

December 2017

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The Urban Lab of Europe !

The MARES Project Journal N°1

Project led by the City of Madrid



**JOBS & SKILLS
IN THE LOCAL ECONOMY**



Barrios. Economía. Futuro.



The MARES project

Since 2008, the economic crisis' impact in Madrid has produced several mutations. Social polarisation and spatial segregation dynamics have escalated, strengthening even more the income barrier between the north (exclusive urban services) and the south/ southeast (negative externalities concentration). The MARES project will initiate an urban and economic resilience strategy on employment through the social and solidarity economy in key industries to move forward a new model of productive matrix of the city.

Therefore, a comprehensive approach of actions will be deployed, based on four pillars:

- Activating recovery processes, prototyping and co-designing disused public spaces.
- Launching a competencies lab capable of promoting economic resilience strategies of civil society.
- Fostering territorial economic innovation processes which generate a new economic fabric through social economy formulas and improve the competitiveness and sustainability of the existing productive schemes in the city.
- Encouraging mechanisms for awareness raising, territorial economic revitalisation and cooperation among agents in order to articulate ecosystems allowing production diversification and more collective possibilities on employment and employability at local level.

The MARES project will launch in four city districts, Centro, Villaverde, Vallecas and Vicálvaro, four spaces called M.A.R.E.S. Every MAR will be specialised: M (mobility), A (food), R (recycling), E (energy) and S (social and care economy, common to the four MAR). These MARES will become a prototype of urban resilience on employment by encouraging social and solidarity economy on these strategic sectors. The project will generate economic activity and create stable jobs by deploying business models, principles and values of the social and solidarity economy. It will recover abandoned or disused common areas and make them available for the creation of new productive initiatives.

Partnership:

- Ayuntamiento de Madrid
- Agencia para el Empleo de Madrid (AE) - Public Agency
- DINAMIA S. COOP. MAD (DN) - Private Company
- Grupo Cooperativo Tangente (TNG) - Private Company
- SIC ARQUITECTURA Y URBANISMO SLP (SIC) - Private Company
- Vivero de Iniciativas Ciudadanas (VIC) - NGO
- Todo por la Praxis (TxP) - NGO
- Fundación Acción contra el Hambre (ACH) – NGO
- NUEVO ESPACIO INDUSTRIAL MADRID, S.L. - ECOOO - Private Company

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1 Executive summary

The first section of the journal – *“The policy context: The social economy in Europe, a response to the crisis and a hope for the future”*, page 2 - addresses the policy context of *Mares de Madrid* discussing the concept of “social economy” – that is central to the initiative – its recent evolutions in the direction of other relevant concepts such as the solidarity economy and its potential articulations and divergences in regards of contextual developments in the fields of social innovation and the collaborative economy. Later, it moves first to address the increasing relevance of the social economy in the realm of European policy-making - *“The EU policy context: the social economy is increasingly visible but real progress is yet to be made”*, page 4 - while underlying the limitations of this progress and presenting recent evolutions in the Spanish legislative framework regarding the social economy - *“The Spanish context, an increasing national and regional recognition”*, page 5 - to finally conclude with an analysis – *“Madrid, the ambition of an overarching and transformative strategy”*, page 6 - of the Madrid context and in particular of the recent city initiatives aimed at the development of a locally rooted social economy in the city.

In the second section – *“Setting up provisional and long-term spaces and pooling social economy start-ups”*, page 7 – addressing in particular its spatial strategy, the current activities regarding the opening of the four Mares while presenting some examples of the projects that are currently being incubated. Later it addresses in depth one of the key activities conducted up to now – *“Mapping initiatives, needs, value chains and projects: the “laboratorios de competencias ciudadanas”*, page 9 - discussing the conception, organization, methodology and final outcomes of this line of work and finally – *“Managing complexity, facing collective expectations and leverage policies: current and upcoming challenges”*, page 11 – it presents some relevant challenges that characterize the initiative regarding in particular the need to balance the specialization and complexity of the different workflows with their overall coordination within the project, to face a high level of collective expectation and of political exposure and to anticipate the management challenges that will arise with the opening of the four Mares.

In the conclusions – *“Conclusions: telling the story of a progressive (possible) transition”*, page 14 – the author outlines the contents that readers will be likely to find in the upcoming issues of the journal.

2 The policy context:

The social economy in Europe, a response to the crisis and a hope for the future.



The city of Madrid during a spring sunset

“The European social economy provides:

- over 13.6 million paid jobs in Europe
- equivalent to about 6.3% of the working population of the EU-28
- employment of a workforce of over 19.1 million
- more than 82.8 million volunteers, equivalent to 5.5 million full time workers
- more than 232 million members of cooperatives, mutuals and similar entities.”¹

Starting in 2008, Europe has faced its worst economic and arguably social crisis since the end of the Second World War. The crisis has posed fundamental questions regarding our economic development model, its overall stability and its

ability to include all sectors of society while limiting negative impacts on future generations and other societies across the globe. In the same years, a wave of technological innovation has started to accelerate the path of change in inherited, traditional ways to organize production and distribution of services. European cities and metropolitan areas have been at the forefront of both these ruptures and processes, concentrating their effects and also incubating new responses to them. In embracing the “social and solidarity economy” as a credible tool for social change, economic transition and organizational innovation in our cities, the *Mares de Madrid* initiative attempts to respond to this new context.

¹ CIRIEC (2016): “Recent evolutions of the Social Economy in the European Union”, European Economic and Social Committee, Brussels.

2.1 Defining the social economy

The core goal of the initiative is the development of a larger, innovative and stronger “social and solidarity economy” in the city of Madrid as a tool for the sustainable and equitable urban regeneration of some of its neighborhoods. In order to introduce the policy context of the initiative, it is essential to include some of the key definitions involved in this area. In fact, a wealth of definitions have been formulated to indicate economic actors and practices that, while looking similar on the surface, still differ in fundamental ways.

To start from a very general definition, “the term social economy designates the universe of practices and forms of mobilising economic resources towards the satisfaction of human needs that belong neither to for-profit enterprises, nor to the institutions of the state in the narrow sense” (Moulaert and Ailenei, 2005). Therefore, what we generally define as the “social economy” is to be understood as a concrete, existing alternative to both mainstream private and state economics coming

to represent a “third sector” – the “not-for-profit sector”, in same readings – in the social and economic organization of contemporary societies (Moro, 2015).

Moving to the goals and rationality of social economy’s actors and practices, based on a EU definition, they distinguish themselves because they strive “to have a social impact rather than make a profit for their owners or shareholders”, endorsing management styles that are “open and in a responsible manner and, in particular, involve employees, consumers and stakeholders” (The European Commission, 2011). Types of organizations that are a fundamental component of the contemporary social and political history of Europe, such as cooperatives, mutual aid societies, labour societies and foundations can all be considered part of the social economy.

Although, a significant level of variation – in founding conceptualization and legal definitions – can still be observed across European contexts and beyond (Moulaert and Ailenei, 2005).

2.2 The social economy and the new economies: possible conflicts and interactions

Closer to established understandings of the social economy, theorizers of the **solidarity economy** – a concept that originated in France and later also developed, through original conceptual and empirical adaptations, in Latin America – have reframed the economy as being organized around the three main poles of the market, redistribution and reciprocity (North, xxxx). Rooted in this pluralistic understanding of economic activity, the solidarity economy therefore attempts “to hook up the three poles of the system”, shaping activities and practices that “are hybrids between the market, non-

market and non-monetary economies” combining “sales of goods and services, government subsidies and donations and volunteers)” (Economic and Social Committee of the European Union, 2016) streams of economic activity.

Differently from established conceptualizations of the social economy, recent theoretical developments on the “solidarity economy” have seen practices that belong to that field not just as a parallel, coexisting form of economic activity but increasingly as a prefiguration of a full, holistic alternative to mainstream market

economy able “to combine the search for survival strategies with demands for popular participation and an economic democracy and justice” (North and Cato, 2017).

Differently, the concept of **social innovation** – with roots that go as far as the 19th Century philosophy and sociology (Moulart, 2009) and consolidated in its current, prevalent understanding since the 1990s - has come to the fore of European scientific debates and policy making indicating a wide range of projects and practices that although pursuing some form of variably framed social responsibility do not necessarily imply structural divergences from mainstream business organization in terms of ownership and the existence of profits while actually underlying the role of skillful and dynamic individuals as leaders of innovation processes.

Finally, the concept of **collaborative economy** (European Commission, 2016) that has spread very rapidly in the last decade across the globe - indicates “business models where activities are facilitated by collaborative platforms that create an open marketplace for the temporary usage of

goods or services often provided by private individuals” (Economic and Social Committee, 2016). Although extremely innovative in many respects – from the shift from owning a certain object to renting it in the form of a service to the virtual, highly informed, way to access these services – the collaborative economy is commonly promoted by actors that pursue the search of profits through businesses that have a traditional private enterprise legal structure.

In conclusion, while there can be social economy practices and projects that imply the creation of collaborative platforms for the production, exchange and use of services and products and that in doing so produce a very high degree of organizational and social innovation, the three concepts cannot in anyway be confused.

At the core of Mares de Madrid, there is the development of *highly collaborative and innovative social and solidarity economy practices* able to leverage the large pool of knowledge and skills that is present in the city of Madrid while responding to its pressing social needs.

2.3 The EU policy context: the social economy is increasingly visible but real progress is yet to be made

In recent years, EU institutions have positioned themselves more clearly on issues related to the development of the social economy in the context of a “highly competitive social market economy”: its actors and practices have been recognized as very valuable tools in the pursuit “of several key EU objectives, including the achievement of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, high-quality employment, social cohesion, social innovation, local and regional development and environmental protection” as they are framed in the as Europe 2020 strategy (European Council, 2015).

Despite this increasing visibility, real results are still mixed in terms of the reorientation of some key EU policies in that direction. As recently as 2015, underscoring how the social economy proved to be more resilient to the effects of the great recession as compared to the mainstream economy, the Council of the European Union required Member States and the commission to strengthen policies aimed at the development of the social economy by taking action in a variety of domains ranging from education and awareness to legal frameworks and financing. This high-level political position was anticipated

by a series of other, important interventions: in 2011, the Commission launched the "*Social Business Initiative* (SBI) aimed at creating a favorable climate for social enterprises, key stakeholders in the social economy and innovation" (European Commission, 2011) through the implementation of 11 key actions to be taken in several policy domains.

Since then, some results have been achieved: in 2012 the Commission adopted the *de minimis* Regulation for the field of Services of General Economic Interest (SGEI); in 2013, the European social entrepreneurship funds (EuSEF) and the Programme for Employment and Social

Innovation (EaSI) and the social economy and social entrepreneurship goals were transferred to ERDF and ESF; in 2014, the public procurement reform package allowed public authorities to insert certain social clauses in procurement procedures (Economic and social committee of the UE, 2017).

Despite all this progress, it is to be underlined that – despite the increasing relevance of the ESF and of the Leader initiative for social economy-related initiatives - a dedicated European budgetary policy was never implemented and the very recent “Declaration of Madrid” has again called for it (Gobierno de España, 2017).

2.4 The Spanish context, an increasing national and regional recognition

In Spain too an increasing interest in the social economy has made itself visible throughout the deep economic, social and political crisis that the country has been experiencing since 2008. While historically concentrated in the Basque country, Navarra and Catalonia, starting with the early 2000s interest in the social economy has been expanding nation-wide with the inclusion of direct references to it in the status of many *comunidades autonomas* – Andalusia, Valencian Community, Catalonia, Castille and Leon - and the launch of a series of related regional plans for its development in Andalusia, Murcia and Baleares (Chaves, 2011).

Starting with the 2008 crisis, the fall in employment and income has been instrumental to the development of new practices and networks of economic and social support and

self-help in neighborhoods of cities and metropolitan areas. Cities, regional governments and also the national government have promoted some initiatives aimed at supporting an expansion in the number and dimension of social and solidarity economy initiatives.

In 2011, the national legislature unanimously promoted a new law recognizing for the first time the role of the social economy in several policy-making areas, establishing a national consultation council, and eliminating some legal restrictions for the formation and public support of social economy actors. Later on, a National Program to foster the social economy and an *Operational Program for social inclusion and the social economy* – leveraging on the ESF programming for 2014-2020 – objectives were introduced (Chaves, 2011).

2.5 Madrid, the ambition of an overarching and transformative strategy

Recently, cities with a fairly strong social economy tradition such as Zaragoza and Barcelona introduced social clauses in their new public contracts. Madrid followed the same path, starting from a less developed background.

In fact, when compared with the national figures of the incidence of the social economy on the whole economy, Madrid presents a lower incidence of SSE actors on the whole of the local economy but a higher concentration of these actors in certain sectors such as education, health, trade and social services.

In total, 7345 actors operate on the field – among cooperatives, labour companies, associations, foundations, grassroots initiatives – employing a workforce that, when compared to SEE economy's national figures, is more male, older, better educated and with a lower presence of foreigners (Ayuntamiento de Madrid, 2017).

In this context, the city administration has launched a very ambitious set of initiatives such as the creation of the *Consejo Consultivo de la Economía Social y Solidaria*, the establishment of the *Oficina de Apoyo a la Economía Social*, the promotion of new forms of financial and credit support for the expansion and creation of social enterprises. Some of these new initiatives were integrated, as recently as October 2017, in an overarching participative strategy aimed at expanding and strengthening the social and solidarity economy across the city, the Plan Estratégico de Economía Social y Solidaria (Ayuntamiento de Madrid, 2017).

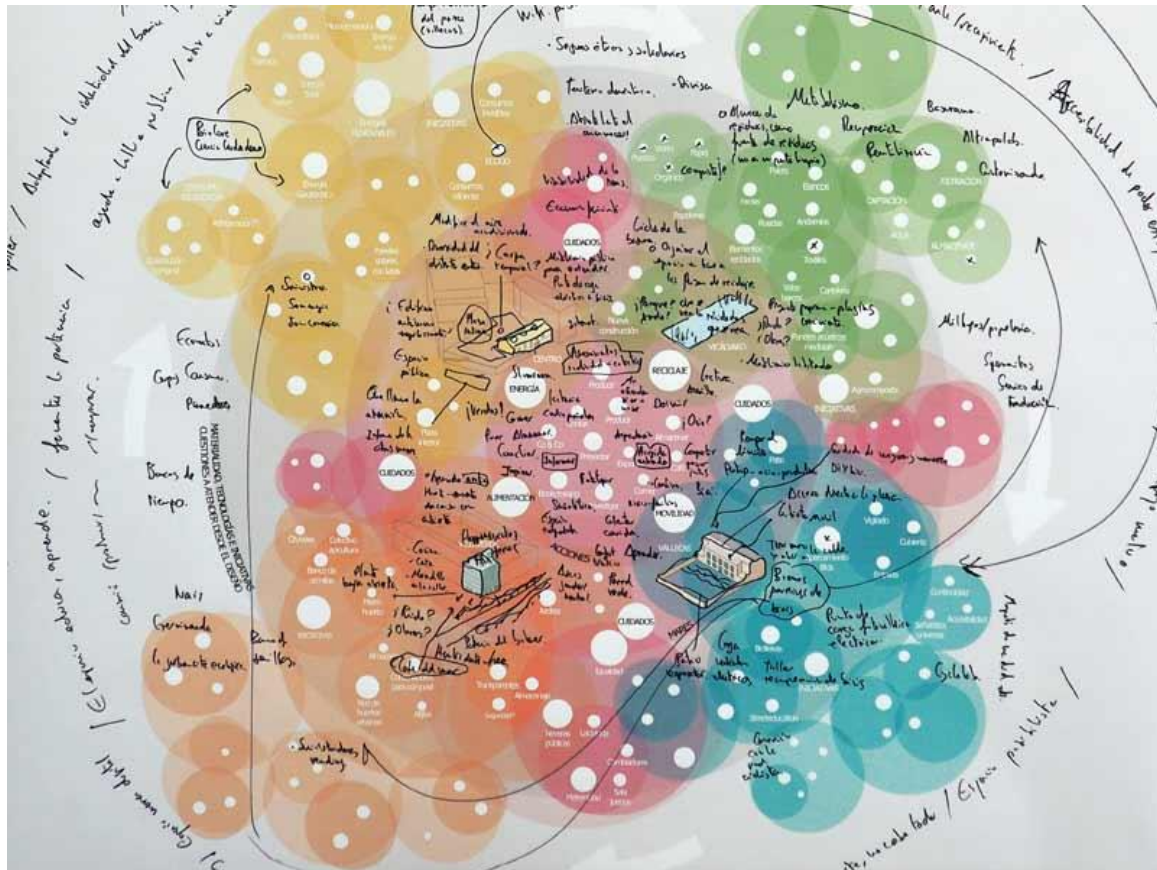
A strong emphasis on territorial aspects characterizes the document that, in many ways,

is convergent with another city strategy focusing on spatial cohesion and justice, the *Estrategia de reequilibrio territorial* (Ayuntamiento de Madrid, 2017). In particular, central in the strategy is the idea of creating four territorial ecosystems for the development of the SSE organized around the already mentioned *Oficinas*, of which the four *Mares* represent decisive prototypes - that will specialize in the offer of a variety of specialized services to established and upcoming projects.

This highly territorial approach – that sees neighborhoods as key contexts in which to ensure a more equitable, participative and innovative management of a wealth of activities related to social reproductions – is seen as instrumental to expand the incidence of SSE activities in the local economy through the developments of new cooperatives in the areas of food, energy, health, housing and culture. The city will also invest in the long-term participative mapping activities of needs and potentials at the local level – also on this point, the activities of the *Laboratorios de Competencias Ciudadanas* presented later have been decisive prototypes - the creation of synergies among existing and new projects and the reuse of abandoned public assets.

Of course, the expansion of opportunities for such actors in the public procurement processes managed by the city – through the inclusion and monitoring of “social clauses” in city contracts - is considered central as well in the strategy as the launch of public funding, rotating funds and credit initiatives to support the new innovative and highly scalable EES projects (Ayuntamiento de Madrid, 2017)

3 Mares de Madrid: state of the art and current challenges



3.1 Setting up provisional and long-term spaces and pooling social economy start-ups

Mares de Madrid is a fairly complex operation characterised by a multitude of very specialised actors engaged in different, reciprocally interacting, streams of work. These streams of work imply both highly intangible activities – such as the participatory mapping process promoted by the **laboratorios de competencias ciudadanas** that are presented in the next section – and highly material-ones such as the preparation of the spaces where the four *Mares* will be operating in the districts of Villaverde, Vallecas, Vivalcaro and Centro. Understandably, communities' expectations are very high regarding this last, critical part, being the opening

of such new facilities very tangible signs of the project's implementation.

As we have seen, the original idea to couple core thematic areas – energy, mobility, food, recycling and care - with specific districts intended to contribute to a larger strategy of **territorial equalization** through the establishment of **specialized, high-quality facilities in peripheral areas** that could become **hubs for communities of practice** operating at the metropolitan scale. In other words, to locate the *Mares de Movilidad* in the Puente de Vallecas area was also meant to turn this peripheral neighbourhood into a hub of people, projects and collaborations emerging at

a metropolitan scale around this single, very important issue. In the same line, the idea to design these new facilities combining functions and uses that seldom are granted in standard urban planning operations – socialization with training, production with recreation – was coupled with the idea of doing design through a **collaborative design practice** that put upfront a new understanding of public facilities and spaces as the outcomes of processes led no more exclusively by the public administration but by **larger, flexible coalitions of grassroots actors** conducive to a stronger sense of collective ownership of the spaces produced.

If, therefore, very high have been the ambitions and expectations regarding the design and opening of the four Mares, the public procurement processes related to their production – in all cases but one, the Mares will be hosted in redesigned and restructured unused city assets - have presented significant challenges that pushed the city and other partners to difficult but very creative decisions.

In fact, considered the delay in the conclusion of the projects' review the city administration and the other partners have decided to open-up **provisional spaces** aimed at hosting the initial activities of the many projects that, as we will see more in detail in the next paragraph, have been the outcomes of the *laboratorios de competencias*. This is the case of the *Mares de Alimentación* in the neighbourhood of Villaverde where, while works are about to start to accommodate the large kitchen that will incubate start-up food production cooperatives, a provisional space has been already put in place or the case of Puente de Vallecas where, while the 1930s building that will host the operations of the *Mares de Movilidad* is being restored, a new open-air space right outside will be put in place in order to accommodate initial activities. So, while all space are predicted to be fully in operation by the summer of 2018, provisional

spaces can already host some of the activity that is linked to the nurturing and support of the new social and solidarity economy projects that have started to take shape both in the *laboratorios* and in other contexts in the city. Each of the coordinators of the five mares is in fact already actively working on a pool of projects that will be hosted in the four spaces.

As examples of the projects that are currently supported, the ***Mares de Cuidado*** (Care Mares) is working on the design of cooperatives or labour societies offering services in the key areas of elderly care and on local health demands in connection with the new *planos barrios salud* (neighbourhood health plans), the ***Mares de Movilidad*** (Mobility Mares) is working on a cooperative of delivery bikers and on one that could would introduce in Madrid the principles and practices of so-called reverse logistics, the ***Mares de Alimentación*** (Food Mares) is working on a wealth of projects focusing on the creation of a more localised, sustainable food production networks such as cooperative food enterprises, restaurants and supermarkets, the ***Mares de Reciclaje*** (Recycling Mares) is supporting cooperative projects focusing on the processing of products in areas such as textile, IT, furniture, building materials that are currently unexplored and that could bust the recycling ratio of Madrid's overall waste flows and, finally, the ***Mares de Energía*** (Energy Mares) is working on a range of projects – such as cooperatives for the installation of photovoltaic systems - that can prove to be instrumental to the city's energy transition goals in particular reference to the housing sector.

The main rational and objective of all these projects is to insure **higher levels of employment** in territories that have been ravaged by the recession and crisis, **better work conditions** in areas of the labour markets that are overly exposed to labour precarization and exploitation

such as in the urban delivery and care services, **credible empowerment paths** for the universality of participants but also in reference to certain cohorts such as women and the **pursue of more environment sustainable economic behaviour** on both the sides of offer and demand of services and products.

Once open to the public, the four Mares spaces will offer these projects a new liveable context where to prototype and host new companies and productions, to access all the support and

mentoring services offered by the city and by the *servicios específicos* packages (advanced services) offered in the framework of Mares, to establish and nurture communities and processes of self and mutual learning. More widely, they will be spaces where to establish links and synergies between projects active in the same sector – mobility or recycling, care, food or energy – while also looking for inter-sectorial collaborations (*resources to be **recycled** such as **food** waste need to be **moved** around...*).

3.2 Mapping initiatives, needs, value chains and projects: the “laboratorios de competencias ciudadanas”



A session of a Laboratorio de Competencias Ciudadanas

As mentioned previously, social economy activities have proved to be more resilient than mainstream economic activities to the great recession. In this regard, the Madrid context is particularly interesting given the **rise and spread of a variety of self-help, often informal practices and networks** that, if adequately supported, can eventually scale-up in more solid and long-term

social and solidarity economy projects. This dynamic background has been one of the main reasons of the launch of the social and solidarity economy strategy promoted by the city administration and of the participation to the UIA call with the Mares de Madrid initiative. In this perspective, if getting to know practices already existing in neighborhoods and leveraging

on them in order to build lasting change is key, participatory activities have necessarily to focus **on the mapping of what is already present** in the four districts that are involved in *Mares de Madrid*.

Building on previous experiences of collaborative mapping focusing on evictions and social responses to evictions at the height of the real-estate and credit crisis and of self-organization and self-help (Janoskha, 2015; Gonick, 2015; Annunziata and Lees, 2016), Vivero de Iniciativas Ciudadanas² and Dinamia³ have designed and now implemented one of the fundamental tools of the Mares Initiative: the **Laboratorios de competencias ciudadanas** (Laboratories for Citizens skills).

The laboratories have multiple, highly integrated, aims: to identify and map citizens' skills in specific territories and the "value chains" that connect them through already existing social economy and informal practices to involve citizens in the empowerment of these skills through the development of new social economy enterprises and – finally – to put in place a variety of forms of support to insure the success of these projects.

The first step of the *laboratorios* has been the co-creation of four **cartografías ciudadanas** (citizens cartographies), one for each neighborhood involved in Mares. Public laboratories have been held during which participants could localize on neighborhoods maps all **grassroots initiatives**, formal and informal, that could be associated to the five main thematic cores of Mares: energy, mobility, food, recycling and care. Participation was open to the universality of inhabitants with a proactive search of key stakeholders responsible of relevant services, projects and practices on the territory and of people potentially interested in

being directly involved in new social and solidarity economy projects. Once elaborated these four maps, the laboratories have been reopened to operate more complex tasks such as the **mapping of existing local social needs** – as of now this activity has been conducted transversally to the four neighborhoods covering only the core area of the *cuidados*, i.e. social care – and the tracking of so-called **cadena de valor** (value chains), meaning the mapping of the existing and missing links between the initiatives that have been mapped in the four neighborhoods.

These two activities have proven to be key in assessing the reality and potential of the neighborhoods as complete "ecosystems" for the development of the social and solidar economy, one of the key goals pursued through the establishment of the four Mares spaces.

In the meanwhile, participants to the four laboratories have been invited first to **map their own skills and preferences** and later to **identify possible new economic projects** – so-called project prototypes – that even if at a very early stage could be activated in the four neighborhoods on the five core areas of *Mares*. **More than 200 project prototypes** have been formulated, coming both from laboratory activities and from new and already established on-line participative tools.

Later, they have been classified based on their degree of maturity and therefore transferred to the four *Mares* that have now the responsibility to incubate them into real and sustainable economic activities.

In conclusion, all these participatory activities have ultimately provided a fairly extensive knowledge of the reality and potential of the

²² <http://viveroiniciativasciudadanas.net>.

³ <http://www.dinamia.org/dinamia/>

social and solidarity economy at the local level: already existing social initiatives, perceived local needs that are currently unsatisfied, existing and missing links between the mapped local initiatives, the distribution of skills and preferences within the local population and finally the projects that – at a varying degree of maturity - could realistically be incubated by the five Mares.

These projects, it is important to underline, had to ostensibly comply with the overall goal of

Mares de Madrid, meaning not of standard, mainstream economic activities **but of a locally rooted social and solidarity economy**. Therefore, the projects had to imply by **certain, specific legal profiles** – cooperatives, associations, associations of mutual benefit – that imply democratic and participative management structures based on the idea of **collective self-employment** as a way to respond in an equitable, inclusive and sustainable way to local social needs.



The final outcomes of mapping lab in the Vallecas district

3.3 Managing complexity, facing collective expectations and leverage policies: current and upcoming challenges

As it was already observed, *Mares* is a very complex operation involving a wealth of very professionalized partners engaged in a set interdependent and highly designed, structured

tasks: the success of the *laboratorios de competencias* is key in insuring a flux of projects and new ideas to be supported by the *servicios específicos* and by the coordinators of the

different *Mares*, the actual implementation of the four *Mares' co-design processes'* results is key in insuring that the new spaces will vehicle both a sense of collective ownership for the general public and a sense of effectiveness for the leaders of the economic projects that will be incubated there.

This coexistence between a **strong logic of specialization and professionalization** on one side and of **interdependence and integration** is both the root of *Mares'* innovative character and a challenge for all the partners involved in the network.

The very high quality and profile of the partners and the large availability of trust, social and relational capital, day to day harmony among them has been until now a precious and sufficient resource to face this challenge. But with the multiplication of workflows, the increase in their complexity and the expansion of the pool of people and projects involved, the network will have to prove to be resilient by protecting trust, social and relational capital while insuring more effective and reliable ways to share and communicate progresses, decisions, and problems.

This is a challenge that, of course, is central to conversations and experiences regarding the organizational innovation of urban governments, governances and policies. The creation of multi-stakeholder, collaborative and strategic environments and actions necessarily implies a dramatization of all relational and communicational aspects while requiring actors to rely on more tacit and informal forms of power and of knowledge-creation and sharing: not everything can be codified as it was in traditional highly bureaucratized and proceduralized urban government systems and, in a sense, complexity implies a high level of informality that implies in turn the availability of abundant social capital and trust in order to be effective.

Moreover, this “internal” organization complexity has to be always managed in a way that is effective in addressing the **very high collective expectations** created and nurtured by both the highly participative and collaborative nature of the process and the strong political investment made by the city administration in the project. In the perspective of the latter, *Mares* is in fact the most advanced and integrated component of a wider set of strategies pursuing transformative goals such as a stronger social economy offering better jobs than the mainstream, a more equitable distribution of resources and opportunities across the urban space and a faster transition towards more sustainable and resilient modes of production, distribution and consumption of resources. The great communication success of the project as well its political visibility pose and will pose, in this perspective, fundamental questions for the future.

A challenge, again, that is relevant for all conversations and experiences focusing on the possibility of locally-based innovative and transformative actions that on one side need to fuel the political and social imagination of communities in order to attract grassroots participation while on the other need to keep a realistic discourse leading to reasonable expectations. A challenge that is further dramatized by a local context – and this is, of course, also the very reason and social mandate of *Mares'* existence – where the recession and then the crisis have dramatized social needs and structural problems such as poverty and unemployment.

Under the umbrella of these two main strategic challenges we also find some related **operational challenges**. On one side, the traditional, expected problems in procedural and procurement processes regarding the **opening of the four Mares** have imposed highly creative if not adaptive responses by the city administration

and the other actors that have been pushed to provide temporary fixes in the expectation of the final opening of the four spaces. Mares coordinators have underlined how it can be difficult to nurture projects in the absence of a fully operational space where to further develop them.

On the other hand, the **very diverse grade of maturity of the projects** that have been designed and submitted in the context of the *laboratorios* and of the other tools have pushed *Laboratorios'* teams and *Mares'* coordinators to come-up with some tailored forms of supports that, while investing on the projects that had a recognizable, higher degree of readiness to be properly incubated, could also include projects that had a lower degree of maturing.

A challenge clearly posing the key issue of how balancing the need to insure success with the essential principle of universal inclusiveness and empowerment.

In conclusion, two more challenges are looming ahead: on one side, the opening of the Mares will represent a very ponderous challenge in terms of the **design and implementation of the temporal and spatial management** modes it will imply while on the other side, the incremental incubation of the projects will pose a challenge in terms of the contextual speed and intensity at which parallel processes of change in key policy areas – such as in the critical area of public procurement - will be able to proceed. Both challenges will surely be addressed more in depth in the incoming issues of this journal.



The 'La Paloma' building in the "Centro" district where the Mares de Energia (Energy) will be located

4 Conclusions: telling the story of a (possible) progressive transition

As we have seen throughout the first issue of this journal, the Mares de Madrid initiative embodies a **deep, ambitious attempt to challenge entrenched conceptualizations and operationalization of relevant policy objects** such as local economic development, social inclusion and cohesion, urban regeneration, innovation, ecological transition and citizens' participation. And it advances this challenge by investing in the creation of a new kind of urban public spaces and facilities that will concretely represent how a *different way* to do local social, economic development, urban regeneration, innovation and environmental policy in our cities can be actually thought and realized.

Ultimately, what *Mares de Madrid* tries to attempt is therefore a **holistic and multi-dimensional transition** from a way to look at and to intervene on urban problems to another way to look at and to intervene on these problems and to follow this transition attempt – its accomplishments as long as its challenges - will be the core task of this journal. Coherently, the incoming issues will follow on one side the evolving contributions that the initiative will offer **to the wider strategies that the city administrations has launched** in different, relevant field – this will be a natural field of tensions and learnings for both the former and the latter – while opening up **in-depth focuses on**

the deployment of certain critical groups of activities.

First, we will start to follow more closely **the maturation of project prototypes** into real economic activities trying to learn more on the condition within which these processes will prove to be possible and sustainable and on the obstacle they will have to overcome.

Secondly, we will focus on **the opening of the four Mares** – that is expected to have at least partially happened by the next issue of the journal – and in particular on the complex organizational, temporal and spatial arrangements that will foreseeably be at the center of the engaging management decisions that the *Mares* coordinators and other partners will have to take.

Thirdly, we will also follow the development of key flows of **activities related to the long-term support of an emerging urban, locally based, social and solidarity economy in Madrid** such as the creation and development of the so-called **comunidades de aprendizaje (learning communities)** and the activities part of the so-called *Mareas* stream of work that are aimed at strengthening the overall social receptivity of the goals, cultures and of the social economy.

The best of this story is yet to come, and we are sure we will have interesting stories to tell by the next journal. You just have to wait and see

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