholarship across these varied fields. It will focus on original studies of interest to a broad readership, including, but not limited to, historical and theoretical narratives as well as accounts of contemporary utopian thought, interpretation and action.

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Julia Ramírez Blanco

Artistic Utopias of Revolt

Claremont Road, Reclaim the Streets, and
the City of Sol

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macmillan

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CHAPTER 5

Disobedience as an Urban Form: The Acampadasol in Madrid

‘We are not leaving’ (Fig. 5.1).¹

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z
a new alphabet for a new party²

In May 2011, I received a message on my mobile telephone from a friend who was in the Puerta del Sol: ‘I am in an assembly with a thousand people who are all keeping silence. We are making history! Come!’ When I arrived the assembly had finished. The square was full and, beneath the orange light of the street lamps, people were talking with each other. A young North American was there. His name was Kyle. He was returning to New York in a few hours, after that single night in town. His time in the city was spent among the crowd, talking, helping, and sitting on the ground, joining various gatherings of people. During the hours that Kyle was in the Puerta del Sol, a camp was built.

For my part, that moment opened a period which I spent with the intensity of enthusiasm: almost without noticing I had changed the desk for the square. At the beginning, I did not know very well how to bridge those two realities. This book emerged from there: its pages were my way to



Fig. 5.1 One of the slogans of the Argentinian uprisings of 2001 declared: 'no se va, el pueblo no se va' ['We won't go, the people won't go']. In May 2011, an activist camp was set up in the centre of Madrid. There, this poster took up this refusal to abandon the public space: 'no nos vamos' ['We are not leaving'] (Photograph by Marco Godoy/Archivo 15M, courtesy of the artist)

bring the desk and the square together, to understand the square through the act of writing, and to try to relate this gesture to the act of taking to the street.

WHERE SHALL WE LIVE?

You'll never have a house in your whole fucking life.³

Although the activist camp of the Puerta del Sol seemed to appear out of nowhere, its origins can be traced in a tradition of local activism with long-established roots. In Spain, as elsewhere, various groups had developed from the movement that opposed the Iraq War in 2003.

A horrific Islamist terrorist attack took place in Madrid on 11 March 2004, killing 192 people. This was widely seen as a reaction to Spanish participation in the armed conflict. But even when various media outlets revealed the Islamist authorship of the attack, the government of the conservative Partido Popular (PP) continued to blame the Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) terrorist group for the attack, a strategy designed to protect their position in upcoming elections. On the night of 13 March, a crowd took to the street spontaneously, coming together via mobile telephones and gathering in front of the PP headquarters.⁴ The next day, voters rejected PP, the party that had opted to participate in the Iraq War, and the election was won by the other main party, the socialist Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE).

Meanwhile, like an underground network, the squatted spaces had continued evolving in their own way. In Madrid, between 2007 and 2008 the squatters' (*okupa*) movement revived after a period of some crisis:⁵ various self-managed social centres flourished, where sumptuous abandoned buildings were transformed into places for concerts, workshops, and meetings of a politicized counterculture. Many of these buildings belonged to promoters implicated in the increasingly frequent corruption schemes of the construction sector.⁶ These enclaves adopted particular meanings in a country where property speculation had made access to housing extremely difficult for a large part of the population.

During the 2000s, a movement for decent housing had begun a variety of activities on behalf of this cause. On 14 May 2006, it started a call to action to engage in mass sit-downs, known as V de Vivienda [H for Housing], a playful reference to *V de Vendetta* [*V for Vendetta*], the Alan Moore comic which had inspired the 2005 film of the same name. Some 'artists' had designed its logo to demonstrate the difficulty of 'representing something whose identity lies in non-representation'.⁷ Slogans were printed in black letters on a yellow background. This typography and direct style was later taken up by Juventud Sin Futuro [Youth Without Future], a pressure group that emerged from various student organizations in Madrid in April 2011.⁸ The group called a demonstration that same month: the punk cry of 'No Future' had become a political demand.

By this time, the consequences of the macro-economic crisis were tangible on the streets. Unemployment had reached levels that were difficult to bear and cuts to the welfare state had been implemented.⁹ Regional elections on 22 May were approaching and the atmosphere was one of a profound lack of confidence in a political class that seemed very distant

from the population that had voted for it. With the slogan '*No somos mercancía en manos de políticos y banqueros*' ['We are not merchandise in the hands of politicians and bankers'], Democracia Real Ya (DRY) [Real Democracy Now]—a recently created mobilization platform—called for a national protest on 15 May. While the police said that 20,000 people took to the street that day, DRY's figures put the total at 50,000.¹⁰

At night, after the customary clashes with the police, a group of between thirty and fifty people decided to sleep in the Puerta del Sol, where the Madrid demonstration had ended and from which in theory people should have dispersed.¹¹ Soon, a complex camp was set up there, quickly dubbed *Acampadasol* [Sol Camp] in the social networks.

This form of protest was part of an inherited repertoire of action¹²: at the local level, an important precedent was the so-called *Campamento de la Esperanza* [Camp of Hope], an impressive protest settlement that workers from the defunct company Sintel set up in central Madrid in 2001.¹³ However, in 2011, the idea of taking to the central square of a town or city and setting up camp was directly inspired by the series of successive revolutions which had just started to take place in the Arab world. In particular, Cairo's Tahrir Square had become iconic: its tents dovetailed with an element of construction typical of the desert, which now served to structure urban dissidence (Fig. 5.2).

The journalist Olga Rodríguez, who had covered the Egyptian uprising for an alternative media outlet, speaks of how Spanish activists 'copied a protest model which was the camp and the taking over of a square'.¹⁴ In Madrid, during the night of 15 May, Rodríguez was telephoned and asked what had been done by protestors in order to spend the night in Tahrir Square.¹⁵ There, the first thing had been getting hold of food and shelter. In Spain, the small group of people asked for leftovers from nearby restaurants and looked for cardboard boxes, sleeping bags, and blankets in order to sleep: it was still cold.

CONSTRUCTIVE PROCESSES

The plaza, my home.¹⁶

During the night of 15 May, an assembly took place, lit by street lamps and electronic devices.¹⁷ Adopting an organizational approach that came from the squatters' social centres, activists divided themselves into work-



Fig. 5.2 The trigger for the Madrid camp can be found in the one in Tahrir Square, Cairo, with its echoes of the tradition of desert architecture (Image by Jonathan Rashad, CC. BY 2.0)

ing groups and committees.¹⁸ Five committees were set up: Infrastructure, Food, Cleaning, Expansion, and Communication. The latter opened a Twitter account, set up an email address, and started a blog.¹⁹

Building began in the early hours of the morning: while the first assembly was taking place, a group of about seven punks built a kind of *jaima*, a sort of North African-style tent.²⁰ They used four rubbish containers, scaffolding, and a building-site canvas, insulating the interior with cardboard boxes. This tent, which had not been approved by the assembly, was the first construction in a square where camping is prohibited by law.

The next day, a blue garden hut with a small plastic window in its fabric walls appeared. It seemed to have come from the *Patio Maravillas*, a squatters' social centre not far from the Puerta del Sol.²¹ It stood next to the punk *jaima*: both were in the zone near the 'Oso y el Madroño' statue on the east side of the square.²² Inside the hut, tables were arranged. Some

hackers came in, set up their computers, and within less than forty-five minutes were providing free internet access to the area. The hashtag #spanishrevolution became a 'trending topic' on the Twitter social network.²³

The blue hut provoked the first conflict with the police, who demanded its removal. People waited in the square to assemble and give a response. Nacho Miranda, a poet who camped from the first night, tells of how at that point the press was looking for the 'leaders' and of how a series of decisions was taken in an intuitive manner.

People had been called to an assembly at eight in the evening, but it took an hour just to make the preparations. When more than a thousand people arrived, filling the square for the first time, some activists from the Patio Maravillas squatted social centre wanted to harangue the masses. However, in the end the convoked assembly was held. As there were too many people for it to function properly, it was consciously decided to make it a 'symbolic assembly'. Those who had spent the night in the plaza were crouching down under the railings of the equestrian statue of Charles III and started to talk without moving from where they were. Thus voices could be heard but not a single face could be seen. Only two questions were asked to see the reaction of the crowd: 'Shall we stay tonight?' and 'Do we stay until after the elections?'²⁴ Cheers greeted both questions. Later, some 250 people stayed to sleep. During the night they were evicted by the police: the authorities removed the *jaima* and the hut, leaving everything in *tabula rasa*.

As dawn rose on 17 May, the square was free of constructed elements. The eviction had the effect of issuing a rallying cry: during that day, the event became massive and at nightfall the Puerta de Sol was still full. It was in this context of empowerment when the first foundations were laid of what could really be called the camp.

Small groups devoted themselves to clearing a space between the people. They swept the ground with cardboard which they then stuck to the pavement, creating a kind of giant carpet which was broken up to form pathways (Fig. 5.3). People also started to tie ropes to the lamp posts and the equestrian statue: from this lightweight structure they hung the tarpaulin which would create a fabric covering.

The Electoral Commission ruled that demonstrating in the square on 18 May would be illegal.²⁵ During that day a large tent appeared, under which the huge group of people who had turned up in defiance of the prohibition took refuge. It rained throughout the night, so all the camp's



Fig. 5.3 On 17 May 2011, the Puerta del Sol was covered with a layer of cardboard, creating an insulating and soft surface upon which the camp was built (Photograph by Santiago Ochoa Marcos, courtesy of the author)

materials had to be replaced, and more solid structures were created.²⁶ On 19 May, the assembly decided to remain camped out until after the elections, which were to take place just three days later. On 21 May, a vegetable garden was planted in the piece of earth which surrounded the two fountains in the Puerta del Sol. 'La plaza echa raíces' ['the square is putting down roots'] could be read on a small poster, which metaphorically expressed a desire to remain.

DIY ARCHITECTURE

This form of taking, this taking of form.²⁷

At the Acampadasol, the Infrastructure Committee did not want to set itself up as a group of specialists. Rather, it sought to dedicate itself to sharing out the materials that arrived so that people could make their own huts in a 'do-it-yourself' spirit (Fig. 5.4).²⁸ Self-construction activated various kinds of practical know-how from the participants in terms of skills such as electricity and carpentry, and the experience of those who were related to the squatter environment proved fundamental.

Here materials were recycled and tended to be modest. Furniture found in the street was taken apart and its pieces used to build other structures. The profusion of cardboard was related to the central location of



Fig. 5.4 The construction of the camp followed the premises of DIY. It drew upon all kinds of materials, reusing them as architectural supports (Photograph from 19 May. Julio Albarrán, courtesy of the author)

the square: big commercial stores create a special kind of rubbish, most of which comprises the remains of packaging. At the Acampadasol, cardboard was used as an element in construction, as insulation, and as the medium for posters. It lent the place an ochre tone that was in dialogue with the blue and white of the canvas above, which was tied with rope to lamp posts or held up by homemade pillars. The Zuloark architectural group eulogized these supports—made from a mixture of wood, broom sticks, and even a toilet bowl—which presented extremely imaginative building solutions. Zuloark highlighted the ‘making of a single constructive typology in a single context out of multiple different forms’, indicating that the pillars served a ‘double and triple function, which allowed them to become a medium for information, rubbish bins, and rest spaces’.²⁹

Tied to the vertical elements, like sails to a mast, the blue canvas of the awnings lent a certain maritime image to a city without a beach: fluttering in the breeze, at times seeming to evoke the movement of water (Fig. 5.5).



Fig. 5.5 The canopy surface expanded with the accelerated growth of the camp (Photograph from 20 May. Julio Albarrán, courtesy of the author)

Below, an atmosphere of complete otherness was created, recalling the souks of Spain's Muslim past. In the zone of the tents, homely sheets appeared, creating resonances of intimacy in the public space.

THE 'CITY OF SOL'

In the square, self-construction went hand in hand with a system of self-government via assemblies, where work was voluntary. Although the square had been taken over as a *protest* against a corrupt and unjust system, the Acampadasol was a place of enthusiasm where people attempted to put into practice different ways of doing things.³⁰ Asking for a different society, activists started to build a small town within the metropolis of Madrid which some came to call *Ciudad de Sol* [City of Sol, or City of the Sun]. This metaphorical enunciation recalls the classic utopia of Tommaso Campanella who, in the seventeenth century, described an imaginary 'City of the Sun', which took a circular form.³¹

As the committees proliferated,³² stalls made of wood and cardboard followed. Each one of these served to provide physical space to the various elements of reflection and work. On tables which served as display counters, information and pamphlets were laid out, along with lists of everything that was needed.³³ The City of Sol was populated with all kinds of constructions that met the needs of a fluctuating and varying population, within a regime where everything was free of charge.

Throughout the camp's rapid growth a series of passageways was maintained at all times. Zonal divisions were designated according to spatial functions: the areas for sleeping (the camp itself) (Fig. 5.6), the rest area, and the perimeter set aside for daily general assemblies were clearly marked out. The west zone, near the *Mallorquina* bakery, was always left free to allow access for ambulances in the event of any problems. It seems that a group of firefighters played an important role in these safety considerations.³⁴

The first map of the City of Sol was sketched on the night of 17 May.³⁵ Mapping seemed to advance at the same time as construction, but its



Fig. 5.6 The camp was divided into activity and rest zones (Photograph from 19 May. Julio Albarrán, courtesy of the author)



Fig. 5.7 The changing urbanism of the camp generated maps of orientation and signposting. In the mapping, the various services that this symbolic city offered can be seen: first-aid posts, food stalls, nursery, library, and vegetable garden (Montage by Julia Ramírez Blanco, CC. BY 2.0)

representations were out of date almost immediately given the camp's constant expansion. The various cartographic efforts are documents that, at the time, served to provide orientation within the complex spatiality of the activist settlement. Today, they serve as snapshots that show the impressive heights of organization reached by the camp committees (Fig. 5.7).

Various committees occupied themselves with logistics and maintaining the space. The Food Committee, which handled donations, ended up having three different stands in the square and stored surplus food and drink (Fig. 5.8). Portable toilets were also set up and the Committee for Infrastructure and Cleaning was established, along with a place for lost objects and a recycling point. The Respect Committee acted as a kind of non-violent police service that tried to mediate pacifically in conflicts.

There were also groups which were concerned with care work: a Children's Zone (comprising a library and a nursery) catered for children,



Fig. 5.8 The food stalls received so many donations that the food had to be stored (Photograph from 19 May. Julio Albarrán, courtesy of the author)

while the nursing stands relied on the altruistic work of professionals who dealt with any medical problems. In the Acampada, sun cream and even hats were provided to protect people from that sun which was becoming stronger as summer approached.

Some groups were more directly related to 'activist' work understood in the strictest sense of the word. The Action Committee planned actions, which were then examined by the Legal Committee, composed of lawyers who saw their work as an interpretation of law 'in terms of rights'.

Several suggestion boxes sited in different parts of the square allowed citizens to articulate and share some 15,000 ideas for change, written on small pieces of paper. There were also several places for signing documents to show approval of the settlement.

Short courses were given to train activists in how to deal with the conventional media and act as spokespeople. The Communication Committee used the Internet intensively to convoke, disseminate, analyse, and inform through texts, photographs, and videos. The legacy networks of earlier

social movements were profoundly revamped, creating a multitude of new platforms on the Web, more or less connected to the nodes which preceded them.

The years since 2000 had been an era of wikis, blogs, and websites such as YouTube, MySpace, Twitter, and Facebook: this new phase of the Internet, whose content is generated by users themselves, opened a flow of information and stories in an unprecedented way. Tools such as these have changed the population's self-perception, granting a large number of people certain iconic skills and the possibility of creating an audience for their thoughts and opinions, something that had previously been possessed only by artists and experts in mass communication. In a way, the ability to create spectacle has been democratized. If the users of social networks are accustomed to generating and managing an account of their own lives, social movements too are playing—consciously or otherwise—in the terrain of the production of narrative, symbolism, and images.

Moreover, and beyond the various elements related to the configuration, maintenance, and management of the camp, the Acampada also generated a whole fabric of thought and discussion which was the real ground of the social movement. People began to come together around the square to talk about socio-economic problems and possible alternatives, reflecting on different areas: groups worked variously on the electoral system, the economy, education, the environment, and short- and long-term politics. The Puerta del Sol took on a strong cultural dimension:³⁶ between 19 and 21 May, a library was created, with a section for adults and a children's area. During the course of the month it received more than 4,000 donated books.³⁷ At the same time, a Documentation and Archive Committee was formed: history was being recorded from inside the very process itself.

In the Acampada, self-government sought to follow a system of direct democracy. As in the squatted social centres, various committees were made up of working groups and came together in a general assembly. During the month of May, many people learnt political theory and were initiated into debating and taking decisions through assembly-based systems. This type of meeting took place twice a day in a space reserved specifically for the purpose.

People sat on the ground around the metro station, leaving free 'pathways'. Each meeting had an agenda, and in order to speak participants had to wait their turn to address the assembly. A sound system enabled everyone's voice to be heard. Approval, doubt, and veto were expressed in sign language so that speakers were not interrupted (Fig. 5.9). At the start, the



Fig. 5.9 The settlement was self-governing through an assembly system. In order not to interrupt speakers, participants used sign language (Image of a general assembly by Julio Albarrán, courtesy of the author)

taking of decisions required unanimity, but eventually this posture was softened to the search for an agreement with a substantial majority (four fifths), in order to make the system more functional. Even though the huge size of the general assemblies meant that they were barely functional, their space for discussion encapsulated the very meaning of the square as an agora.

The camp also fulfilled a role of dialectical antagonism in relation to the rest of the city: it was a small antithesis to the system, situated in the very centre of the metropolis.³⁸ Its demands were expressed through the dynamics of the space itself: the organizational and urban structures of Sol configured a systemic proposal which spoke of the possibility of radical self-organization, of an existence without formal hierarchies, of forms of voluntary work and non-monetary economy, and of a communitarian life where caregiving is carried out collectively.

To a certain extent, some of the services provided (such as nursing, the crèche, and the library) could be seen as a symbolic reinvention of some of

the public services that were being threatened by the dismantling of the welfare state. Self-government and the assembly system, in contrast, had more to do with the traditions of anarchism and autonomy, which had always been very strong in Spain.³⁹ With its elements varying between the metaphorical and the pragmatic, the Acampada proposed an 'ideal city', which to a large extent represented ideas tied to a politicized counterculture related to the extra-parliamentary left, combined with certain reformist ideas and concepts belonging to socialism and traditional workers' movements.

The Acampada brought together and gave visibility to a whole series of practices that had been developing for years without gaining much public attention. Suddenly, their underground currents burst through and overflowed onto the surface. In a certain sense, the square acted as a kind of 'fair' for activism, where each group was able to set up its own self-made 'pavilion' from which it could provide information about its activities and ways of seeing the world, inviting others to join. Taken as a whole, the camp and its agents staged a radically different urban model, another possible city. Civil disobedience had created its own disobedient settlement. And this was situated in the heart of the capital, Madrid's very centre, right in front of the headquarters of the regional government.

A REGIME OF GLEANING AND AN AESTHETICS OF PRECARIOUSNESS

Like so many other people, during the month of May the artists Antoni Muntadas and Hans Haacke came to the camp and took photographs. It is interesting to see how the aesthetic of the Acampada coincides with a current in contemporary art that is interested in the use of rubbish and precarious materials. For decades, architects and creators have contemplated the constructive process of shanty towns as architecture at its most basic level.⁴⁰

In particular, the camp showed certain visual echoes of the work of the Swiss artist Thomas Hirschhorn. Speaking about his work, Hirschhorn declared: 'I love the power of forms made in urgency and necessity. These forms have an explosive density. They are untameable and rebellious.'⁴¹ His recurrent materials are cardboard and balsa wood, adhesive tape, plastic, and rubbish. The *clochard* aesthetic of his work is similar to that of the City of Sol.

Some have spoken of the 'enlightened shanty town',⁴² alluding to forms of construction based on emergency and immediate need. In the dissident settlement, this way of proceeding had an ideological meaning: those who originally configured it did so of their own free will, unlike the unchosen precariousness of millions of people who build and live in slums across the world. This circle was closed when homeless people started to install themselves in the Sol camp.

The use of rubbish has a strong political meaning, as it is the other face of consumer capitalism. In her film *The Gleaners and I*,⁴³ Agnès Varda gathers various examples of two different attitudes towards reuse: choice and necessity. The film shows various forms of gleaning: although the origin of this term is in the rural practice of collecting what remains on the ground after harvest, Varda extends the concept, applying it to different forms of reusing that which others have discarded, also in the context of the city. The filmmaker depicts people who collect food or objects in a subjective catalogue of ways in which they live off leftovers and construct worlds through bits and pieces. This is not difficult to do in our society of excess, where every day tonnes of food and other goods in perfect condition are thrown away.

In the Acampada, the economic system was that of generosity (through donations of materials, objects, and food) and gleaning (through the gathering and recycling of all kinds of refuse). Money was explicitly forbidden (Fig. 5.10). Nacho Miranda expresses surprise at how 'it was possible to do something so wonderful with something that we had not bought, that we did not own, that belonged to everyone and no one at the same time'.⁴⁴ Those things gathered outside the direct situations of buying and selling could perhaps generate other kinds of relationships. Implicit in Miranda's words seems to be the idea of the gathered as a kind of *commons*, framed within that crucial concept at the heart of the book *Commonwealth* by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri.⁴⁵

As in Varda's film, reuse at Sol opened a door of hope. Places such as the Acampada sketched the possibility of beginning to build a new world on the basis of the old one's waste. As with gleaned fruit, the leftovers belonged to everyone. It was a question of organizing the excess, reordering rubbish, and using it for building. This way of acting would imply a dialectical scheme, in which the alternative depends upon capitalism to provide it with resources: however, this can be seen as merely the start, the first step towards creating a sustainable framework. A form of beginning, based on radical degrowth.

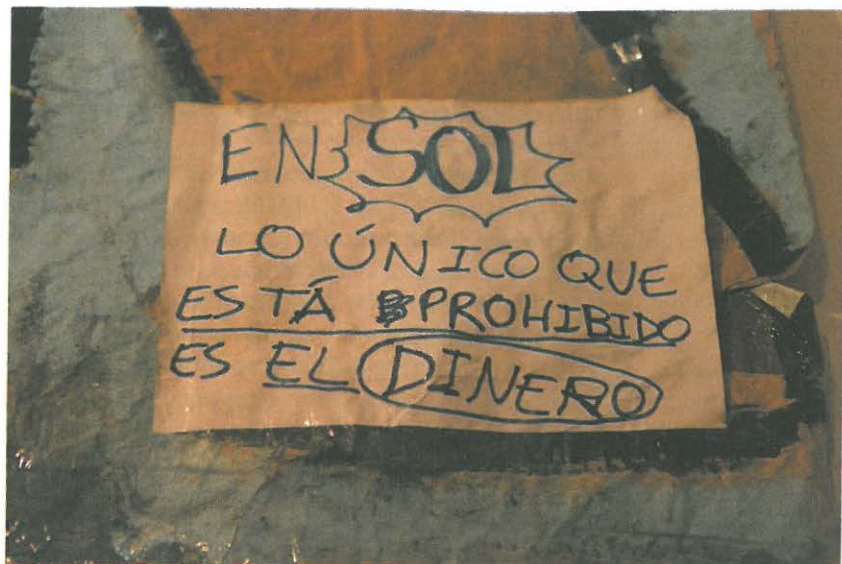


Fig. 5.10 The camp's economy was governed by the practices of collection and donation. This small poster refers to the explicit banning of money throughout the camp (Image by Marco Godoy, courtesy of the author)

POLITICAL HETEROGENEITY AND THE PRINCIPLE OF COLLAGE

In the Puerta del Sol, heterogeneity was both political and aesthetic. The place became a kind of mosaic of great eclecticism where neither the political nor the aesthetic seemed to have any 'possible direction or guideline'.⁴⁶ Elements were added to a motley ensemble where anyone who wished to express themselves could do so.

This overabundance of direct individual expressions can be seen as yet another manifestation of the crisis of representation.⁴⁷ Many people in the square seemed to feel the need to communicate their opinions and beliefs. Attempts at unification failed: one of the few large banners referred to this lack of faith in the idea that a single element could speak in the name of everyone. It showed a portrait of Himmler with Mickey Mouse ears and a cap bearing the euro sign—pulling together symbols of Nazism, North American capitalism, and the European Union's single currency—together with the words '*No nos representan*' ['They do not represent us']. This banner was hung on top of a huge shampoo advertisement.⁴⁸

The giant poster which showed Spanish actress Paz Vega promoting a shampoo for 'Mediterranean hair' had been acted on in an example of communication guerrilla tactics. What started out as an attack on an element of advertising,⁴⁹ ended up becoming a *détournement*, a diversion which playfully appropriated the image in the service of a new meaning. Through crossing out and superimposing letters, 'L'Oréal' became 'Democracia Real' ['Real Democracy'] (Fig. 5.11). Next to the silhouette of the actress erupted an international exhortation: 'PEOPLE OF EUROPE RISE UP!' Paz Vega, as an involuntary muse of the revolution, inspired posters which insisted on the idea of non-violence by playing with her name ['paz' is Spanish for 'peace'] and actively using humour, that primary subversive resource. Under her giant photograph, which had become a collective mural, a verbal node could be found. In the scaffolding which covered the building on which the advertisement was sited, nestled a dense mass of signs.

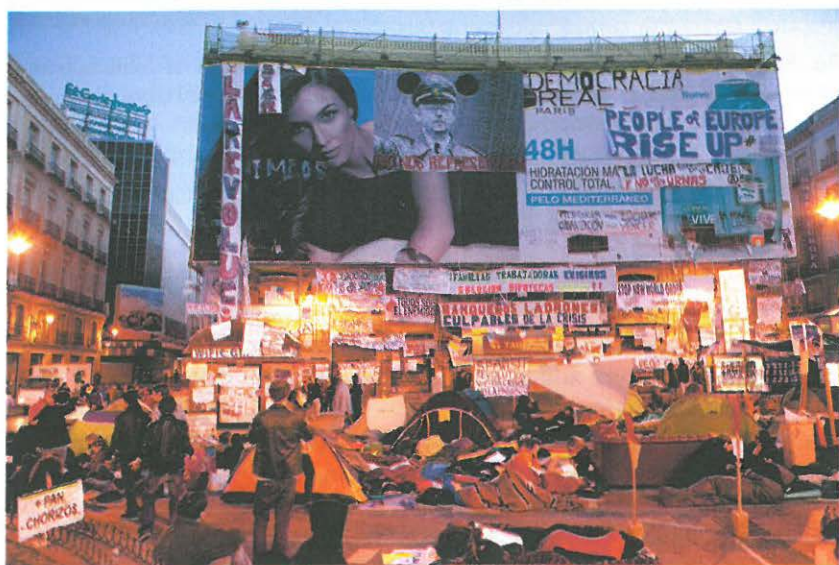


Fig. 5.11 On one of the buildings which surrounds the square, a huge advertising hoarding was subjected to a collective intervention. The cosmetics brand 'L'Oréal' became 'Democracia Real' ['Real Democracy'] (Photograph by Julio Albarrán, courtesy of the author)

CROWDS IN ASSEMBLY; BANNERS AND POSTERS

Phrases which are repeated for the mere pleasure of hearing them again.⁵⁰

The engineer and cultural critic Raúl Minchinela points to the popular recuperation of language as a fundamental element of the camp.⁵¹ Within the settlement, posters invaded everything: hung from the ropes that held up the awnings, stuck to the walls of surrounding buildings, on the committee tables, on the walls of their stalls. An architecture of signs took shape in the square, which once again recalls the textual and conceptual overabundance of the work of Thomas Hirschhorn. Its solidity was made of messages and ideas which were balanced between coherency and contradiction.⁵² This importance of language can be related to its centrality within the assembly system, which is based on government through hours and hours of spoken words (Fig. 5.12).



Fig. 5.12 The profusion of signs formed a complex verbal palimpsest of overlapping and superimposed meanings. The textual oversaturation of the space showed a kind of *horror vacui* of texts which kept on accumulating (Photograph of 19 May. Julio Albarrán, courtesy of the author)

A large number of posters sought to restore meaning to words such as 'democracy' or 'crisis', proposing possible solutions to various economic and social problems. Taken together, they signify an impressive exercise in collective political thought, with repeated thematic points: the privileges of the political class, the schism between institutional politics and the citizenry, the self-interested manipulation of the economic crisis, the parasitic character of the governing classes, and the need for radical change.⁵³ Some old slogans were taken up again, revealed as earlier strata of the discourse (Fig. 5.13).

The popular reclaiming of language not only retrieves the use of political terminology but also exercises the right to use speech as a vehicle of subjectivity and poetry, enjoying the ludic-symbolic possibilities offered by words. Many texts speak of personal experiences. Others play with metaphor: an example of such creativity is the rhetoric of the sun [*sol*], referring to Puerta del Sol, a place name which in Spanish means 'Gateway of the Sun'. The sun is taken as a symbol of the social movement and its implicit promises, with banners such as 'Tenemos el Sol, ahora queremos la luna' ['we have the Sun, now we want the moon'] or 'hace un día de sol precioso' ['it's a beautifully sunny day'] (Fig. 5.14). The square itself became the 'Plaza de la SOLución' ['square of the SOL-ution']: the new city planning was completed with the invention of a new toponymy, changing the names of those places that had been transformed (Fig. 5.15).

The Graphic and Visual Arts Committee worked continuously to produce signs and symbolic elements for display in the square (Fig. 5.16). While banners on demonstrations are mobile, walking along with their bearers, the placards in the Sol camp were more static, placed there by protestors who had set up camp in the square, and they played a fundamental role in creating a new sense of space. Many of them were made *in situ*, drawn with pens or even pencils, in a vast catalogue of calligraphies. Most of the messages were written on paper, cardboard, or even using the minimal format of Post-It notes. The principle of collective and evolving collage was also applied to these spontaneous texts, whose conjunction formed part of 'a very combinatory aesthetic'.⁵⁴ The constant advance of signs was of a modular character, in which the small predominated: as anything big had to be approved by the Assembly, the aesthetic elements of the camp essentially added small items of horizontal growth with various points of concentration. Texts, drawings, paintings, graffiti, stencils, printed photographs, interventions on advertisements, cardboard mario-nettes All were superimposed in an accumulation of meanings that



Fig. 5.13 The vast variety of posters which populated the camp oscillated between poetry, humour, and proclamation (Montage by Marco Godoy, CC/ Archivo 15M)



Fig. 5.14 ‘Hace un día de sol precioso’ [it’s a beautifully sunny day]. Appealing to the double meaning suggested by ‘dawn’ (literal and metaphorical), Puerta del Sol—which means ‘Gateway of the Sun’—became a name identified with the promises of change that are heralded by revolt (Photograph by Sole Parody, courtesy of the author)

became measureless. The handmade banners—and with them, the concepts they displayed—grew rhizomatically and were placed in the space in a spontaneous way, with a kind of *horror vacui*.

Philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari claim that the rhizome structure is inherently subversive.⁵⁵ The horizontal organization of the camp was also translated into a horizontal arrangement of its messages. This is also linked to a young population educated in Web 2.0: the overabundance of essentially equivalent texts corresponds to this phase of the Internet’s development where excess replaces exception. One of the centres of verbal concentration was the entrance to the Sol metro and train station, which became a place to exchange ideas. In a way similar to that of posting opinions on a blog, written papers accumulated on the glass, rendering it almost opaque.



Fig. 5.15 The Puerta de Sol itself was dubbed *Plaza Sol-ución* [Plaza Sol-ution]. In a kind of new revolutionary topography, the activist alteration of the space was accompanied by a change of name (Image by Julio Albarrán, courtesy of the author)

Many people left the metro and entered the square through this glass structure, emerging from beneath a profusion of written messages. The star project of the Partido Popular in Madrid became a democratic medium, a noticeboard for change. Elements such as this reveal that the Puerta del Sol had become a huge open-air book. Written words were read in an environment of spoken, shouted, or chanted words, of slogans old and new,⁵⁶ personal and common, aggressive and enthusiastic. The square became, literally, a square of words, in an environment that was a total overflowing of language.

THE 'SILENT SCREAM': AFTER UTOPIA

On the first evening of fighting, it so happened that the dials on clock towers were being fired at simultaneously and independently from several locations in Paris. An eyewitness, who may have owed his insight to the rhyme, wrote as follows:



Fig. 5.16 The Arts Committee carried out a constant production of posters, in which there was an impressive collective exercise in creativity and political reflection (Photograph by Julia Ramírez Blanco, CC BY 2.0)

*Qui le croirait! On dirait qu'irrités contre l'heure
De nouveaux Josués, au pied de chaque tour,
Tiraient sur les cadrans pour arrêter le jour.*

[Who would believe it! It is said that, incensed at the hour,
Latter-day Joshuas, at the foot of every clock tower,
Were firing on clock faces to make the day stand still.]⁵⁷

During the first week, the camp did not stop growing. The square's inhabitants were overwhelmed with a feeling of imminent social change. Meanwhile, the Legal Committee provided the telephone numbers of lawyers, which people wrote on their skin, to use in the event of eviction and/or arrest. These first moments were a period of wonder. Almost immediately the Madrid camp spawned similar settlements in various Spanish cities. In the capital the euphoria grew. Nonetheless, outside the

Acampada and its surroundings, the rest of the city continued under the regime of earlier 'normality', as if the activist place inhabited a different temporality.

However, during the two days before the elections it seemed that one city had fallen on top of another. 'Lo llaman democracia y no lo es' ['They call it democracy, but it's not'] had already become a popular slogan and it resounded throughout the square. Many of those chanting it had not previously been connected to any social movement. They were there despite the fact that, on Friday 20 May, the Electoral Commission had explicitly prohibited all demonstrations on the following Saturday.⁵⁸

At midnight, therefore, the gathering officially became illegal. The crowd then expressed disobedience in a performative manner. Those thousands of people who had come to the Puerta del Sol kept silence and waved their hands in assembly-style applause. Some had sealed their mouths with duct tape. The twelve chimes of the city-hall clock were heard in pristine clarity. When the chiming finished, there were shouts and applause. More than 20,000 people stood under the orange light of the street lamps.

That great collective performance became known as the 'silent scream' (Fig. 5.17). The extended hands evoke surrender, in a kind of pacifist defiance, which in Spain is reminiscent of the *manos blancas* [white hands] of the demonstrations against the ETA terrorist group. The scene also makes one think of the national tradition of eating a dozen grapes on 31 December, one for each of the chimes which announce the start of the New Year. Some banners played with the analogy: 'Si viene la policía, sacad las uvas y disimulad' ['If the police come, take out grapes and pretend'].

After the silent scream, there was a voiceless tension. Would there be an eviction? There were too many people, it would be impossible to leave the square ... Nothing happened and this moment was lived as a triumph. It was the biggest act of civil disobedience in the post-Franco history of the country.

The silent scream acted as a huge collective explosion. Everyone was there, with their hands stretched out into the night. Because of the proximity of bodies, there was hardly any space to move. Moments such as this act as catalysts. Years earlier, the writer Yves Frémion had proposed the metaphor of the 'orgasms of history' to describe processes of insurgency:

[Like the orgasm, the uprisings] too, boast a stage when the struggles (slowly but inexorably) are hatching and building up. The explosion when it comes, comes abruptly, and is hard to control, even for those who unleash



Fig. 5.17 On 20 May 2011, more than 20,000 people occupied the Puerta del Sol, defying the Electoral Commission's prohibition. This enormous performance—one of the largest acts of civil disobedience in Spanish history—became known as the *grito mudo* or the silent scream (Photograph by Julio Albarrán, courtesy of the author)

it. Once the explosion is over, there is an undeniable easing of tension, an ebb tide heralding the very palpable torpor of the aftermath of pleasure [...]. Away then, with the hoary image of revolution as a once-and-for-all success: and with the notion of love as an ongoing orgasm. Sure, the orgasm may be short-lived, but it is damned fine while it lasts.⁵⁹

The moment that follows the utopian explosion is similar to that which comes 'after love'. And, in a certain way, one can also see the *Acampada* as a big celebration, whose excess led to a kind of collective 'hangover'. At that moment, the events of representative politics did not help.

When the regional elections took place on 22 May it seemed that the activist event had left no mark on parliamentary politics. The Partido Popular, the most right-wing option among mainstream parties, won an overwhelming majority:⁶⁰ many people had abstained from voting, and some had put slices of chorizo in the voting envelope, alluding to the

corruption of the political class.⁶¹ On top of all this, the square had emptied noticeably.

Despite the constant fear of eviction, after the police repression of 15 May the authorities had not sought to repeat an attempt at removing the Madrid camp.⁶² After the elections, the building of the Acampada's structures continued to progress in a space that sheltered far fewer people. Now the settlement's inhabitants were more clearly tied to the countercultural scene and the networks of previous activism.

In time, internal conflicts became increasingly bitter, and thefts and aggressive behaviour took on greater significance. Again, the participants were aware that to throw out those whose behaviour was 'problematic' was against their own principles. Many people noticed how a large amount of energy was focused on managing the space, to the detriment of carrying out actions. Where previously there had been consensus, the debate started about when and how to leave, in order to be able to channel the social movement in another way.

After a week of tense assemblies where only a small number of people opposed the general decision, the group decided to dismantle the settlement. People then started to talk of *Mudanzas 15M* [15M Removals]. On 12 June 2011, the materials of the Sol camp were put into vans and most were taken to various squatters' social centres in the city.⁶³ At this time, there was a big gathering up of posters, banners, and other objects which became part of the 15M Archive.⁶⁴

Once the ground had been swept and the area vacated, the Acampadasol wanted to leave a permanent information point in the square along with a ground-level monument: next to the statue of Carlos III a metal plate was placed, with the text 'Dormíamos, despertamos. Plaza tomada, 2011' ['We were sleeping, we awoke. Square taken over, 2011'] (Fig. 5.18). On the last day of the settlement, there was a summing-up assembly during which the various committees and working groups gave accounts of their work. The camp had endured for a total of twenty-eight days.

By now, the Acampadasol had already become a global trigger and when the Madrid camp disappeared, there were already similar settlements in many other places across the globe, initiating a new wave of activism at an international level. On 17 September 2011, Occupy Wall Street appeared, siting its dissident camp in Zuccotti Park, very near the New York Stock Exchange, one of capitalism's main symbolic centres. As with the movement of movements, the people in the street cried 'Another world is



Fig. 5.18 After its dismantlement, those at the camp wanted to leave a small monument at ground level. This plaque spoke of the activist transformation understood as an ‘awakening’: ‘We were asleep. We awoke. Square taken over, 2011’ (Photograph by Juanlu Sánchez, courtesy of the author)

possible!’ In his analysis, the social geographer David Harvey once again turned to the metaphor of the machine and the idea of putting one’s own body between the cogs of the system:

Spreading from city to city, the tactics of Occupy Wall Street are to take a central public space, a park or a square, close to where many of the levers of power are centered, and, by putting human bodies in that place, to convert public space into a political commons—a place for open discussion and debate over what the power is doing and how best to oppose its reach.⁶⁵

Through the camps, the people in the crowd seemed to be reclaiming their right to intervene in the cities which they inhabited.⁶⁶ Occupying squares had become a form of acting which spread with great force and speed.⁶⁷ The Madrid camp had translated the Arab phenomenon to the

West, establishing the basis for a kind of utopian and countercultural settlement, where the communitarian experiment was inseparable from political protest.⁶⁸

Although very varied according to their different contexts, the camps had elements in common. They all included the aesthetic of precariousness, the profusion of words through small handmade posters, and the construction of space through structures of wood and cardboard. Certain elements with a strong symbolic significance, such as the library, sprouted from Athens to New York.

The Tahrir-style camp, through the filter of Madrid, implied a new typology in the vocabulary of the aesthetics of protest, as had happened previously with the Reclaim the Streets style of rave-carnival and the counter-summit in the manner of Seattle and Prague. Now, public space was taken over by building a small metropolis inside the main one—a kind of symbolic State that implied a radical questioning of how things function.

But the settlements did not function in the long term and nor would they have survived without resources provided by the rest of the city. More than 'real' communities, the camps were performative communities. Nonetheless, in these spaces, people could *experience* that another way of living *could be possible*.

Le Corbusier reflected on the utopian impulse and its relation to building in *Vers une architecture*:

Society is filled with a violent desire for something which it may obtain or not. Everything lies in that: everything depends on the effort made and the attention paid to these alarming symptoms. Architecture or Revolution. Revolution can be avoided.⁶⁹

The global camps seemed to want to resolve this opposition by proposing (popular) architecture as a tool of rebellion.⁷⁰ New social movements emerged everywhere where this dissident urbanism arose, emanating from life at the camps themselves. In Spain, the 15M movement appeared, whose characteristics were initially related to the lines that had been articulated by the camps: the assembly approach, horizontality, and voluntary work divided by thematic areas. At the same time, a myriad of specific campaigns arose, which adopted the '15M style' of spectacular action and collective disobedience.⁷¹

After the camp, insurrection continued while the 'normal' city imposed its increasingly authoritarian plans in a state of growing deficiency and

fear, very far removed from the hopes of that May. Cuts in social spending were combined with repression in the context of growing poverty.⁷² The utopian place had served as a catalyst, but there was soon a growing despair which combined with dumb rage. ‘Nobody expects the Spanish Revolution’,⁷³ declared one of the slogans, while a piece of graffiti added: ‘*No pasa hasta que pasa*’ [‘it doesn’t happen until it happens’]. On 25 September 2012, a defiant protest attempted to surround and blockade the Congress building. This *Rodea el Congreso* [Surround the Congress] action—developed in the context of a strong police presence and high levels of repression—showed the Congress building behind a perimeter of fences, against the citizenry. During the following months, the barriers and the surveillance were maintained, as if the institutions had to protect themselves from the people.

At first, the camp had barely influenced institutional politics. However, a very rapid political process unfolded in Spain which ensured that a strong impact would be felt in subsequent elections. It was not easy to predict that the experience of the camp would give legitimacy to the creation in 2014 of a new political party, called *Podemos* [We Can]. Pablo Iglesias, its leader, had been part of the *Tutte Bianche* and described their civil disobedience practices in his doctoral thesis, emphasizing the importance of spectacles that capture the attention of the media. The alter-globalization generation of activists had come together with new waves of people who had been politicized by 2011’s camps, and some of them had decided to speak the language of the media and to enter the game of political parties. *Podemos* would very soon gain popularity and institutional power. Different radical groups grew at the municipal level, and some of these would come together with *Podemos* in electoral coalitions. One such example is *AhoraMadrid*, formed ‘as an instrumental party without organic internal life’ in order to win the elections. In May 2015, *AhoraMadrid* (with the support of PSOE) took power in the Madrid city hall while a similar coalition, *BarcelonaenComú*, did so in Barcelona. Ada Colau, linked to the squatters’ movement and the campaign for decent housing, and connected to *Las Agencias*, became mayor of Barcelona. In December of the same year, analogous groupings backed *Podemos* in the general election at which it became a significant political force.

Thus, in a way, the crowd moved from trying to surround and disrupt a congress which they felt did not represent them to attempting to enter it through the front door—but now returning to the language of representative politics. The activist and poet Ernesto Garcia speaks of how

The 'movementist' cycle (2011–13) and the institutional and electoral cycle (2013 onwards) would be two connected cycles with distinct political subjectivities. [...] The second is not a mere evolution of the first and nor is the first a pre-political process that has nothing to do with the institutional. Rather, I consider that both periods (with all their recursion, confusion, interaction) do not behave as clear stages but [...] conduct a dialogue with the institutional from distinct places. The 'movementist' cycle implies [...] among many other things the construction of a political subjectivity that is antagonistic to institutional rationales and to parties, a new sensibility sustained by the centrality of the citizen-neighbour, but in dialectic tension with the State; while the second phase constructs a 'new political animal' where (through Podemos) the rationale of the party is reassembled, but in a different style, in a transversal manner, with new internal dynamics. In this regard, it is not correct to attribute to Podemos the social demobilization (the streets had already been vacated since autumn 2013), nor could we ascribe to it the supposed translation of the 15-M in terms of 'political maturing'.⁷⁴

The *micro* had quickly influenced the *macro*, and part of the counter-cultural youth that slept in the open air of the camp embarked on a rapid journey to what they called the 'institutional assault' or even the 'storming of heaven'.⁷⁵ New complexities opened up, and it is hard to tell where they might lead. The closing of this book therefore lies at the entrance to a path that crosses both the lands of Utopia and the earthly grounds of realpolitik.

NOTES

1. 'No nos vamos', slogan, May 2011.
2. María Salgado, blog entry 17.5.11. Available at <http://globorapido.blogspot.com.es/search?updated-min=2011-01-01T00:00:00%2B01:00&updated-max=2012-01-01T00:00:00%2B01:00&max-results=50> [Consulted: 28/12/2015].
3. 'No vas a tener casa en la puta vida', slogan of V de Vivienda, a movement which campaigned for decent housing.
4. 14 March 2004 became known as the 'night of the mobile telephones', in which text messages spread the message with a 'pass it on'.
5. Miguel Ángel Martínez, 'El Movimiento de Okupaciones: Contracultura Urbana y Dinámicas Alter-Globalización' ['The Squatters' Movement: Urban Counterculture and Alter-Globalization Dynamics'], *Revista de Estudios de Juventud*, no. 76, March 2007, 225–43.

6. Normally the squatter 'ethic' implies the taking over of buildings that have been left for a long time without being used. In Spain, the profusion of property scandals, which were related to speculation, made squatting those buildings an equally 'moral' alternative.
7. Ada Colau, future mayor of Barcelona, was also linked to these groups. Some of these people later formed part of the Enmedio Collective. Enmedio continued to be very active, designing images for campaigns such as the *escrachas* (a form of demonstration where protestors target the homes or workplaces of people they wish to protest against) of the Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (a campaigning group for people struggling with mortgage repayments and repossessions). See <http://www.enmedio.info> [Consulted: 28/12/2015].
8. A little later, a similar image was used by Occupy Wall Street, through the design of the activist group Not An Alternative, strongly linked to Enmedio. Not An Alternative speaks of a voluntary resemblance, aiming at an aesthetic connection with the Madrid Camp. Jason Jones, interview with the author, 20/03/2014.
9. These problems sharpened considerably in a very short space of time.
10. The event was supported by hundreds of blogs and organizations with an anti-globalization and anti-capitalist orientation, not tied to political parties or trade unions: among them one could highlight certain collectives related to the movement of movements, such as ATTAC; groups which defend internet freedom, e.g. Anonymous and No Les Votes [Don't Vote For Them]; and organizations with origins within a university framework, such as Juventud Sin Futuro.
11. Puerta del Sol is a place of great symbolic importance: it had been the scene of the uprising of 2 May 1808 (painted by Goya), and where the Second Republic was proclaimed in 1931. In the square, one of the most important buildings is the main office of the regional government.
12. A large number of examples could be cited. In 2006, in Mexico, the presidential candidate Manuel López Obrador called for 'civil disobedience' camps to demand a recount of votes. See 'Ciudad de México, paralizada por los campamentos' [Mexico City, Paralysed by the Camps], *El Mundo*, 1 August 2006. Available at: <http://www.elmundo.es/elmundo2006/07/31/internacional/1154365213.html> [Consulted: 28/12/2015]. In the course of research for this book, it became apparent that other examples, such as Greenham Common and the camps of the anti-roads movement, can be regarded as quality examples of prolonged activist experiments at living in community. For a study of this tactic, see Anna Feigenbaum, Fabian Frenzel, and Patrick McCurdy, *Protest Camps* (London: Zed Books, 2013).

13. Sintel installed telephone systems and was part of the Telefónica group. In 1996, during the privatization of the public sector, it was sold to a company called Mas Tec. A slow decline in business led ultimately to its closure in 2000, resulting in mass redundancies that affected 900 employees. In protest, they erected a camp in the public thoroughfare Castellana which lasted six months—the camp contained showers and microwave ovens.
14. Olga Rodríguez reported on the Egyptian revolution for the alternative media outlet *Periodismo Humano*—this organization gained significance in May 2011 by extensively covering the events in Puerta del Sol. Olga Rodríguez, *Conversaciones 15m.cc6*. Available at: <http://madrid.15m.cc/2012/01/conversaciones-15mcc-olga-rodriguez.html> [Consulted: 28/12/2015]. Rodríguez is the author of the book *Yo muero hoy: Las revueltas en el mundo árabe* [*I Die Today: Revolts in the Arab World*] (Barcelona: Debate, 2012).
15. Rodríguez, *Conversaciones 15mcc6*.
16. 'La plaza, mi casa', slogan in Puerta del Sol, May 2011.
17. The entire first night of assembly was recorded by sound activist Kamen Nedev, using a binaural system. Available at <https://archive.org/search.php?query=%2315MAudio&sort=publicdate> [Consulted: 03/03/2016].
18. Within the group that stayed to sleep on the first night were several people who formed part of the network of squatted social centres. See Miguel Ángel Martínez, 'Ocupar las plazas, liberar los edificios (sobre el movimiento 15M y la okupación)' ['Occupy the Squares, Liberate the Buildings (Concerning the 15M Movement and Squatting)'], *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies*, 2015, vol. 14, no. 1, 157–84.
19. The original blog contains testimonies from the first days and nights: <http://concentracionssolmadrid.blogspot.com/> [Consulted: 28/12/2015]. On 17 May, its web address was changed to <http://tomalaplaza.net> [Consulted: 28/12/2015].
20. Nacho Miranda, interview with the author, 25/01/2012.
21. The social centres contributed to the logistics of the camp. As well as Patio Maravillas (squatted in its second location since 2010), the social centres of Casablanca (squatted since 2010) and Tabacalera (a self-managed project which has been developed since 2009 in a building lent by the Ministry of Culture) perhaps stand out.
22. This statue of the bear and the strawberry tree, the symbol of Madrid and the work of the sculptor Navarro Santafé, was unveiled in 1967 by the then mayor Arias Navarro during the Franco dictatorship. In 1994, the PP mayor Álvarez de Manzano unveiled the equestrian statue dedicated to King Charles III.

23. Marta G. Franco, who formed part of the Communication Committee, gives this account: 'We started to work with some fragile connections (someone brought a 3G dongle, some people signed up for mobile data ... or we used the Wi-Fi of Rodilla and McDonalds). During the day the Facebook page Spanish Revolution was launched. During the night [...] it was decided to launch [the website] tomalaplaza and its subdomains [...]. After finishing this, two "hactivist" friends went to the home of one of them (or to the [squatted social centre] Patio [Maravillas], I'm not sure) to buy the domain and install WordPress. And I went to my home to start to work on madrid.tomalaplaza.net. While I was doing this, the eviction took place, on the morning of the 17th [...] And then we returned and put up what was the real infernal tent at the rear of the horse [the equestrian statue of Carlos III], which underwent several mutations. That night of the 17th and 18th the boom in donations started and among the things which people brought were 3G modems and Fonera routers. In addition, hackers turned up and installed the Wi-Fi network in the rear of the horse. Those Wi-Fi routers which provided connection (some were open and others required a password, these latter to assure bandwidth for people who were working in Communication) connected to the internet at times through 3G, Fonera routers and Wi-Fi connections that the hackers had been able to pirate [...]. Martin Varsavsky (of [Wi-Fi provider] Fon) gave us Fonera routers and credits. I don't recall exactly how this Fon stuff worked, but the fact was that these Foneras gave us a connection which we did not have to pay for.' Marta G. Franco, e-mail to the author, 29/06/2013. On the donation by Martín Varsavsky, businessman and founder of companies such as Viatel, Ya.com, Jazztel, and Fon, see his personal website: <http://spanish.martinvarsavsky.net/general/ofreciendo-wifi-a-la-spanishrevolution.html> [Consulted: 28/12/2015]. It seems that Varsavsky wanted to seek a commercial and political opportunity in the Acampada—he had frequently criticized the 'backward' politics of Spain, though proposing solutions in line with neoliberal globalization.
24. This account comes from the words of Nacho Miranda: interview with the author, 25/01/2012.
25. In Spain, political demonstrations are not allowed on the days before elections. See F. Javier Barroso, 'La Junta Electoral de Madrid prohíbe la concentración en la Puerta del Sol' ['The Electoral Commission Bans the Concentration at Puerta del Sol'], *El País*, 18 May 2011. Available at: http://politica.elpais.com/politica/2011/05/16/actualidad/1305579962_497160.html [Consulted: 28/12/2012].
26. Juanlu Sánchez, interview with the author, 26/01/2012. Sánchez is one of the journalists who has written most about the Acampada, working for *Periodismo Humano*.

27. María Salgado, interview in *Los viernes al Sol* [*Fridays in the Sun*], 10 February 2012, Universidad de Alicante. Available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=73rE-Nw8gSs> [Consulted: 28/12/2015].
28. Nacho Miranda, interview with the author, 02/03/2012.
29. Zuloark, 'IC Sol. Los pilares de la #spanishrevolution' ['Collective Intelligence Sol. The Pillars of the #spanishrevolution']. Available at: <http://minipost.zuloark.es/post/6582491440/pilares-spanish-revolution> [Consulted: 31/12/2015].
30. The press named this new social group *Los indignados* [the indignant ones, the outraged], taking the term from the book of the French Resistance veteran Stéphane Hessel, with which many participants did not identify. See Stéphane Hessel, *Time for Outrage (Indignez-vous!)* (New York, Twelve, 2011).
31. Francis Bacon and Tomasso Campanella, *The New Atlantis and The City of the Sun: Two Classic Utopias* (New York: Dover Publications, 2003).
32. See Adolfo Estalella and Alberto Corsín, '#spanishrevolution', *Anthropology Today*, vol. 27, no. 4, August 2011, 19–23. Available at: <http://es.scribd.com/doc/115467840/spanishrevolution> [Consulted: 31/12/2015].
33. This procedure is frequent in squatted social centres.
34. Before 15 May, firefighters were already camped out, in Madrid's Cuesta de Mayano, to protest against cuts. From the night of 15 May, communication was established between the two settlements. Even though as a body the firefighters were not officially connected to the Acampada, they demonstrated an explicit level of personal support. The journalist Jessica Romero tells of having seen maps made by firefighters. Jessica Romero, interview with the author, 26/01/2012.
35. Juanlu Sánchez, interview with the author, 26/01/2012.
36. See Alejandro Torrús, 'Una cultura propia para una democracia real' ['A Culture of One's Own for a Real Democracy'], *Público*, 5 May 2012. Available at: <http://www.publico.es/espana/431981/una-cultura-propia-para-una-democracia-real> [Consulted: 31/12/2015]. See also T. V. Reed, *The Art of Protest: Culture and Activism from the Civil Rights Movement to the Streets of Seattle* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).
37. See the blog of the group *Bibliosol*, which continued after the end of the Acampada: <http://bibliosol.wordpress.com/quienes-somos/> [Consulted 1/12/2015].
38. The media began to show huge interest in knowing what the so-called Acampadasol 'wanted'. However, and although some people insisted on creating a document which made specific demands (the so-called 'minimum consensus'), the heterogeneity of the settlement combined with the assembly methodology and the refusal of many to enter into dialogue with

the political class made this impossible. Thus the discourse can be found in the practices of the settlement itself.

39. The hashtag #spanishrevolution was derived to reflect the way in which anarchists refer to the wave of collectivization and self-management which took place during the Spanish Civil War of 1936–9.
40. In the field of art, some examples are the works of Marjetrica Potrc, Helio Oiticica, and the shanty-town designs of Atelier van Lieshout. The *arte povera* of the 1970s is a benchmark in terms of the celebration of precarious materials, although the ‘style’ is very different. Regarding recycling refuse for construction, see the classic text by Martin Pawley, *Garbage Housing* (Florida: Krieger Publishing Company, 1978).
41. In Craig Garrett, ‘Thomas Hirschhorn, Philosophical Battery’. Available at: <http://www.papercoffin.com/writing/articles/hirschhorn.html> [Consulted 31/12/2015]. The work of Hirschhorn has a strongly political content. This is expressed not only in the subjects chosen for his works, but also in the very praxis his work implies. A paradigmatic example is the Musée Précaire Albinet, of 2004: for this project, Hirschhorn erected barracks in which key works of contemporary art were displayed. To construct this alternative institution, he sought the collaboration of the inhabitants of the working-class district of Albinet in Aubervilliers. However, he has also been criticized for maintaining a hierarchy based on the figure of the artist.
42. ‘*Chabolismo ilustrado*’, a term invented by the Beatus Ille group of architects, whose members include Alberto Araico Brito, creator of the project for an information point which remained for some time in the Puerta del Sol. See ‘Arquitectura de Guerrilla para el 15-M’, *El País*, 17 June 2011. Available at: http://elpais.com/diario/2011/06/17/madrid/1308309860_850215.html [Consulted: 31/12/2015].
43. Agnès Varda, *Les glaneurs et la glaneuse* [*The Gleaners and I*], France, 2000. Its continuation, *Les glaneurs et la glaneuse ... deux ans après* [*The Gleaners and I: Two Years Later*], France, 2002, is more hopeless and sad.
44. Nacho Miranda, interview with the author, 25/01/2012.
45. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Commonwealth* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2009). See also Peter Linebaugh, *The Magna Carta Manifesto: Liberties and Commons for All* (Berkeley: Los Angeles–London, University of California Press, 2008).
46. Marta G. Franco, interview with the author, 17/01/2012.
47. Jordi Claramonte speaks of the relationship of the 15M to the crisis of representation. Interview with the author, 02/03/2012. In 2009, Claramonte was one of the people who proposed the Tabacalera self-managed social centre to the Ministry of Culture, at a time when Ángeles Albert was the General Director of Fine Arts.

48. On Thursday 19 May, a banner whose meaning was transversal, 'La revolución será feminista o no será' ['The revolution will be feminist or it won't be'], was torn down. The man who removed it beat his chest 'King Kong-style' and was applauded by people below. The banner was later replaced and the incident was condemned by the General Assembly. The Feminist tent, in response, organized a 'feminism for beginners' workshop. This incident was described by the writer Belén Gopegui in 'Será feminista. Un taller de feminismo para principiantes en la Puerta del Sol' [It will be feminist. A feminism-for-beginners workshop in the Puerta del Sol], *Rebellion.org*, 21 May 2011. Available at: <http://www.rebellion.org/noticia.php?id=128853> [Consulted 31/12/2015].
49. Marta G. Franco describes it thus: 'we started to hang things on the scaffolding because there was a hurtful advertising poster which everyone wanted to destroy. We were there, getting stuck in. At first, most of the banners were put on top of that of L'Oreal and the other scaffold was left empty (...) because the important thing was to break that L'Oreal shit.' Interview with the author, 17/01/2012.
50. Salgado, *Los viernes al Sol*.
51. Lecture by Raúl Minchinela, 'REALISMO SUCIO. Lemas y consignas en el movimiento 15M' ['DIRTY REALISM. Slogans and Banners in the 15M Movement'], in *¡URGENTE!*, CCCB, 15 July 2011.
52. In Marta G. Franco's account: 'Sometimes for what was written on the banners, one noted that there was little in the way of shared principles, for someone arrived who wrote some stupid "sons of bitches", then a feminist would arrive and cover it over, then someone else came and put an x ...', interview with the author, 17/01/2012.
53. Raúl Minchinela points out that the thematic axes were to denounce lies, defend thought, oppose the bailing out of the banks, condemn government by financial power, and criticize materialism. *Minchinela*, 'REALISMO SUCIO'.
54. Kamen Nedev, interview with the author, 19/01/2012.
55. See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, trans. Brian Massumi, 'Rhizome', introduction to *A Thousand Plateaus* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).
56. For Kamen Nedev, the slogans 'were pure collage re-appropriation'. Interview with the author, 19/01/2012.
57. Walter Benjamin, in Michael Löwy, *Fire Alarm: Reading Walter Benjamin's On the Concept of History* (London-New York: Verso, 2005), 90.
58. Juanlu Sánchez, in Adriano Morán Conesa's documentary, *La Plaza, la gestación del movimiento 15M* [*The Square, the Gestation of the 15M Movement*], Spain, 2011. See <http://especiales.lainformacion.com/espana/documental15m/> [Consulted: 31/12/15].

59. Yves Frémion, *Orgasms of History: 3000 Years of Spontaneous Insurrection* (Edinburgh–Oakland: AK Press, 2002), xi.
60. Even though the number of votes for smaller parties rose, their increase was not sufficient to play a role in the government. In the national elections on 20 November, this vote against bipartisanship increased further. The Izquierda Unida [United Left] coalition was one of the parties that gained most. However, the PP continued to have an overall majority. At the next general election, in December 2015, the situation changed dramatically when some people linked to the social movements integrated themselves into the party political system.
61. ‘Chorizo’ is a colloquial term for ‘thief’ in Spain.
62. In Barcelona, however, there was a violent eviction, coinciding with a football match: the square was cleared out so that a celebration could be held after the sports event.
63. The Casablanca squatters’ social centre was the main recipient of materials and groups. The library (Bibliosol) was set up there, along with the archive (Archivo 15M) and the Arts Committee. Its importance as an organizational place meant that the police evicted it in September 2012, as part of a campaign of preventive repression directed towards the activist event ‘Rodea el Congreso’ [‘Surround the parliament’].
64. When the Acampada was taken down, all the posters that remained became part of the Archivo 15M, which since then has been classified and digitalized. See my text ‘El archivo del 15M’ [‘The 15M Archive’], published at <http://archivosol15m.wordpress.com/about/> [Consulted 31/12/2015] and ‘Banners and the Madrid 2011 Protest Camp: Reading the Signs of Revolt’, Disobedient Objects blog, Victoria and Albert Museum, accessible at <http://www.vam.ac.uk/blog/disobedient-objects/banners-and-2011-madrid-protest-camp-reading-signs-revolt> [Consulted 16/08/2017]. See also Alberto Senante, ‘Archivo 15M, la memoria de un sueño’ [‘15M Archive, the Remembrance of a Dream’], *Periodismo Humano*, 28 March 2012. Available at: <http://periodismohumano.com/sociedad/memoria/archivo-15m-la-memoria-de-un-sueno.html> [Consulted 31/12/2015].
65. David Harvey, *Rebel Cities* (London–New York: Verso, 2012), 161.
66. See Henri Lefebvre, *Le droit à la ville* [The Right to the City], (Paris: Anthropos, 1968) and David Harvey, *Rebel Cities*.
67. On 20 May, it was estimated that there were sixty camps in Spain and fifteen in other countries. On 25 May, Athenians set up camp in Syntagma Square. (Exaggerated) estimates in June 2011 spoke of 140 camps across the world. See http://wiki.15m.cc/wiki/Lista_de_acampadas [Consulted 31/12/2015].
68. The art world renewed its interest in activism, which seemed to have been left forgotten since the unrest of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s.

In the prestigious magazine *Art Forum*, Manuel Borja Villeda, director of the Reina Sofía museum (and director of the Barcelona Museum of Contemporary Art [MACBA] at the time of Las Agencias), speaks of the Acampadasol as the most important event of 2011. See 'Best of 2011', *Art Forum*, December 2011, 196. Months later, the European Prize for Urban Public Space created a special category in order to praise its virtues (see <http://www.publicspace.org/en/works/g001-acampada-en-la-puerta-del-sol/prize> [Consulted: 31/12/2015]). The artistic environment tried to involve members of the various Occupy camps in their shows: in 2012, Documenta in Kassel asked a local camp if it would set up next to its headquarters and, during the Berlin Biennial, the artistic centre KunstWerke became a paradoxical protest camp (see the exhibition catalogue: Artur Zmijewski and Joanna Warsza [eds.], *Forget Fear* [Cologne: KW/Verlag der Buchhandlung Walter König, 2012]).

69. Le Corbusier, *Vers une architecture* (Paris, G. Crès, 1923), 225.
70. These ideas were articulated for the first time in Julia Ramírez Blanco, 'La ciudad de Sol' ['The City of Sol'], *Arquitectura Viva*, vol. 145, 2012, 112.
71. Closing the circle of the problem of where to live, movements that have undergone revival are the squatters' movement and the movement for decent housing, led to a great extent by the Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca [Platform of Those Affected by Mortgages]. Also, those affected by cuts to the welfare state organized themselves in a 'chromatic' way in the so-called *mareas* [tides]: the ones which have had most impact in the media are the *marea verde* [green tide] of education and the *marea blanca* [white tide] of healthcare.
72. Josep Maria Fontana indicates how 'an IMF study of 173 cases of fiscal austerity recorded in advanced countries between 1978 and 2009 confirmed that the results were generally negative: economic contraction and increased unemployment'. Josep Maria Fontana, *El futuro es un país extraño* (Barcelona: Pasado y Presente, 2013), 65.
73. A playful reference to the Monty Python sketch in which one of the characters repeatedly says 'Nobody expects the Spanish Inquisition!'
74. Ernesto García, email to the author, 09/03/2016. In García's opinion, 'the only social movements which stick to it and during the institutionalist phase maintained "the street" would be the feminist movement, the anti-eviction movement (PAH), and the ecologist movement with its strong involvement in initiatives such as the fight against the TTIP (Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership)'.
75. This expression is a quote from Karl Marx in a letter he wrote to Ludwig Kugelmann referring to the Paris Commune on 12 April 1871, available at https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1871/letters/71_04_12.htm [Consulted: 08/03/2016].

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