

# Open urban forms

## An anthropological analysis of civic experimentation with free culture in the city

### Abstract<sup>1</sup>

The city has become the paradigmatic site for social struggles in the context of large urban transformations during the twentieth century. An intense renovation of some forms of civic political associations has taken place resulting from the incorporation of Internet and digital technologies in the political activism since the late nineties. **This project aims to explore the transformations in the way the city is imagined and practiced in urban contexts where forms of relationality and political association are intensively mediated by digital technologies.** More specifically its research object are the **urban articulations of what has started to be known as free culture.** Free software has emerged since the mid-nineties as one of the most exceptional creations of the Internet, it has been considered a model for innovation, a form of production and governance of knowledge and a radical innovation in the regimes of intellectual property. The notion of free culture points to the extension of this social form to new domains. The concept of **open urban forms** follows up into this trail and tries to conceptualize the novel urban articulations of free culture.

The project aims to research the next two interrelated questions: **how is free culture spatially translated in contexts of civic political association?** And **how is the city imagined and practiced in those contexts drawing on free culture?** This proposal sets up the continuation of a 24-month ongoing ethnography conducted in two field sites in Madrid (a medialab and an assembly of the 15M *indignados* movement). More specifically the project aims to: (i) analyze the urban articulations of free culture and its spatial translation into specific places, (ii) describe and analyze the novel modes of relationality and political association which produce a new "right to the city" drawing on the language and material infrastructure of free culture, (iii) describe and analyze the emergence of novel forms of production of public space and the new models of urban citizenship which are inspired in free culture. The project aims to contribute to three areas of knowledge: the anthropological study of digital culture, urban anthropology and the social studies of science and technology.

## 1. Project description

### 1.1 Introduction

In late December 2011, the assembly of the 15M *indignados* movement of Las Letras neighbourhood in Madrid held its weekly meeting at the Medialab-Prado for the first time. Medialab-Prado (MLP) is a public centre dedicated to the production of critical projects at the intersection of art, science and technology. Seven months earlier, on May 15 2011 and after a large public demonstration in protest over the political management of the economic crisis, an encampment occupied the Puerta del Sol square in Madrid during four weeks. Early on, the campers started to refer to it as a "miniature city" that relying on recycling practices, do-it-yourself (DIY) and digital communication deployed its infrastructure in the city's most famous and centric square. What has come to be known as the 15M **movement, the *indignados* movement or the #spanishrevolution**, came out of this encampment. More than a hundred of assemblies, similar to the one of Las Letras, sprouted from it and occupied the squares of Madrid neighbourhoods (and other cities in Spain) in the following months. Assemblies (*asambleas populares*) are the salient and identifying element of the 15M *indignados* movement in comparison with the Occupy Wall Street protest, for instance. The encampment first, and later the assemblies, brought into sharp relief **the experiments in which the city was (and is) imagined and practiced in novel ways through interventions in the public space and the production of a self-managed digital infrastructure.** The celebration of the assembly of Las Letras neighbourhood in Medialab-Prado signalled the convergence of two contexts of a 24-month ongoing ethnography (17 months completed) located in two field sites: Medialab-Prado and the assembly of the 15M *indignados* movement in the nearby neighbourhood of Lavapiés.

All together, the *indignados* assembly of Lavapiés neighbourhood, the encampment in Puerta del Sol square and, Medialab-Prado, are urban experimental settings in which citizens design, build and maintain over time their own material infrastructure: an encampment made of cardboard, plastic and recycled wood; a digital infrastructure of servers and software that sustains the assemblies over time, and technological prototypes that test new forms of sociability in Medialab-Prado. The prototypes are the salient figure of the language and experimental practice of Medialab-Prado; a prototype is conventionally a precarious and unstable technology, but it is also a concept that in Medialab-Prado stands out as a form of experimental

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relationality that draws inspiration from free culture. **The project tentatively thinks of these sociotechnical assemblages (the encampment, the assembly and the prototype) as open urban forms that make the city an experimental object**, a place where new forms of urban conditions are tested: a different way for imagining and practicing the public space and a novel mode for articulating citizenship. The project aims to research specifically a striking feature of these experiments: the mobilization of particular technologies, free software; and a language of openness which invokes a vocabulary of collaboration, transparency and horizontality that explicitly points out to free culture as its inspiration.

The project aims to characterize the urban articulation of free culture in these contexts of digital experimentation and to investigate how free culture is incorporated and shaped in contexts of civic involvement within the production of the urban fabric. More specifically, the objectives of the project are: (i) analyze the **urban articulations of free culture and their spatial translations** in contexts of digital experimentation, (ii) describe and analyze the **novel modalities of urban relationality and political association that imagine and practice the city** in different ways drawing on free culture, (iii) describe and analyze **how free culture inspires new ways of performing the public space and new models of urban citizenship**. The project aims to contribute to three areas of knowledge: the anthropological study of digital culture, urban anthropology and the social studies of science and technology. It is proposed as the continuation of an ongoing ethnography of 24 months (ending in July 2012); **its explicit aim is therefore to analyze the empirical data produced in this fieldwork**. In what follows I first introduce the theoretical background of the project; in the second section I point out the objectives of the project, the methodology and the work plan and finally I pose the expected contributions of the project.

## 1.2 Theoretical background and research themes

Free software has emerged in the last decade as one of the most exceptional creations of the Internet. More than an ecosystem of particular software technologies, free software has been described as a model for innovation (Mateos-García and Steinmueller, 2003), a form of production, dissemination and knowledge governance (Ghosh, 2005, Kelty, 2008) and a radical innovation in the regime of intellectual property (Moglen, 1999; Weber, 2004; Coleman, 2009). Free software has particularly inspired anthropological imagination in the last years describing it as a type of gift culture (Zeitlyn, 2003, Kelty, 2005), a form of moral imagination (Leach et al. 2009; Coleman and Golub 2008) or a radical revitalization of the public sphere (Kelty, 2008). This interest follows on the growing anthropological literature on digital cultures since the turn of the century (Miller and Slater, 2000). A field that has paid attention to the vibrant cultures resulting from mediated communications (Mayans, 2002; Miller, 2011), that has explored the construction of virtual worlds (Boellstorff, 2008; Nardi, 2010), researched the novel forms of sociability mediated by the mobile phone (Ito et al., 2005; Horst and Miller, 2006) or had paid attention to the changes in activist practices with the incorporation of Internet and digital technologies (Juris, 2005; Postill, 2011).

But free software has inspired the production of other technologies and projects like the Wikipedia, the Creative Commons licenses, the open hardware and the Open Access movement in the academic world. **The notion of free, or open culture, (Lessig, 2004) points to the extension and reformulation to other places, technologies and domains of society of what James Leach calls the social form of free software (Leach et al., 2009)**. The notion of openness in particular has pervaded broad domains of our society (Benkler, 2006), travelling into the academia to inspire new forms of circulation of scientific knowledge like Open Access (Kelty et al., 2008), inspiring "open systems of innovation" in business contexts (Chesbrough, Vanhaverbeke and West, 2006) and renewing proposals of open government (Rushkoff, 2003). However, few attention has been paid to free culture and the kind of transformation and reformulation that free software experiments when translated into new domains; with the exception of the work of Chris Kelty (2008). My aim is to contribute to the analysis of this novel sociological object called free culture. As a result of the fieldwork I have conducted so far, the ethnographical findings show the deep imbrications of free culture with the ways the city is imagined and practiced in Medialab-Prado and the 15M assembly of Lavapiés. **My aim is, therefore, to research how free culture is localized in particular places and how its language and infrastructure take part in the production of the urban fabric informing novel modes of relationality and political association**.

The following discussion presents four sections, each one introduces a research topic identified during the fieldwork in progress: places of digital culture, the right to the city, public space and urban citizenship. I consider relevant for presenting my arguments to discuss some empirical evidences of the fieldwork that allow me to introduce the relevant literature with which the project aims to dialogue with.

### Places of digital culture

The interactions between digital technologies and the city have become the object of interest of a growing literature in communication studies and geography. Concepts such as digital cities, smart cities and open source architectures bear witness to the intense exchange between digital and urban imaginations.

However, communication studies have tended to describe citizens as passive consumers of digital infrastructure (Foth, 2009; Hampton et al., 2010) while geography has been particularly interested in the socio-political transformation of urban space resulting from the deployment of digital infrastructures that reproduce current forms of inequality (Graham and Guy, 2002) or militarizes the public space (Graham, 2010). However, anthropology and the social studies of science and technology have paid little attention to the dynamics between digital technologies and the city. However, the opportunity to analyze this dynamic is exceptional in a number of places like hacklabs (hacker's laboratories) and medialabs where technological experts and citizens experiment with digital technologies.

I use **the concept of 'places of digital culture'** to refer to the kind of sites that hacklabs and medialabs represent. In doing so, I try to point out to the uniqueness of these urban sites that make of the Internet and digital technologies a key element of its rationale. We can consider places of digital cultures too the cybercafés, *locutorios* and living labs. However, and despite the proliferation of hacklabs and medialabs in the past decade, the places of digital culture have received little attention as a proper object for the analysis of digital culture, but some exceptions such as Blanca Callén analysis the Barcelona hacklab Riereta.net (Callén, 2010). Hacklabs are sites oriented toward the experimentation with digital technologies that tend to be traditionally located in squatted centres (*centros okupados*) (Sábada and Roig, 2004). They are the context for an intense exchange between the digital culture and urban activism that however has been almost completely overlooked. The only exceptions that tackle the urban dimension and articulations of these places of digital culture are, to my knowledge, the analysis of Internet cafés of Nina Wakeford (2003) and Anne Sophie Laegran and James Steward (2003).

Then again, returning back to my empirical field sites, Internet and digital technologies have been pointed out as key elements in the Arab uprising and the Occupy Wall Street movement in the USA (Jungerson, 2011). The *indignados* 15M movement has also assumed this imaginary as part of its self-identifying discourse, an aspect that has captured the attention of social scientists (Postill, s/d; Sampedro y Sánchez Duarte, 2011) and that we have tentatively explored (Corsin and Estalella, 2011). This project pays attention to digital technologies in the *indignados* 15M movement too, however I intent to add **a spatial turn to the analysis of digital technologies drawing on the concept of 'places of digital culture'**. Medialab-Prado, the encampment in Puerta del Sol square and assemblies are places where experimentation with the production of urban material infrastructures (not only digital) is held by drawing on a set of different practices (such as recycling, DIY and digital communication). It is through these infrastructures that citizens resist urban orderings (Coutard and Guy, 2007) and respond to what which Nigel Thrift has named as the as the *panic urbanism* of some social scientists (Thrift, 2005). Fred Turner (2006) has traced back to the 60's the ancestry of digital utopianism showing its ascendancy from DIY practices and the philosophy of cybernetics, five decades later the very same practices remain imbricate together in certain contexts where free culture takes shape.

The resonance of 'places of digital culture' with the figure of 'places of science' (Henke and Gieryn, 2008) is not accidental. The literature that discuss this concept, and other contributions from 'laboratory studies' (Latour and Woolgar, 1995 [1979]) and from the literature of 'architectures of science' (Galison and Thompson, 1999), are inspiring for approaching the analysis of the experimental cultures of Medialab-Prado and the Lavapiés assembly. More specifically, the interest in this literature on space and architecture provide a fruitful source for dialogue. The project addresses the following questions: what kind of experimental cultures emerge in these sites of digital cultures? How is translated into physical spaces the free software notion of openness? Which practices and technologies are mobilized in producing openness? Finally, what forms of urban imagination are produced drawing on free culture in these places of digital culture?

### **The right to the city**

The process of urbanization in the twentieth century has run parallel to the extension of democracy (Holston, 2009). Cities of the world have gradually enlarge while experiencing an intense transformation resulting from neoliberal economic reforms that have made the cities what David Harvey designates a space of capitalist surplus accumulation (Harvey, 2010). In this context, social struggles have moved from the factory to the city. Conflicts that make the city an object of political controversy have often been described by using the figure of the "right to the city" (Dikec, 2001, Amin and Thrift, 2002; Mitchell, 2003; Harvey, 2008). Henri Lefebvre (1969 [1968]) coined the notion of "the right to the city" more than 50 years ago when discussing the centrality of the production of space for capitalism. Drawing on this figure the French author claims the citizens' right to experience the city in their own terms and take part in the production of the urban fabric. It is possible then to think of the emergence of neighbourhood associations in Spain (*asociaciones vecinales*) (Pérez and Sánchez, 2008), urban movements (Castells, 1983) and practices of squatting (Adell and Martínez, 2004) as urban forms of political association that claim the right to take part in the production of the urban fabric, forms of political association that claim for a certain right to the city.

But what right to the city is demanded is usually a vague issue in a literature (Attoh, 2011) whose discussion generally focuses on claims for a more democratic participation in the management of the city

(Wastl-Walter et al., 2005), a more just city (Fainstein, 2010) or the right to have access to certain infrastructures (Soja, 2010). **This literature has tended to focus on the object of the right rather than in the right as a research object.** In contrast, practices that perform and bring into life a new right to the city have received little attention. My aim is precisely to make of the "right" to the city my research object. The hypotheses is that **new rights to the city are brought into existence in the laborious deployment of certain material urban infrastructures.**

I am thinking in urban infrastructures as sociotechnical assemblages. Stephen Graham and Simon Marvin (2001) have described the city as the effect of the interaction among urban infrastructures and other sociotechnical assemblages. A perspective adopted and extended in recent analysis of the city elaborated from Actor-Network Theory (ANT) (Fariás and Bender, 2009), a particular theoretical approach and sensibility in the STS. The project tries therefore to approach the city as a composition of diverse sociotechnical assemblages as it has been previously approached by Bruno Latour and Emilie Hermant (1998) in their study of Paris, or in the later work of Ash Amin and Nigel Thrift (2002). In these trend, ANT authors throw light on the interactions between the material dimension of the city and the condition of the urban fabric, problematizing the dichotomy established by Henri Lefebvre between this two concepts. Drawing on it Manuel Delgado (1999) has described the urban fabric as the city less the architecture, an approach that could be said representative of an extended sensibility in urban anthropology. Delgado's description of the urban life as spontaneous and unpredictable in opposition to the organized and ordered city is inspired by Michel de Certeau (1988). The French author opposes the ordering strategies of the urban planners inscribed in the built environment to the immaterial practices of resistance of city dwellers. However, ANT ethnographic studies focussed on process of construction and remodelling of urban contexts show that the built environment is more malleable and flexible than thought (Gieryn, 2002; Guggenheim, 2009). From this perspective the encampment in Puerta del Sol, for instance, can be interpreted as a mode of intervention that radically transforms the urban condition through the production of material infrastructures in the city. The encampment, the assemblies and MLP are material infrastructures that take part in performing and imagining the city in new ways.

The large theoretical literature on "making things public" (Latour and Weibel, 2005) is worth of noting in this regard. Following the recent approach of Noortje Marres and Javier Lezaun to what they have called material approach to the public participation, it is possible to think of the right to the city as an instance whose politics is not make up just of discourse but requires a series of material practices that often go unnoticed (Marres and Lezaun, 2011). Infrastructure are therefore not just the object of the right but an entity that take part in bringing it (the right) into existence. I then ask: what is the relationship between the production of new rights to the city and the deployment of urban infrastructures by citizens? Is the deployment of certain infrastructure a performative instance of new rights to the city? But many of these infrastructures are ephemeral (the encampment, for instance), so I am interested in how certain practices of narrating these events in the Internet, like assembly minutes (*actas*) or the documentation practices in Medialab-Prado, contributes to preserve the urban memory and sustain or even take part in the enactment of certain rights to the city by way of making public their claims (Marres, 2007). My aim is then to explore how memory practices contribute to produce and sustain a new right to the city.

### Public space

Public space has been one of the salient urban objects of reclamation when the right to the city is raised. A paradigmatic invention of the modern city, urban public space has been conceived as the political epitome of the polis. The literature has described it as the ultimate location for the realization of the public sphere (Smith and Low, 2006), the paradigmatic expression of the right to the city (Mitchell, 2003) or, from a critical perspective, the referent in certain emergent ideologies of an appeased citizenship (Delgado, 2011). The transformation of urban public space during the last decades strikingly exemplifies the changes that cities have experienced around the globe. Authors have been alerting for the last forty years over the progressive decline of the public space (Sennett, 2011 [1977], Jacobs, 2011 [1961]) due to a growing privatization (Low, 2003) and a transformation of its condition by, for example, the widespread of monitoring systems (Graham, 2010).

The fact that streets and squares have been chosen as the preferable location for the assemblies of the 15M movement signals the importance of public space in its political imagination. Drawing on a detailed methodology originally designed during the first days of the encampment, assemblies reformulate the characterization of public space as the place where you have the right to solitude in the company of others, the right to certain civil inattention (Goffman, 1974). Contrary to Goffman's description, the assembly makes legitimate to address strangers in public. The street is no longer an ungovernable space (Delgado, 2007) but the place for a new governance of the public. **The assembly could then be considered a methodology for the production of a certain condition of the public space,** a topic that we have we tentatively discussed elsewhere (Corsín and Estalella, s/d). But producing this condition requires a considerable effort, and this is the object of my interest.

The Lavapiés assembly that is weekly held in public spaces is previously organized in meetings celebrated during the weekdays in other public and private spaces (cafés, bars and homes), mobilizing during the

process a set of intensive Internet practices (emailing, blogging, and others). While a traditional dichotomy opposes the urban public space to the private space, **the assembly reveals the interdependency between spaces considered of very different conditions (public and private) and a set of diverse practices that relate them while transforming their nature**. The transformation of public space brings into the fore and resonates with an intense debate on the *procomún* (commons) that has been developed in Medialab-Prado in recent years. The concept of *procomún* refers in Medialab-Prado to a spatial condition, a regime of property (different from the public and private) and a distinctive form of social organization. The question that I propose to take up is: how are spaces of different conditions (public and private) assembled in the celebration of the assembly? Which kind of relations are established between them? How certain condition of the public space is produced in the assembly?

In the midst of the progressive fading of urban public space, the Internet and digital technologies have paradoxically emerged since the mid-nineties as a promise for renewing democracy and revitalizing the public sphere (Poster, 1995; Levy 2004 [2002]). Chris Kelty (2008) points to free software as a force for renewing the public sphere, but his analysis, as similar literature on the Internet and public sphere, describes a public sphere that is deterritorialized and disembedded. This is a general problem present in the literature focussing in the analysis of the public sphere (Smith and Low, 2006). The question I would like to raise is: how do digital infrastructures contribute to the production of a certain condition of the public space? How is the free software notion of openness translated in the production of some condition of the urban public space?

### Urban citizenship

The city has become the paradigmatic place in recent decades for the experimentation with new forms of citizenship that articulate novel modes of political association in urban contexts. This signals the exhaustion of the relation established in Modernity between individuals and the nation-state as the only legitimate source of citizenship (Holston and Appadurai, 1996). James Holston (2008) coined the concept of insurgent citizenship or spaces of insurgency to refer to some experiences elaborated on the margins of southern cities in which different forms of political participation in the production of the urban fabric occurred. In these contexts, citizenship is not articulated by way of a relationship with the state but through the citizens' intervention in the urban space drawing on self-construction practices (*prácticas de autoconstrucción*). Holston's description resonates in the encampment of Puerta del Sol square, but what he describes as a phenomenon characteristic of the margins of southern cities emerges in this case as a unique urban condition in the centre of an European city. However, the radical singularity in the articulation of modes of citizenship in the assemblies has a different source. Holston description, as a large literature does, approaches the experiments with the political condition of city dwellers from a citizenship framework. However, both the *indignados* assemblies and MLP have completely given up the concept of citizenship to describe the political condition of city dwellers. On the contrary, **it is the figure of the *vecino* (neighbour), and its spatial correlate figure of the *barrio* (neighbourhood), what constitutes the cornerstone in the articulation of the political condition of city inhabitants.**

The neighbourhood is a permanent concern in MLP that organized one of its biggest workshops under the title of 'Neighbourhood Science' (*Ciencia de barrio*). *El barrio* (the neighbourhood) is both the context and the object of the experimentation of MLP. But the *barrio* is also a benchmark in the daily life and political practice of the participants in the Lavapiés assembly. The centrality of the figure of *vecino* appears in a clear way when assembly participants respond to the permanent harassment of the police toward migrant people in the streets of the neighbourhood. The assembly calls on migrants' right to occupy the public space using the formula: "*todos somos vecinos del barrio*" ("we all are neighbours in the neighbourhood"). This formula synthesizes the explicit and reflective consensus of the assembly to give up the concept of citizen choosing instead the concept of *vecino* as a strategy to include as legitimate right holders those who are not citizens under the ruling law. **The figure of the *vecino* points out to a distinctive form of urban imagination that in the assembly and MLP seems to think in a novel way the political condition of city dwellers and their urban relationality.** The figure of the *vecino* makes of the street the preferred place for a mode of relationality that calls into question the characterization of relationships in public space as weak and transient (Delgado, 2007). And the *barrio* appears as a mode of place making different to the conventional communities or networks linked to digital technologies (Green, Harvey and Knox, 2005). The last questions I would wish to raise are: what kind of political condition for city dwellers carry the notion of *vecino*? Even more, and framing the question in anthropological terms, what is a *vecino*? How is a neighbourhood performed? And what kind of neighbourhood is performed by the assembly?

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## 2. Objectives, methodology and work plan

### 2.1 Objectives

The research object of this project is the urban articulation of free culture localized in two field sites: Medialab-Prado and the 15M *indignados* assembly in the neighbourhood of Lavapiés. The project aims to contribute to three specific areas of knowledge: the anthropological analysis of digital culture, urban anthropology and the social studies of science and technology. Its specific objectives are the following:

**(i) analyze the urban articulation of free culture and its spatial translation in contexts where citizens experiment with Internet and digital technologies.** My aim is to document the experimental modes inspired by free culture and to conceptualize certain urban sites as 'places of digital culture'.

In dialogue with the laboratory studies literature I attempt to contribute to the social studies of science and technology. My aim is to approach the analysis of the experimental condition of places of digital culture drawing on the literature of 'places of science' (Henke y Gieryn, 2008). A analysis that can be a fruitful contribution to the current anthropological study of digital culture, and specifically it can provide evidences of the spatial translation of free culture and its interactions with urban domains.

**(ii) describe, analyze and conceptualize open urban forms as modes of relationality and political association** which drawing on the language and infrastructure of free culture perform and practice the city in a novel way.

In discussing urban forms I aim to contribute to present debates on the 'right to the city'. More specifically my intention is to investigate the relationship between the design and development of urban infrastructure by citizens and the emergence of new rights to the city. I hope that this particular formulation of the problem will allow me to contribute to present debates on urban anthropology and to intervene in current debates on the materiality and spatiality of politics in the social studies of science and technology.

**(iii) describe and analyze how free culture takes part in the civic production of the urban fabric,** specifically how free culture informs the production of public space and new models of urban citizenship.

I aim to contribute to present discussions of public space and models of urban citizenship in urban anthropology, more particularly I aim to intervene in this debate analyzing how digital technologies take part in the reformulation of public space and urban citizenship.

### 2.2. Methodology

The empirical data of this project has been elaborated in a collaborative ethnography with Alberto Corsín during two periods covering 24 months and ending in July 2012<sup>2</sup>. I briefly present below the two field sites of the ethnography and the methodological approach. But before that I want to refer to the epistemological assumptions of this project. This ethnography is informed by a recent turn in ethnographic theory that poses as its main methodological problem the question of description (Viveiros de Castro, 2010). Very briefly, this approach aims to unveil the internal theoretical purchase of indigenous descriptive practices. The problem for the anthropologist is therefore to treat the informants descriptions as theoretical statements in their own. Instead of taking informants' statements as descriptions that have to be later interpreted and translated into the sociological language of the ethnographer, this approach involves considering informants descriptions as sociological statements bis-a-bis those of the anthropologist. As Eduardo Viveiros de Castro has put it (2003), the challenge for the anthropologist is how to take people's statements seriously. This approach involves a turn to ontology in anthropology that resonates with parallel approaches in STS in recent years (Woolgar, 2008) and that is accompanied by an intensified interests on the material dimension of our social worlds that is distinct from previous perspectives like the material cultural analysis (Henare et al., 2007). The task of anthropology would be, from this approach, to explore the other's ontology and not translate their description to our epistemological language. An ontology that is not only a discursive elaboration or a categorization but a way of bringing into existence reality in practice (Mol, 2002).

#### **2010 (March-December). Prototyping cultures at Medialab-Prado**

Medialab-Prado is a public institution centred around the experimentation with digital technologies whose **activity is focused on the production of critical projects at the intersection of art, science and technology.** The projects are developed in large workshops of three weeks of duration. They are open to public participation and the outcome of the projects are prototypes. A

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<sup>2</sup> Fieldwork has been conducted as part of two research projects led by Alberto Corsín, anthropologist of the Center of Humanities and Social Sciences at the CSIC. The first project is funded by the CSIC (Spanish National Research Council) and the second corresponds to a project of the R & D National Plan 2011-2013 (*Proyectos de Investigación Fundamental no orientada, Plan Nacional de I+D 2011-2013*).



prototype is a precarious and unstable technology, but it is also a concept that in Medialab-Prado stands out as a form of experimental relationality that draws inspiration from free culture. Located in the centre of Madrid, fieldwork was conducted during **10 months of intensive participant observation** that involved my daily presence at public events, in internal meetings and in the daily life of participants in the neighbourhood of Las Letras and the nearby neighbourhood of Lavapiés. As part of the fieldwork 35 in deep interviews were conducted and an extensive record of internal and public documents was conducted too.

#### **2011 (July) - 2012 (July). 15M *indignados* assembly of Lavapiés neighbourhood**

The 15M *indignados* movement has been organized in Madrid and other cities in Spain in assemblies localized in neighbourhoods and celebrated in public spaces. **Since June of 2011 I have been involved in the assembly of Lavapiés**, a central neighbourhood of Madrid very close to Medialab-Prado and with tight connections due to people that participate both in social and activist projects in Lavapiés and Medialab-Prado. Fieldwork has extended from this assembly to others in close neighbourhoods and has involved my participation in other activists projects like the squatted-like centre La Tabacalera and the squatted social centre (*okupado*) Casablanca. Ongoing work has involved my residence in Lavapiés.

### **2.3. Work plan**

The objective of this project is to undertake the analysis of the empirical data produced in the fieldwork conducted between March 2010 and July 2012. **No empirical work is expected to be conducted during the fellowship period, only analysis and writing.** The working plan is structured following both the research topics identified during the fieldwork and the substantive academic items that are expected to be produced during the project (for more details see section 3, outcomes), more specifically: at least 6 papers in international journals, a draft of the ethnographic monograph of the fieldwork (in collaboration with Alberto Corsín), the organization of two international academic events and the publication of a special issue in an international journal.

#### **[Year 2013]**

##### **January - March (3 months).**

- First data analysis (data analysis will go on during all the stay accompanying the writing process).
- Review of literature: (i) urban anthropology (public space and urban citizenship); STS (analysis of the city); anthropology of digital culture and internet studies (spatial analysis of digital culture).

##### **April - July (4 months).**

- Continuation of literature review.
- First article writing, provisional topic: spatial translations of digital culture, places of digital culture.

##### **September - December (4 months).**

- Second article writing, provisional topic: digital infrastructure and the right to the city.
- Ethnographic monograph, writing start. I will draw on articles already elaborated and articles in development during the stay.

#### **[Year 2014]**

##### **January - March (3 months).**

- Third article writing, provisional topic: modes of production of public space.
- Continuation with the monograph writing.
- International workshop celebration: '*Places of digital culture*'.

##### **April - July (4 months).**

- Fourth article writing, provisional topic: *vecinos*, a novel mode for the political condition of city dwellers.
- Continuation with the monograph writing.
- Management of the publication of a special issue based on the contributions to the first workshop.

##### **September - December (4 months).**

- Fifth and sixth article writing: topic to be established.
- First draft of the ethnographic monograph.
- Symposium celebration at the conference of the European Association of Social Anthropologist (EASA) and/or the conference of the European Association for the Study of Science and Technology (EASST).

### 3. Impact and expected contributions

#### 3.1 Knowledge contributions

This research aims to contribute to three specific areas of knowledge: the anthropological study of digital culture, urban anthropology and the social studies of science and technology. The expected contributions are:

(i) The first expected contribution is to **widen the analysis of free software describing and conceptualizing this novel sociological object that is free culture**. Digital culture is permeating broad domains of our society, including the urban imagination; however, anthropology and the social studies of science and technology have not paid attention to it. The project aims to contribute to understand the translations of digital culture into urban domains, it specifically aims to contribute to the analysis of the spatial translation of digital culture in contexts where citizens experiment with the Internet and digital technologies.

(ii) A second contribution of the project is located in the field of urban anthropology. This follows two different related lines. First, it aims to **contribute to understand the materiality of the right to the city and how these rights are performed in the deployment of digital infrastructures**. Second, it aims to understand the **citizen participation in the production or urban public space and novel forms of urban citizenship**. Following this approach the project aims to intervene in debates on material politics in the social studies of science and technology (Marres and Lezaun, 2011).

(iii) Finally the project proposes an **innovative approach to the analysis of indignados 15M movement**. This and similar protests such as the Arab uprising or the Occupy Wall Street movement, have been described within the paradigm of social movements (Adell Argilés, 2011) or the analysis of digital communications (Sampedro y Sánchez Duarte, 2011). The genuinely urban condition of the *indignados* 15M movement and its spatial dimension have been ignored so far. This proposal may contribute to a fruitful analysis of this issues.

#### 3.2 Substantive scientific contributions

The project includes two types of substantive expected contributions: a series of publications and the organization of academic meetings. In addition to that it is described a strategy of dissemination of results.

##### Research publications

**Papers.** My aim is to publish **a minimum of 6 papers in international journals** in the field of anthropology (potential journals: *Anthropological Quarterly*, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, *Ethnos*, *AIBR*) or social studies of science and technology (*Science, Technology and Human Values*; *Social Studies of Science*; *Science as Culture*).

**Monograph.** It is expected to elaborate **a complete draft of a monograph** based on the fieldwork data. It will be carry out in collaboration with Alberto Corsin. The papers produced during the fellowship will contribute to the monograph.

##### Academic meetings

It is expected to organize **two international workshops**. The first one under the topic of '*Places of digital culture*'. I will try to edit and publish a special issue in an internationally journal based on the contributions to the workshop (potential journals: *New Media and Society*; *Anthropological Quarterly*; *Science as Culture*).

A second academic meeting (symposium) will be organized at the conference of the European Association of Social Anthropologist (EASA) and/or the conference of the European Association for the Study of Science and Technology (EASST).

#### 3.3 Dissemination of results

- Two sessions will be organized for presenting and discussing results in Medialab-Prado (Madrid) in the format of a round table and/or workshop.

- Results and outcomes will be published in the blog of the research project:  
<http://www.prototyping.es>