Eventual Publics:

an enquiry on socio-material participation
in El Campo de Cebada, Madrid

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Thesis submitted to the University College London for the degree of
Doctorate of Philosophy

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July 2020
DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, Jorge Martín Sainz de los Terreros, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.
Abstract

This research begins with a hypothesis: what if, rather than thinking about public participation as an instrument of planning and urban design, we consider it a socio-material performative phenomenon; in other words, what if, rather than trying to design, organize, devise or implement public participation, we understand it as something that already happens in everyday urban ordinary practices. To develop this dissertation from this point of departure, I focus on ‘eventual publics’, a concept that combines the idea of ‘eventual urbanism’—which accounts for practices developed in temporarily used urban sites—and the pragmatist understanding of a public as a ‘set of actors affected by an issue and organised around it in order to solve it’. In particular, the research analyses the case of El Campo de la Cebada—a publicly owned urban site in Madrid managed by a heterogeneous group of people—and concentrates at the specific relationship between temporality and materiality. Drawing on an STS perspective—and particularly using ANT—the argument is built around three questions: How are communities and collectives formed? How is conflict managed? And how are care practices deployed? Based on a five-month fieldwork developed in El Campo de la Cebada during the summer of 2015, a visual ethnography was performed to dwell into these questions. The ethnographic account emerging from that experience delves into three very specific and situated practices: (1) accessing the site, (2) dealing with a noise complaint, and (3) watering the plants; three very ordinary practices thickly described that allow me to show the fluid nature of socio-material collectives formed during the enactment of participation, the ways in which issues are governed in a welcoming and radical open manner, and the different relationships between heterogeneous entities materialised thought affective practices of care. Ultimately, the aim of this thesis is twofold: on one hand, to foreground the intimate, mutual and intertwined relationship between temporality and materiality, which shapes both urban theory and practice, and on the other hand, to consider how the incorporation of a socio-material enquiry into urban studies could have an impact in the development of urban thought.
Impact Statement

Research on public participation is currently developed in multiple disciplines and mostly concerns the democratic development of public life. Urban Design, Planning and Political Science among many others offer a wide range of lenses to interpret the notion of participation and its relationship with publicness. Few of them, however, provide a framework that relates such ideas with the performance of everyday life. This research precisely highlights that relationship analysing temporarily used urban sites as its object of study. In so doing, it offers a distinct academic contribution that explores the interwoven relationship between participation and everyday life drawing on a multidisciplinary framework that mainly combines two realms of knowledge: Urban Studies and Science and Technology Studies.

This combined framework particularly focuses on two different readings of public life: the study of the urban as a socio-material phenomenon, and the study of performative relationships from their temporary dimension. Such double focus on socio-materiality and temporality opens multiple new paths for additional research in urban studies, urban design, planning and architecture as well as in social and political sciences. In addition, the specific emphasis on everyday interrelationships also introduces a feminist perspective attentive to invisible practices of care that in many cases are indeed the base of urban life.

So far, the research has been shared via presentations in multiple international academic conferences, such as the 4S/EASST Conference in Barcelona 2016. I have also participated as a teacher and lecturer in several modules taught at UCL and abroad, managing to include in the syllabus of courses part of the work developed in this research. Furthermore, I have contributed to several academic and non-academic publications with papers and articles reaching a wide audience. Among those, I have published two articles in peer-reviewed journals: one included in the a special issue about activism in ‘Social Movements Studies’ Journal, and the other one in ‘Scandinavica’ Journal which was the result of a collaboration emerging from a symposium between UCL and Malmö University in 2016. Currently, I am also planning to expand further this research by
writing a monography and translate it into Spanish to make it available to non-English speakers.

Three main contributions could be highlighted. Firstly, this research sheds light to some theoretical discussions around participation and urban life reconceptualising the relationship between time and materiality, understanding them as mutually constitutive of each other. Then, it also explores a distinct methodology—i.e. visual ethnography—borrowed from STS and Anthropology and applies it to Urban Studies, mobilising the particular sensibility of Actor-Network Theory. In that line, I am currently working on a chapter of a book about Planning and Regulation using my research as a base. And finally, in practical terms, this thesis addresses questions of governance, legitimacy, complexity and heterogeneity that relate to community formation, issue-driven procedures, problem-solving mechanisms and decision-making processes which might be particularly helpful to a wide range of private and public institutions and organisations, especially in planning and urban design practice.
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Acknowledgements

Seven years have already passed since I enrolled at UCL; seven years that have ultimately materialized in the pages you are about to read. Mostly, that materialization process recalls in my head experiences and people with whom I have had the privilege to share places, conversations and thoughts, and who I managed to meet and consider now friends.

First and foremost, I have to thank my supervisors Professor Yvonne Rydin and Doctor Tse Hui Teh. During these years, both have managed to thoroughly pave my way towards completion, always knowing how to help me decide the following step, challenging me at times, and also encouraging me to keep on working hard when my spirit was low. Hui showed me to be attentive to wording and to the very specific sense some concepts and terms had—especially those related with ANT. Yvonne has been the best academic guide I could possibly imagine having. She has taught me how to structure my writing, how to focus on specific things, when to move forward, when to leave things for now and when to delve into some idea, for it was exactly there where the crux of the matter was. I also deeply appreciate how both have been patient with my English and how they have made me feel valuable and at home.

Secondly, I would like to thank all my colleagues at the Bartlett School of Planning, from administration to academic staff, from janitors to PhD colleagues. Some people cannot be forgotten. I am thankful to Dr Elisabete Cidre for giving me my first teaching opportunity and then trusted me year after year as one of her PGTAs in her courses. With her, I understood the difference between imparting knowledge and teaching, who also involved providing the right space and atmosphere to share experiences. Also, all the PGTAs with whom I shared those teaching experiences cannot be missed, in particular Isa, Lucía, James and Juliana. I also thank Valentina for showing me one of the best Italian restaurant in London, and Pablo for his interested and interesting ideas and views on STS. From the office of the department, I have to personally thank Lisa Fernand and Jenny Post; both of them always made things seemed to be easy and help us all to find ways to travel bureaucracy with great sense of humor and a smile in their faces.

After all these years, when I think about the ‘sixth floor’ where the PhD community worked, the only thing that comes to my mind is that it was my home when I lived in
London. Patricia, Ed, Sonia, Elisabeta, Alexandra, Hooman, Martín, Calvin, Alejandro, Lucía, Ting Ting, Tatiana, Katy, Yuqi, Mónica, Justinien and Daniel, all of them, with whom I shared many lunches and conversations, have been a great inspiration for me. In particular, Daniel (now Dr Daniel Fitzpatrick) was a great companion in this journey. In the early stages of the thesis, he was always attentive and careful, and his conversation, rich, connected and thorough, was the best in times of doubt.

Beyond UCL, I had the opportunity to meet many academics in multiple locations. In particular, I consider the STS Spanish troupe (from the Red de Estudios Sociales de la Ciencia y la Tecnología) showed me how to experience and investigate in a different academic environment and often fostered innovative approaches. Through that network, I met many interesting people. Among them, I would like to specially thank Dr Adolfo Estalella, Dr Isaac Marrero-Guillamón and Dr Alberto Corsín Jimenez, who encouraged me to delve into STS and ANT, and who read and listened to parts of this dissertation, giving me invaluable tips and ideas to keep on working. In addition, Adolfo helped me with my ethics, Isaac with the inclusion of one of my papers in a magnificent Special Issue on ANT and Social Movements, and Alberto generously invited me to present it in the CSIC once it was published. From other academic environments, I would like to thank Dr Jesper Magnusson, from Malmo University, who showed me it was possible to make a PhD thesis on everyday matters based on an ANT sensitivity. Also, I am grateful to Dr Clare Colomb and Dr Pei Sze Chow who blindly trust me to write a paper on visual ethnography and later even published it.

For the people I met in El Campo de Cebada I have nothing but gratitude words. All the people there were really special in one sense or another. All of them showed great interest in others and were always searching for ways to make things for the common good; how to share, how to open, how to join together, how to discuss. I do not know the name of most of them, those who shared the space with me while I was in the field; however, I met and shared many beers and chats with some them. Flavia, Manu, Jacobo, Pedro, Jonkar and Ángela; all of them were great discussants in assemblies and great gardeners and carpenters; they also played guitars in concerts and sang from time to time; they knew how to repair taps and plugs, and if they did not know how to do it, they knew who to ask. They could do many things, and what is most important, they let me learn how to do those things along with them, which was the greatest pleasure of this fantastic trip. I have
to specially thank those who accepted to have a recorded conversation with me: Carmen, Flavia, Manu, Jacobo, Juan Carlos, David, Pedro, Jerry, Rubén, Jota, Johan and Sebastian, and those who even thought that my ideas were worth discussing and dared to interview me for their projects; here I am talking about Amador and Pepe.

During these seven years, apart from being an academic, I have also lived my life, mostly between London and Madrid. In London, I managed to make very good new friends and also get some old friends back. That is the case of Ana Varela; how lucky I was that you moved to London. With her and the Pearly Sundays (Alejo, Fernando, Phillippe and Nico) we had the best roast-beefs in town and some of the best paellas too. Also, from the very beginning María Pla was the warmest mate for the coldest days. I should not forget Leonor Sierra and Eva Nieto and Zoltan, who in my first arrival to the city, back in 2011, did not doubt on letting me stay with them while I looked for a place in one of the hardest cities to find a flat. Also, my visits and short stay in Goshen house with Daniel, Alon, Tyra and the rest of the family gave me always reasons to laugh and live life as it came, and with Andrea I found a partner in sonic entanglements. Thank you all for such great moments.

In Madrid I made my living too. I worked part time as an architect and thus I have to thank Nacho who, on top of being attentive to someone who was “new to the city” in my return in 2015, also offered me short time collaborations that could be combined with my research. Also, I have to thank Fernando for his support in the refurbishment of my flat. In this last period, Cibrán also accompanied me and gave me his always deeply wise, musical and politically engaged thoughts and comments. It was indeed a pleasure to come back to my city. Family wise, one of the biggest thanks goes for Miguel, my cousin, great companion in our crazy competition entries, always looking for the edge of knowledge. And of course, my parents, Patricia and Juan, who have maintained and sustained my life and my living during these years, even though they rarely understood what the hell was I doing in London!! This research could not have been possible without the Martín-Sainz de los Terreros Scholarship they offered me in the beginning.

Finally, I have to deeply thank my partner in crime, Bea (Dr Beatriz Aragon, indeed), with whom I began this adventure in 2011 eating meatballs in Farringdon Road and discussing about being ‘damaged by scholarships’ (damnificados por las becas), continued later being halfies in many library sessions at the National Spanish Library,
and now have our daughter Luisa in common. To her my deepest thank of all, for being always there, for being so inspiring, and sharp, and so you. And Luisa, this is also for you. I hope will manage to live a better world. I will do my best to assure you that!
'There are many things in Place Saint-Sulpice; [...] a great number, if not the majority, of these things have been described, inventoried, photographed, talked about, or registered. My intention in the pages that follow was to describe the rest instead; that which is generally not taken note of, that which is not noticed, that which has no importance: what happens when nothing happens other than the weather, people, cars, and clouds.' (Perec 2010, 3)

‘Rule 1 We study science in action and not ready made science or technology: to do so, we either arrive before the facts and machines are blackboxed or we follow the controversies that reopen them.’ (Latour 1987, 258).
Chapter 1 _
Introduction

The rope

One day, during my fieldwork, I found a hanging rope. It was tied up to a metal tube on top of a wall. It was over an area that was painted in white to be used as a cinema screen. It had several knots in it and the area of the wall around the rope was stained with footprints. The wall was 6 meters high, and the stains almost reached the top. When I checked my pictures several months later, I was able to partially reconstruct what had happened. The rope had been tied up on top of the wall a couple of weeks before to hold a big cloth used to give some shade to the audience of a concert; after the concert nobody took care of the rope and it remained in its place. In another picture dated some days later, two men climbed the rope. Some knots had been added to it. Two weeks after I found it, the rope was gone. One month later, the screen was repainted in white. No trace was left, but my photographs.

Figure 1. The rope, one knot, some stains, and a white wall.
If this vignette would be analysed from a traditional urban socio-political framework, to the question of ‘what had happened?’ the answer would probably be ‘Nothing; there was a rope, and now there is no rope anymore. Why do you ask that question? It’s irrelevant. There is no problem here.’ The vignette would probably raise no interest at all.

For me—and I hope the troupe of urban STS scholars I align with—this seemingly simple vignette encompasses several relevant questions I would like to tackle in the piece of research you are about to read. It presents several groups of people—i.e. humans—that, mediated by a rope, a shade, a concert, some footprints, some knots and a cinema screen—i.e. non-humans—related in ways that were indeed politically relevant, and did so without verbal communication, without discursive mediation. We can see there were power
relationships deployed—e.g. someone decided that the rope had to be gone; there were also ‘unruly’ and ‘subversive’ practices of appropriation of space—i.e. rather than using the rope for supporting a cloth, some people used it for practicing climbing; there was certain non-human agency—e.g. the ‘invitation’ of the rope to be climbed or the stains that ‘disturbed’ the cinema screenings; and there was also a trace left in the photographs I took that allow me to use this example to begin framing my research. All in all, a discrete ‘urban assemblage’ emerged and disappeared; a socio-material collective was formed composed by heterogeneous actors related to each other in diverse ways, which foregrounded material participation and the emergence, formation, development and resolution of issue-politics. That is, the vignette shows certain relationships that might help us reveal the political relevance of ‘what-happens-when-(supposedly)-nothing-happens’.

In addition, there is something else that can be extracted from the vignette, something that concerns temporality. It is not the same to look at it before, during or after the rope was placed and used to climb the wall. Before, the relationship between the different groups had not emerged yet. Once the screen was stained, a controversy surfaced and certain groups of people previously unrelated had to relate to each other—even if tacitly. The screen was stained and the people that used it for screening cinema had to repaint it in order for it to work properly. Several practices converged: a concert, some climbing sessions and cinema screenings; and even if they did not overlap in time, some interfered with others. Nevertheless, after the rope was removed and the screen was repainted, apparently the problem ‘disappeared’; apparently the controversy was ‘solved’.

*  

So, the point of departure of this thesis is a seemingly simple even inconsistent question: what happens in urban life when ‘nothing happens’? What happens when people have a walk, meet for a chat, role and smoke a cigarette, drink a beer, go to work, play a soccer match or walk their dogs? What happens when birds sing and nest in the trees, when plants grow, water flows, a car passes by or the sun shines? Or put it differently, how do the seemingly irrelevant actors, actions and issues that are the basis of our everyday life participate in urban matters? And how do they relate to, affect and are affected by the ‘relevant and important’ issues of our public life? How are the (apparently) unimportant
encounters of urban daily life intertwined with the (supposedly more) relevant and important political issues? Should they—the ordinary things of daily life—be rendered also politically relevant? And if so, how? How can we assess and understand such relevance? All these questions emerged in my mind when I managed to understand what happened with the rope.

To begin answering these questions, two things are at the base of this enquiry: materiality and temporality. Both play specific and distinct roles in these urban matters and, as we will see, they affect each other. Whereas time affects the participation of things in urban life, materiality shapes the rhythms and timescapes of everyday life. But, how exactly? This is, I contend, the first task to unveil. However, materiality and temporality not only constitute the basic foundations of this enquiry, they also shape the framing of the research, for they guide the process of narrowing down the scope towards questions asked about specific situations, actors, practices and places. In doing so, enquiring about materiality endorses the choice of the theoretico-methodological framework—Science and Technology Studies (hereafter STS), and particularly Actor-Network Theory—and enquiring about temporality allows me to find a topic of research—temporary urban sites.

First, enquiring about materiality leads us towards a socio-material framework. This enquiry foregrounds the role of non-humans and weighs it with the role of humans from a ‘symmetric’ perspective; namely, my point of departure understands that both human and non-humans have certain capacity of action—which does not mean necessarily that they enact agency in the same way. Entities that participate in social relationships are heterogenous and participate in their own particular ways. Thus, considering what the role of materiality is in effect situates us in an STS realm, which in this case will particularly draw on Actor-Network Theory—hereafter ANT—(Callon 1986a; 1986b; 2001; Latour 2005b; 1987; 1999; Law and Hassard 1999) and very specifically with the work of Marres about ‘material participation’ and ‘issue-politics’ (Marres 2005a; 2005b; 2012a; Marres and Lezaun 2011; Lezaun, Marres, and Tironi 2017). This specific framing provides, first and foremost, a way of looking at public issues and publicness that is a catalyst to trigger a possible and interesting dialogue with questions on how to understand public space in a different manner. Also, as already suggested, it helps foreground the role of materiality and radical relationality. And then, it also deploys an epistemological sensitivity based on the study of situated and specific events, rather than abstract matters.
In the following section I will provide a brief and I hope comprehensive summary of what the use of this type of framing entails.

On the other hand, temporality directs our sight towards a productive topic: temporarily used urban sites. A wide and rich topic that I will particularly study delving into one specific case: *El Campo de Cebada*. In that regard, the opportunity that temporary urban sites provide relates to the specific timeframe in which these sites develop. Such delimitation of time relates to a very specific status that I understand as a sort of ‘legal suspension’; that is, in many cases, temporary urban sites are developed under specific circumstances decided for their particular situation. That allows them to experiment with urban public life and particular ways of managing, governing and developing both sites and projects. And that is often possible because the legal conditions under which many cases work do not necessarily respond to standard, formal and general rules. They operate as ‘exceptions’ to the system—i.e. as self-detached sites and projects, as temporarily ‘a-legal spaces’, or as Bey would call them ‘temporary autonomous zones’ (1991)—and hence are able to test governance procedures and political practices otherwise difficult to sound out and implement.

So, in this chapter, I will begin by presenting an overview of the relationship between STS and urban studies, describing also some of the main conceptual twists ANT offers. Then, I will present a brief explanation of the temporarily used urban site I will study—*El Campo de Cebada*—and how it relates to the specific Spanish context after the burst of the 2008’s economic crisis. To finish the chapter, I will pose four research questions that will guide the enquiry throughout the whole thesis, one overarching one and three sub-questions. And I will close with the roadmap of the thesis and with a short summary of the different contents presented in each chapter.

1. **STS and the urban**

The realm of urban studies has been traditionally enquired from multiple socio-political frameworks: critical theory, social constructivism, political economy, and so on. Most of these frameworks have centered their efforts in demonstrating that there were certain ‘hidden’ structural forces, mainly driven by economic power, that made the world an
uneven and unjust place. In turn, their aim was ultimately, to unveil and understand these pre-existing forces, in order to counterbalance them and hence manage to provide certain responses that will allow us to overcome social injustice and incorporate equity into the socio-political arena and, as a consequence, also into our daily lives. Furthermore, this literature has also considered that such forces were mainly produced and reproduced by individuals, groups of individuals, enterprises and corporations integrated in what is called ‘society’ that decided and managed resources for their own benefit; that is, they tended to consider the world was led and shaped by humans and their ‘social’ relationships, and hence, they claimed that humans had autonomy, independence and a capacity of action that could be enacted independently of their context. These two issues correspond respectively to the two sides of the structure-agency dichotomy. The aim of such discussions was to find what were those hidden causes and what they were based on, and who were those responsible for their development.

Since around the beginning of the current century, however, a growing number of urban scholars have found a different sensitivity to look at the urban phenomenon; a sensitivity that takes into account socio-technical assemblages as their main object of study. The significant conceptual shift of such perspectives is twofold. First, all entities are considered to have the capacity of exerting some sort of agency; that means, according to Latour (2005b) that everything is in effect a possible mediator rather than an intermediary. And second, all entities are argued to be radically relational; that is, humans and non-humans are not independent and autonomous; contrarily, all entities are constituted by the relationships that they deployed and are deployed around them. This implies several ontological moves—which I will briefly present below—among which we find one key notion for this research: the non-recognition of dichotomies. Namely, it makes no sense to point out a clear cut division between, among others, culture and nature, local and global, content and context, society and technology, or, as just mentioned above, structure

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1 This new sensitivity has gathered scholars from multiple disciplines: architecture (Yaneva 2005; 2009; 2011; Latour and Yaneva 2008; Guggenheim 2010), urban design (Teh 2016; Sendra 2015), urban planning (Rydin 2013a; 2013b; 2014; 2019; Rydin and Natarajan 2016; Rydin and Tate 2016; Beauregard 2012; Lieto and Beauregard 2015), urban geography (Ruming 2009; Anderson et al. 2012), urban anthropology (Estalella and Corsín Jiménez 2016), and of course the wide discipline of urban studies (Farías and Bender 2010; Blok and Farías 2016a; Farías and Blok 2017).
and agency; for everything is composed of hybrid associations made of heterogeneous relationships among multiple and diverse entities.

Amid those that have discussed these matters, we find two early books that introduced that approach into urban discussions: *Cities: Reimagining the urban* (Amin and Thrift 2002), where the notion of non-humans was already considered, and *Splintering Urbanism* (Graham and Marvin 2001) which proposed the study of urban infrastructural networks foregrounding their hybrid nature; i.e. networks were at the same time nature and technology. Also, urban political ecological perspectives contributed to that inclusion of socio-technical thinking in urban questions (e.g. Swyngedouw 2007; Heynen, Kaika, and Swyngedouw 2006). Whereas in those early urban socio-technical contributions there was a theoretical understanding that the urban was constituted by a multiplicity of urban technological networks and an epistemological acknowledgement that the focus should be directed towards specific situations where these imbroglios were deployed and unfolded, urban political ecologists, however, still aligned with urban critical theorists and considered that certain structural forces played powerful roles in such assemblages.

It was not until the 2010s that a wider socio-technical discussion was unlocked around urban matters triggered, I contend, by the edited volume of *Urban Assemblages* (Farías and Bender 2010) which introduced yet another and much more radical approach into urban studies, that of ANT. In 2011, an interesting and controversial discussion around assemblage theory and the urban was developed in the journal *City* volume 15 (McFarlane 2011c; 2011a; 2011b; Brenner, Madden, and Wachsmuth 2011; Wachsmuth, Madden, and Brenner 2011; Farías 2011; Swanton 2011c; 2011b; 2011a). There, at least three sensitivities were discussed, with a fierce critique towards STS approaches specially focused on issues of non-human agency: (1) those critical theorists who were antagonist to the concept of ‘assemblage theory’ and considered that agency was necessarily linked with intention and hence could only be a human capacity; (2) those who acknowledged the methodological strength and effectiveness of assemblage thinking in accounting for complexity, but still partly aligned with structural understandings of the world, and (3) those, like Farías (2011), who following his previous endeavor in pursuing an urban ANT research agenda (2010) advocated for the incorporation of ANT into urban studies; he defended that both the epistemological stance and the ontological proposal were crucial to underline the political value of such a way of accounting for the urban.
Farías and Bender’s (2010) contribution proposed, in my opinion, an ambitious project of research. Their idea was, in Farías’ own words, to understand ‘the notion of urban assemblages’ as ‘a powerful foundation to grasp the city anew, as an object [...] relentlessly being assembled at concrete sites, or [...] as a multiplicity of processes of becoming’ (2010, 2). For him, ‘the city is [...] not an out-there reality, but is literally made of urban assemblages, through which it can come into being in multiple ways’ (Farías 2010, 13). Hence, the city is not something easy to grasp; it is in effect many things at the same time; it is complex, mutable, messy and multiple. The difficulty, he argued along with Blok, ‘is precisely how to think of this multiplicity’ (2017, 571). Interestingly, at the core of this joint venture of STS and urban studies, not only STS offered certain tools—both theoretical and methodological—to the study of the city, but also urban studies challenged in new and unexpected ways STS thought.

But what exactly does the socio-technical agenda offer to the study of the urban? Well, it offers an alternative methodological approach and a quite innovative ontological understanding of the world that translates in several theoretical ideas that could be summed up—as an unavoidable oversimplification—in three main concepts: ‘flat ontology’, that offers an alternative position to structural understandings of the world; ‘generalized symmetry’, a perspective that forefronts non-human agency and decenters humans from the core of the social; and ‘radical relationality’, which indeed is the base of the actor-network concept.

In regard to ANT’s methodological motto, Actor-Network Theory has been argued not to be really a ‘theory’ but more an epistemological position from which the world is understood. Indeed, Latour is clear in that respect:

ANT ‘was never a theory of what the social is made of. [...] ANT was simply another way of being faithful to the insights of ethnomethodology[,] [...] a very crude method to learn from the actors without imposing on them an a priori definition of their world-building capacities’ (1999, 19–20)

And in later works, he continues with a similar idea when considering that the task of ANT is to disassemble the pre-existing construction of the social to reassemble it again, yet with a totally different and renewed version of what social means (Latour 2005b). It is in trying to achieve that endeavor that ANT utilizes a different conceptual framework,
not the other way around. To begin, first of all there needs to be something to be accounted for, something that necessarily has left some sort of trace. As Latour said, ‘no trace left, thus no information, thus no description, then no talk’ (2005b, 150). So, research begins to be tangible as soon as we leave the realm of the abstraction and start to look at the things that happen in order to describe them. There is no need for explanation, he argues, because, if that seems to be needed it means something has gone wrong; there is some step that the researcher has skipped in her register (Latour 2005b). In other words, our task, as urban STS scholars, is not to assume hidden a priori causes; rather, we have to look for the ‘effects’ of relationships and describe them.

Then, from a theoretical point of view, ANT confronts structural explanations. However, by opposing structural explanations of the world, socio-technical perspectives do not refute the existence of power structures; on the contrary, STS scholars recognise that power relationships exist. Still, what they argue is that such positions of power do not unfold from ‘causes’ but are the ‘effects’ of heterogeneous networks of relationships (Law 1992). Indeed, the very origin of STS was precisely to enquire about power relationships through what was called the ‘sociology of translation’ (Callon 1986a). As they argued, to understand power relationships, knowledge can only be achieved if the point of departure is not aprioristic and the networks of relationship to be researched are considered to be flat. Namely, in the beginning of the enquiry, there should not be any element with more weight than others; that comes later, once the register and the account are developed.

In considering a flat ontological perspective, STS scholars introduced the concept of ‘general symmetry’ (Callon 1986a; 2001). Using this concept means understanding that humans are not anymore in the centre of the social; namely, all the other entities that populate the world are also social. And all those other entities—identified in the literature as non-humans, more-than-humans or other-than-humans—are not only other living beings—such as plants or animals—but also includes machines, documents, institutions, discourses, materials, buildings, technology, and so on and so forth. Indeed, this relational understanding of the world shapes the way in which agency is understood, not anymore as an individual will, but as the enactment of interactions among different social elements constitutive of an ‘assemblage’. Hence, STS focuses on the relationships rather than on
the actors that are related, and on the way these associations emerge, are shaped and developed.

These assemblages are socio-material networks that are constantly materialised through the enactment of practices, and agency is related to the networked practices and relationships among individuals, rather than to the individuals involved in them. As Bennett (2010) claimed, it is the agency of assemblages what we should focus on; how associations affect other associations. Following from there, Bennett underlined the ‘agency capacities’ of things and objects (2010). This does not mean arguing that things have agency in themselves, but that they, as part as a heterogenous assemblage of humans and non-humans, have the capacity to ‘translate’ and ‘mediate’ relationships rather than being just mere ‘intermediaries’ with no influence in such relationships (Latour 2005b). This means that, in the process of translation, relationships are transformative and also transformed by the participation of things.

Actually, this is exactly what radical relationality refers to. If all entities are constituted by the relationships they establish with others, then it makes no sense to think about the difference between context and content; what is worthwhile is to think in terms of the different levels of influence and the relational distance between all manner of entities; I mean, the type of relationship one establishes with others and how that relationship moves their respective networks of affection. To understand this idea, it may help to think about the actor-network concept, which is not a dichotomy but an overlap. All entities are actor-networks in the sense that they are both actors playing a role in a wider network and at the same time networks in themselves, for they are the relationships they deploy. In that sense, the study of relationships through the lens of ANT reveals exactly that, and it is done by using two opposed mechanisms that allow the process of enquiring. On the one hand, ‘punctualisation’ (Callon 1986a) is used in order to simplify a multiplicity of relationships into a node of a network, and on the other hand, ‘unblackboxing’ (Latour 2005b) is mobilised when there is the need to open up a node in order to reveal the networks it hides and understand how it operates.

All in all, and here is where the urban gets into the equation, I consider that the city—with its huge complexity, messiness and heterogeneity—offers STS the perfect site for research. However, such a site is a very difficult one to grasp. At the core of this joint
venture between STS and urban studies, there is a term that encapsulates quite straightforwardly the complexity and multiplicity of the city; that of ‘throwntogetherness’ (Massey 2005; Amin 2008), which, as Farías and Blok argued, could be understood as the ‘situations in which people and things are put in the presence of each other and forced to confront, even if in a collateral way, the multiplicity of the urban’ (2016, 11). It is in that tension, in the problematic and productive situations where I hope STS, and particularly ANT, might help to shed some light into what the urban is, and specially, how it is that it keeps on going.

2. Spain, the post-15M2 and El Campo de Cebada

When the 2008 financial recession began worldwide, the real estate bubble burst in Spain with special harshness. Even if predicted—i.e. we were warned about the ‘creative destruction’ processes and cyclical nature of economic rhythms (e.g. Harvey 2003)—its violence took us by surprise. The Spanish government initially reacted denying the situation and later implementing shy measures to promote public investment3. Very soon after, cuts were imposed by the European Union in order to cope with our northern colleagues’ growing rhythm; cuts that had wide-reaching effects from education to health care systems. Those cuts motivated huge reaction campaigns that expanded for several years and materialized in many demonstrations which later developed in social mobilizations of all kinds, showing the disagreement and disappointment of Spanish society in regard to those austerity measures implemented.

Among the demonstrations that emerged during that period between 2009 and 2012, the 15M demonstration—which sparked on the 15th of May of 2011 in Madrid—has been claimed to be the pivotal moment that identified the beginning of a new political era (Cruells and Ibarra Güell 2013). The 15M evolved into the Spanish occupy movement,

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2 The acronym refers to the date of a demonstration occurred the 15th of May of 2011, that was considered to be a point of inflexion in a subjacent and later explicit social mobilization against austerity measures that affected multiple social sectors.

3 Here I am specifically referring to what was known as the PlanE. In 2009, the national government mobilised public funding that was transferred to local authorities in proportion to their population in an attempt to encourage the development of public works and activate the economic stagnation.
also known as the Indignados [Outraged] movement. In Madrid, that first demonstration mutated into an encampment that lasted for a month in the Puerta del Sol, the most symbolic square in the heart of the city. After that first month, the encampment dissolved and spread across boroughs. Something similar occurred in other cities too. In each borough, a neighborhood assembly was formed and began to work at a local scale (Estalella and Corsín Jiménez 2013). Not surprisingly, the assembly re-emerged as a key device to develop new alternative politics and rethink governance models, especially at a local level.

Also, some social projects and movements, which had been dormant for years, woke up and reorganized in parallel to new ones that flourished moved by that wave of demonstrations that acted as a catalyst. Such projects ranged from traditional antagonist movements opposing the market and the state to alternative political proposals. The post-15M politics has been claimed to be characterised for the development of new language and knowledge: new political sensitives emerged, new forums crystallised and new political tools, devices and mechanisms were tested. Even new political parties—such Podemos in 2015—were founded at a national scale under the light of those movements.

The general feeling among many activists was that new—or better renewed—alternative politics were flourishing allowing for experimental atmospheres to happen (Corsín Jiménez and Estalella 2013). It was in that context, with a mixed feeling between outrage and hope, that many temporary urban sites in Spain were developed from 2009. Examples of those temporary urban sites could be found in Madrid, Barcelona, Zaragoza, Valencia and many other Spanish cities, and, as we will see in the chapter that follows, the formulas and configurations they deployed were multiple and quite heterogeneous. Amongst all those cases, El Campo de Cebada was born.

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4 Note that many of the temporary urban sites developed during that period did not began necessarily after the 15M in 2011, however the 15M helped them to be empowered and visible.

5 Some examples are: in Madrid, El Campo de Cebada, Esto es una Plaza, Patio Maravillas, Red de huertos Urbanos; in Barcelona, Pla de Buits, Recreant Cruilles, Can Batlló; in Zaragoza: Esto no es un solar; and in Valencia, Solar de la Corona.
El Campo de Cebada was a temporary urban project developed in a publicly owned open-air site and managed by a heterogenous group of neighbours. The space where it was built was a 2500sqm site in the central borough of Madrid that occupied a vacant plot left by the demolition of a former public sports center. The building was demolished in 2009 linked to the development of a new sports center and a mall and funded with public investment by an early governmental attempt to overcome the economic crisis that was about to hit hard. Despite having tried to secure more funds for the scheme, these only covered up to the demolition, and the construction of the future building remained inactive waiting for better times. In turn, the space was left vacant and after a year with no movement on the site, several neighbours and activists decided to ask the municipal government to arrange and sign a temporary lease of the space to have the possibility for it to be used by neighbours until the new development started again. After some months of negotiation, a group of neighbours managed to sign a lease for one year which could be extended, depending on the specific situation, every year; an arrangement that continued for more than six years. Coincidentally, also the 15th of May of 2011, El Campo de Cebada opened its doors.

During the time El Campo was opened, it became a reference point for many neighbours and activists in Madrid. Its size—which allowed for the hosting of multiple and different

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6 The aforementioned PlanE.
activities at a time—along with its vibrant cultural activity, full of events of all kinds—e.g. theatre plays, concerts, cinema screenings, garden activities, basketball tournaments, fairs, and so on—helped to build its reputation. The core of the group that managed the space was a quite heterogenous troupe; coming from diverse backgrounds—architects, cultural activists, artists, social movements, and so on—their principal objective was to build and developed a ‘public space’ open to all. To do so, they built most of its infrastructure, from a watering system, an electrical network, a vegetable garden, to different pieces of furniture to seat, and even a storage room with a recycled shipping container placed on top of a scaffolding structure. What formerly was an empty and sunken concrete slab, after several months of work, was transformed into a lively space where one could attend events and activities. But also—and this is something I realized later—it was a place to just hang out, relax and unwind with friends, a sort of local square for the people of the vicinity. Originally, it was that ‘hands-on’ attitude towards a shared infrastructure that attracted me, that capacity and willingness to ‘participate in the making’. In addition, and once most of its infrastructure was built, the challenge mutated into the caring, maintenance and constant development of the space and its vibrant activity. In that regard, I would claim, their weekly assembly played a key role, as we will see in the account that follows. It was there where issues were discussed and where most of the governance of the space was funneled through. Thus, it was not only ‘participation in the making’ that was at stake but also the ‘making of participation’; that is, who and what participated and how they did in the discussions and decision-making processes developed. Such a way of participating directly linked with the ideas that Marres (2012a) proposed when describing ‘material participation’ as a ‘performative phenomenon’, and that is hence another issue that I aim to address.

In a that sense, El Campo was not alone in its endeavour. In the particular context of post-15M in Spain where and when El Campo was developed, many other projects emerged around the idea of building new places for collective gathering and action developed as places to be together, new public spaces for the development of an active citizenship. Importantly, those new places and practices incorporated a way of working together that did not necessarily—yet neither abstained to—enact the confrontational mode of doing politics traditionally ascribed to social movements—i.e. demonstrations and the like. Namely, their proposals did not work ‘against’ the state or public administrations, but
rather ‘in parallel’ to them and even, in some cases, ‘in collaboration with’ them. Some of those projects were developed trying to think of alternative modes of cooperation and collaboration that speculated around hybridity—e.g. testing with hybrid governance proposals and institutional arrangements (Cabrerizo Sanz, Klett, and García Bachiller 2015). Interestingly, these type of projects focused on what Corsín Jiménez (2014) has called the ‘right to infrastructure’, understanding infrastructure as a verb not as a noun; that is, the right to build, to repair, to maintain and to take care of the same spaces they were ultimately going to inhabit.

Among other theories, the idea of the ‘urban commons’ has been tested in different realms as a possible overarching perspective to explain how certain specific practices developed and related in the Spanish case (Blanco, Gomà, and Subirats 2018; Blanco and Gomà 2019). Elsewhere, scholars have argued that the idea of urban commons (Borch and Kornberger 2015) might encapsulate the multiplicity and complexity of activist practices developed in urban spaces, and I think that could also be argued in the Spanish case too. Indeed, the idea of ‘commoning’—understood as a practice of taking care of, coproducing and collaborating together—was at the core of debates and discussions in neighbourhood assemblies in many activist realms too during those years (Fernández-Savater 2016).

More generally, the ‘commons’ approach (Ostrom 1990) has been argued to help overcoming the antagonist logic between market and state, introducing ‘a third way of governing collective action’: civic engagement. On top of that, the addition of the urban qualification to the concept of commons reveals a particular and relevant character to it, due to the intrinsic non-subtractive nature of the urban (Borch and Kornberger 2015). Namely, what Borch and Kronberger (2015) argued was that whereas in traditional literature (i.e. Hardin 1968; Ostrom 1990) the commons were ‘competed’ over because the nature of resources was subtractive—i.e. fisheries or fields—in the urban realm, resources gained value when being used, rather than losing it; that is, urban life in streets and squares was produced by their mere use.

Whereas I could partly agree with the urban commons vision as a possible background for this project, I think this research would be more productive aligning with an alternative view. In that regard, my idea is to follow the steps proposed by Blok and Farías in Urban Cosmopolitics (2016a)—an edited collection that could be understood as the continuation of Urban Assemblages (Farías and Bender 2010). I consider that what was happening in
Spain was not only about how resources were used, but how new political atmospheres were shared, built, thought, invented and deployed. In that sense, Blok and Fariás’ proposal better fits that atmospheric idea when describing ‘urban cosmopolitics’ as the ‘search of urban common worlds of human and non-human cohabitation’ (Blok and Fariás 2016b, 228–29). In that regard, it is not about how to share things but how to share with things; how to commonly build affective spaces to live together.

3. Research questions and methodology

In light of the issues just presented, several questions could be posed. If I begin with the hypothesis that temporary urban projects developed in urban sites could deploy a sort of ‘public participation in the making’ and the ‘making of public participation’, the first questions are clear to me: How exactly is that sort of public participation enacted in temporarily used spaces? And how do time and materiality affect that enactment? To answer these questions, however, first of all, I will need to clarify what I mean by temporary urban projects, sites and spaces, and then what I mean by public participation, because if I follow a socio-material frame those definitions are not necessarily straightforward. I will delve into that clarification in chapters 2 and 3 respectively, doing a review of current literature on both matters. In so doing, I will explore ideas around temporary urban sites and propose the concept of ‘eventual urbanism’ which accounts for the temporary urban practices developed in the projects I am enquiring into, considering the aforementioned socio-material framework. Then, I will present Marres’s work around the ideas of ‘material participation’, ‘publics’ and ‘issue-politics’ (2005a; 2005b; 2012a; Marres and Lezaun 2011; Lezaun, Marres, and Tironi 2017), which will lead me to interrogate specifically three sub-questions that will clarify the overarching query.

Those three sub-questions—that indeed are three sets of questions—concern three aspects of participation which are also at the core of democratic investigations. The first one concerns the issue of group formation (Latour 2005b), or if you prefer, the more traditional concept of ‘community’. ‘Who participates?’ is the typical question around this issue. In this research, however, taking into account a socio-material framework, that question should necessarily mutate into the ‘who and what participates?’ one. Still, rather
than remaining around this later ‘who and what’ question, I propose to step further and ask ‘how’, in line with the preoccupation of socio-technical enquiries not into the actors themselves, but into the relationships those actors establish among themselves. Hence, the questions to be posed would be: How are communities formed? How do actors that participate in the development of temporary urban sites bundle together? How are they included or excluded in practices? This would be the first set of questions.

Then, the second consideration to be addressed is ‘how issues are handled’; that is, when a controversy emerges and a group around it is formed in order to tackle it, how is that conflict handled? This concerns primarily the nature of governance relationships, and how much conflict is welcomed. I mean, it relates to the way in which consensus and conflict are dealt with and to the ‘agonistic’ nature of certain political relationships (Mouffe 2005). It also relates to the forums and public spaces where those discussions and debates occur. In developing my argument, I will propose to use the concept of ‘eventual publics’—the term that entitles this thesis—to discuss issues around those situations and spaces.

Finally, and here I refer back to the beginning of this chapter, the third question to be investigated refers to the invisible and forgotten practices of everyday life and how they relate to care in the type of participation I am conceptualising here. The question then would be: how are the invisible caring practices of eventual urbanism enacted? Or, what does it mean to care about a problem in the everyday of temporary urban sites? In this case, specific attention will be given to caring practices that are usually taken for granted and constitute the base of everyday life. Enquiring about the often-invisible practices of care focusses particularly in the affective more-than-human intersubjective relationships established within socio-material collectives.

Thus, to sum up, I will pose one general question and three sub-questions that could be formulated as follows:

- **Main research question (MRQ):** How exactly is public participation enacted in temporarily used spaces, and particularly in El Campo de Cebada?

- **First research sub-question (RSQ1):** How are the multiple socio-material collectives of El Campo formed and related?
Second research sub-question (RSQ2): How are issues dealt with, what governance and political mechanisms are used and in what spaces?

Third research sub-questions (RSQ3): How are the everyday caring practices of El Campo politically relevant?

To answer these questions, an immersive ethnomethodology should be sought for; one that provides the researcher enough time and space to closely observe the object of study and if possible, to participate in the development of practices. Also, there is a need for an epistemological sensitivity that looks to describe the events that occur and abstinence to explain what seems to be happening. Consequently, it logically follows that the methodology I have to use is ethnography. In this case, I will add the visual component to it, and that comes from one very simple reason. As an architect and urban planner, my background provides me with certain visual tools that will help me to ease the challenge of embarking into the adventure of doing ethnography. This is the first time I will do five months of ethnography and having at my side a pen, a sketch book and a photo camera will give me confidence and comfort.

Understanding how participation is enacted in El Campo de Cebada, then, will mean participating in the events they develop, in the weekly assembly, in the gardening practices and all the other activities too. It will mean meeting people and informally chatting with them and telling them about my research. It will also mean living the everyday of the space, being there for long periods of time, and even getting bored. It will mean taking notes, making photographs and videos, and drawing the space, and also analysing them later; classifying the registers, deciding categories and organising the material. And it will ultimately mean finding a narrative that manages to convey all those experiences into a text.

4. Outline of the Chapters

To conclude this introduction, I will briefly summarise the seven chapters that follow. In the second and third chapter I present respectively the topic of research and the theoretical
framework. In the fourth one, I propose a methodological approach along with a more detailed explanation of the case that I will study: El Campo de Cebada (here after El Campo). From the fifth to the seventh chapters I present my empirical account. And in the final chapter I conclude by reviewing the account and proposing an overarching cross-cutting analysis, trying to foreground the most significant findings of the thesis.

In chapter 2, I explore the topic of research—temporary urban sites—and review the current state of the literature that has dealt with it up to date. In so doing, I discuss three debates that are key in that literature. First, the debate on the role played by temporary uses as an efficient and productive alternative to vacancy; then, the second debate concerns the direct link some have claimed that exists between temporary urban projects and the creative class, which many times becomes associated with gentrification processes; and the third discussion explores the relationship these projects have with social innovation processes and local and civic engagement. These debates, I argue, still operate within the logic of structural and human centred approaches. So, in order to move beyond, I offer an alternative framework that is built around the concept of ‘eventual urbanism’ that accounts for the material, performative, conflictual and provisional character of what is usually understood as temporary use.

Moving into chapter 3, I propose a discussion that draws on an STS sensitivity—and particularly on ANT and New Materialisms (Braun and Whatmore 2010; Bennett 2010)—and explores the political side of ‘material participation’, taking as a point of departure Marres’ work (2012a) and two of her main ideas. The first concept is that ‘material participation’—which as she claims is distinct mode of participation—is a ‘performative phenomenon’ (Marres 2012a). The second concept, borrowed from Dewey (1927) and reconceptualised from a socio-material perspective, is that a ‘public’ consists of a ‘set of actors jointly affected by a problem […] [who] organize into a public, so as to assure that the problem is addressed’ (Marres and Rogers 2004, 8). Thinking with both ideas allows me to discuss publicness and public space from a renewed perspective, as something that happens ‘in the making’ (Latour 2005a). In the second part of that chapter, I theoretically discuss the three concepts that are the base of my enquiry and relate to the three research sub-questions of the thesis: community and group formation, issue-politics and the debate around consensus, conflict and agonism, and the different relationships deployed between ‘matters of care’ (Puig de la Bellacasa 2011; 2017) and affectivity.
In the fourth chapter I present the case more in-depth along with the methodological steps I followed during the whole process of researching. The chapter is divided in three parts which correspond chronologically with the periods of before, during and after the fieldwork, which I undertook in 2015 from April to September. The narrative unfolds trying to present the case and methodological decisions situating the reader in these three different moments and justifying the paths taken with the knowledge and experience I had in each of those periods of time. In this chapter I explain why I chose visual ethnography as my main methodology, commenting on the different obstacles and challenges it posed to me and discuss the ethical dimension of it.

In the fifth chapter I begin my ethnographic description delving into two seemingly irrelevant practices: opening and closing the site. In thoroughly studying their deployment, I manage to find specific material and temporary features that reveal certain specific ways in which group formation happens in El Campo. Among those findings I understand that not only engagement and openness is important for the development and bonding of communities but also separation and disengagement play a crucial role. Also, I manage to study the boundary—material and otherwise—and its margins where, I contend, multiple socio-material collectives are formed, and help link otherwise independent groups of people. In this chapter, the main actors are the fence, the wall, the door, the key, the padlock and some rubbish containers.

The sixth chapter engages with a different kind of matter: sound. This chapter is divided into two different parts. The first one presents the soundscapes of El Campo and describes the way in which different sonic territories are formed. In the second part, I deal with the case of a noise complaint and, in trying to elucidate if the sound is either music or noise, I manage to show how the weekly assembly deploys certain political mechanisms that allow it, first of all, to be a legitimate interlocutor against the police and a complaining neighbour, and then, to propose alternative scenarios to govern sound that the police was unable to offer. In investigating this case, what is mainly pointed out is that the governance procedures used within the weekly assembly are indeed ‘radically opened and relational’, for they are not only seeking temporary consensus but also willing to incorporate at any moment conflict too.
The seventh and last empirical chapter describes how the plants of El Campo ‘were watered almost every day’. The description navigates from the illegal watering connection with the municipal grid, passing through the watering infrastructure and several watering devices, up to the planters, the soil and the plants. In that travel, the water that feeds the plants need to be enough, and that qualitative quantification depends on three things, pressure, capacity of storage and time. In studying that equilibrium, I manage to find the affective capacity certain plants exert, and hence, how they manage to ‘negotiate’ with gardeners their own process of watering. Consequently, care practices and their ethico-political dimension are foregrounded and revealed relevant. In addition, when delving into such intertwined and complex watering imbroglio, we manage to grasp the intrinsic relationships between matter and time, which I will claim, are both constrained and constituted by each other.

To conclude, the final chapter collects all that is learnt throughout the thesis and presents a comprehensive summary of the findings, making a final crosscutting analysis of them underlining four theoretical ideas: first, the crucial role played by what I call ‘marginal entities’, underlining their fluid nature; then, the productive capacities that temporariness provides to governance processes, especially in regards to openness and slowness; thirdly, I bring to the front seemingly unimportant and unproblematic everyday practices and propose to what extent they are politically relevant for urban matters; and finally, I briefly discuss the role that materiality and temporariness have played in the thesis and how they are ultimately intrinsically intertwined with each other. To close the thesis, I propose a few research paths to follow up for further research, and also certain interesting mechanisms that could be useful for the development of urban practice.
Chapter 2 _
Eventual Urbanism

1. Temporary use: a new model for urban development?

This chapter introduces the general topic of the present research: the temporary use of urban spaces, and in particular, temporarily used urban sites. In doing so, I briefly present how temporary projects are defined, studied and discussed in current literature, and propose a conceptual framework to study them which I have called ‘eventual urbanism’, a framework slightly different to what would be referred as ‘temporary urbanism’ (Ferreri 2015). ‘Temporary urbanism’ could be defined as the urban practices that are developed in certain urban spaces for certain period of time. However, this definition is so vague that could describe almost any urban practice developed in an urban context. Temporary projects developed in urban spaces cover a broad range of urban practices (Bishop and Williams 2012), including community gardens, pop-up shops, urban beaches, raves and parties, festivals, fairs, concerts, cultural events, casual sports, and many others. Among all those, we find the temporary use of urban sites, a specific type of urban practices which refers to uses developed in specific urban locations, usually vacant or ‘unused’ sites.

In recent years, the temporary use of urban spaces has been presented by many actors—including practitioners, users, community groups, developers, planners, policymakers and scholars—as a realm for the emergence and development of multiple, heterogeneous (and sometimes conflicting) opportunities. Such opportunities included, among many others, the efficient and productive use of derelict urban spaces, the fostering of new creative practices, the nurturing of new social bonds among local communities, or the experimentation with alternative political mechanisms. That general positivist understanding of the possible innovative outcomes of temporary uses has seen in those projects and interventions glimpses of a new urban development model. As Ferreri (2015) pointed out, such projects and practices were seen as a ‘magical’ solution, because they managed to integrate apparently clashing positions. According to some authors (i.e. Haydn and Temel 2006; Bishop and Williams 2012; Oswalt, Overmeyer, and Misselwitz 2013), in many cases, urban planners, policy-makers, developers, practitioners and local
communities have seemed to agree that the temporary use of urban spaces might be a win-win interim solution for everyone.

However, temporary uses cannot be reduced to a generic and generalisable object; on the contrary, they are complex and heterogeneous networks of practices. Their nature is specific and contextual, and they are usually small in scale and locally self-referenced. Still, most literature on temporary uses has focused its efforts in homogenizing and simplifying their complexity trying to explain them as a sort of trend, relying in structural approaches which underlined the common features and similarities among a multiplicity of experiences (i.e. Haydn and Temel 2006; Bishop and Williams 2012; Oswalt, Overmeyer, and Misselwitz 2013). In that sense, the present dissertation will present an alternative way to discuss the phenomenon through a specific and situated analysis of practices. In doing so, I will propose to tackle their study by looking at their particularities.

Hence, the aim of this chapter is threefold. First, I will briefly present the historical and socio-political context in which temporary uses have developed in recent years, focusing particularly on the European case. Then, I will draw on literature on temporary urbanism and discuss current debates on the topic. And finally, I will close the chapter proposing a conceptual framework that uses the idea of ‘eventual urbanism’ and its etymological family to explore the situated and specific nature of the heterogenous actors and practices I will be dealing with in the rest of the dissertation. In turn, I will discuss whether the temporary use of urban sites is a trend or even an alternative model for urban development, as claimed by some, or if, on the contrary, it is such a heterogeneous, situated and complex phenomenon that makes no sense to label it as such. In following the later claim, I will argue that rather than looking at the common features, which may lead to speculations and ultimately prove unhelpful, it is better to focus on studying the practices themselves, and from there on build a different understanding of what these practices may offer to theory and practice—being it a new model of urban development or a different way to understand the urban.
2. The Topic of Study: Temporarily used urban sites

The myriad of cases and the interest in the phenomenon

It is worth beginning this review of temporality and the city by pointing out that the use of urban spaces for temporary purposes is not new. It could be argued that the birth of urban life has its origin in temporary settlements in the crossroads where traders set their markets to exchange goods. Such temporary nature of the origin of the urban, inherited from a nomadic past, has been replicated since in a multiplicity of social gatherings, from religious rituals to traditional events, such as processions, parades, festivals and fairs. These events occupy urban spaces—all kinds—during certain periods of time that vary in length and periodicity and occur in many cases interwoven with everyday life and routines. Indeed, sometimes it is difficult to make a clear distinction between those extraordinary uses and the ordinary practices that happen every day in urban spaces, such as kids playing in the street, people going to the weekly market to buy food or casual encounters between acquaintances or strangers (Franck and Stevens 2007). Urban life could be defined as an overlaid concatenation of temporary social relationships and interactions; and urban spaces—including not only the so-called public spaces, such as streets, squares and parks, but also sites, cafes, buildings and infrastructures both publicly and privately owned—the places where these interactions happen. Hence, it could be argued that urban life, understood as a social relationship, is always temporary to certain extent.

However, in the realm of urban planning and urban design, the interest in ‘temporary urbanism’ from scholars and practitioners has appeared quite recently. Initially, the concept of ‘temporarily use’ was introduced by situationists in the 50s as a response to the programmatic nature of modern functionalist urbanism (Ronneberger 2006). That response confronted mono-functional zoning and the static nature of urban planning proposed by functionalism against a more fluid and flexible understanding of the urban. In the late 60s and 70s, the development of such ideas materialised, for example, in non-built utopian projects like Constant’s New Babylon (Wigley and Constant 1998) or the many projects proposed by Archigram (Archigram Group 1999; Sadler 2005). Still, it has not been until recent years that a broader and more systematic—yet not extensive—approach to the study of the role of temporary uses in urban development has been developed, studying the phenomenon from various perspectives.
Among the literature that has dealt with temporary uses, there are three contributions that
has stood out due to its extensive and systematic analysis of the phenomenon: Temporary urban spaces: concepts for the use of city spaces (Haydn and Temel 2006), The temporary city (Bishop and Williams 2012), and Urban Catalyst: the power of temporary use (Oswalt, Overmeyer, and Misselwitz 2013). These three comprehensive compilations studied a wide range of types of ‘temporarily used’ urban spaces, and analysed the topic from diverse points of view. Beyond these three volumes, a number of scholars have studied and critically analysed temporary use (Colomb 2012; Andres 2013; Tonkiss 2013; Ferreri 2013; 2014; 2015; Honeck 2017; Madanipour 2017; 2018). The development of that body of literature could be argued to be triggered by three reasons: first, by the proliferation of a multiplicity of cases in different locations, with different time-frames and diverse materialisations; second, by the interest that those cases raised in urban planning and policy-making theory and practice, being seen as an opportunity to rethink urban development models and processes; and finally, by their ‘informality’, a feature widely studied in Global South practices and somehow ‘lost’ in the static and rigid urban Global North.

In regard to the first reason, the myriad of recent examples—especially in western countries—revealed the multiple possibilities such interventions provided for the implementation of different uses in spaces, and the range of ways in which temporary projects could be done. The examples were highly heterogeneous; pop-up fairs, cultural events and festivals, artistic interventions, protests and demonstrations, urban gardening, or squatted buildings and sites, all could be identified—depending on the lens from which they were analysed—as temporary use of urban spaces. For example, Bishop and Williams (2012) made an interesting overview in which they accounted for different practices that focussed on social, economic, cultural, entrepreneurial and confrontational perspectives—to cite some. Many examples of temporary use could be found around the world: from the urban community gardening practices developed in New York and elsewhere across USA from the 70s (Schmelzkopf 1995) to the interventions labelled under to the so-called ‘pop-up’ culture in UK in the early 2000s (Bishop and Williams 2012), or from post-wall Berlin´s cases in the early 90s and their ‘pioneering’ character (SenStadt 2007) to the later proliferation of similar urban practices, projects and interventions all over Europe in the context of the last financial crisis (Tonkiss 2013). All
could be referred to as ‘temporary urbanism’ (Ferreri 2015), yet each case had its specific and contextual idiosyncrasy.

Temporary uses have been classified in multiple ways. As temporality refers to time, one way was to distinguish projects in regard to the timeframe of the intervention; namely, how much time they lasted: a day, a week, some months or years. Still, temporary uses have also been studied from many different perspectives which deployed a range of characteristics and associated issues: i.e. (a) the type of actors involved and patterns of inclusion/exclusion; (b) the type of place in which they occur—their size, physical conditions, infrastructures and facilities; (c) the type of participants, actors and users involved; (d) the relationship between past/present/future uses of premises and their continuity in their long term; (e) the ownership status and the contractual agreements between owners and users; (f) the type of use developed—cultural, commercial, educational, environmental; (g) the financial schemes under which they occur—charity, voluntariness, private investment, governmental funding; and so on and so forth. Several authors (i.e. Temel 2006; Bishop and Williams 2012; Oswalt, Overmeyer, and Misselwitz 2013) attempted to classify them trying to cover all facets; however, a full account of the heterogeneity present in temporary use was, I would claim, almost impossible to achieve. Most cases were particular in one way or another; and hence, there was always something else to that could be added.

Among these different ways of looking at temporary uses, one of them—developed by Oswalt et al. (2013)—is worth commenting here, for it foregrounded a dynamic, changing and fluid relationship between time and space, which to a certain extent acknowledged the relationship between temporality and materiality. For Oswalt et al. (2013), looking at temporary use from a spatial perspective helped account for situations otherwise overlooked. They suggested a typological classification that included several time-space relationships: ‘consolidated’—practices managing to stay on site beyond their original timeframe; ‘free-flow’—projects changing location; ‘impulse’—initiatives producing new activity profiles and spilling out from sites; ‘co-existence’—uses staying and sharing the space with new uses implemented; ‘vacant again’—sites returning to vacancy; and so on. In that sense, temporary projects could move from locations, mutate, expand, shrink, and be stabilised, reproduced and replicated. For example, there were certain projects of Berlin’s night-scene that were developed as itinerant events not attached to specific
venues. Those projects, rather than provisional and site specific, were ephemeral and multiple, yet they still were part of specific temporary projects with certain unity and longevity. In that line, the temporary dimension could be considered as more than just a ‘meanwhile’ situation; it could also include multiple ‘ephemeralities’ (Temel 2006; Fernández Pascual 2011) and be related to a multiplicity of heterogeneous sites, projects and materialities. By taking into account the spatial and material dimension of the temporary, the scope of its meaning and relevance expanded. Indeed, the research project I am proposing here engages to a certain extent in such challenge, for what I intend to study is the interwoven relationships between time and materiality.

Then, the second reason for the development of the current interest in temporary urbanism could be related to a willingness to assimilate temporary projects into urban planning and policy-making processes (Ferreri 2015). From Ferrari’s point of view, this incorporation was increasingly fostered because temporary uses managed to merge ‘two seemingly irreconcilable agendas: urban planners’ targets for urban development and practitioners’ need for spaces alternative to the “world ruled by the profit maxim” ’ (2015, 182). In my opinion, that merger of agendas was not only restricted to either urban planners or urban practitioners; indeed, those agendas were also shared by a great number of different stakeholders, including developers, community groups, public authorities, politicians, entrepreneurs, users and many others. All those actors seemed to be attracted by temporary uses for the opportunities they offered. However, I agree with Ferreri (2015) that the seeming convergence and common ground might mutate into conflict when issues emerged, especially when it came to sharing long term visions. Oversimplifying, for some—i.e. developers, practitioners, urban planners—temporary uses were understood as time-gap fillers, whereas for others—i.e. community groups, users—temporary uses were seen as long term projects tending towards certain stability of practices and the consolidation of the social values generated; a confrontation that manifested a tension between divergent agendas over space.

Finally, I would also claim that a common characteristic of these projects was their material informality, which linked opportunity, flexibility and precarity (Madanipour 2018). As Madanipour put it, ‘temporary use [...] lies in the intersection of contextual crises, flexible responses and multivalent consequences’ (2018, 1105). That is, many times, the appeal and interest of these type of projects related to the capacities and
opportunities enabled by the sort of material configuration that could not be devised from the regulatory frameworks in which they were inscribed. Indeed, Andres et al. (2019) already argued that such inexistent relationship between the formal and the informal should be fostered, particularly in the Global South context. In that context, the material and aesthetic configurations of informality in effect linked to notions of urbanity that, here, in the North, were attractive due to their indeterminacy—in legal terms—and their flexibility—in relational and material terms. In that sense, however, I am aware that we—scholars—should be cautious, and try not to romanticise this informality, which in many cases might mask hidden injustices and inequalities. Indeed, Manadipour underlined that same idea when claiming that ‘the image of this flexibility, however, finds a cultural value that goes beyond its conditions of possibility, normalising an attitude that takes inequality for granted, and hiding the unbalanced outcomes for different stakeholders’ (2018, 1105).

In any case, one of the opportunities this research takes into consideration is such indeterminacy, for the temporary character of projects in many cases suspends legality ‘de facto’ inside the premises, opening windows of opportunity for experimentation; namely, during the time temporary projects are developed, many of the official rules and laws that would apply to those specific sites ‘do not apply’, because the specific temporary situation often triggers ‘bespoke’ agreements and arrangements. In a way, these sorts of projects try to reclaim a lost urbanity that still vibrates in other coordinates of the world (e.g. Simone 2004; 2008; 2010; 2012; Simone and Pieterse 2017); a fluid, flexible, mutable, mobile, ‘temporary’ urbanity.

**Current debates**

To contextualise contemporary discussions on temporary uses, three current debates will be presented. Firstly, some positions have acknowledged the potential of temporary uses as drivers of urban development. In these—mainly positivist—positions, temporary interventions were considered to be projects developed as interim alternatives to decay (Overmeyer 2007). These positions mostly referred to efficiency, value capture and the productive nature of the urban. Secondly, and linked to this previous discussion, according to Colomb (2012), temporary uses were connected to city branding and the promotion of the ‘creative city’ (Florida 2005) and its ‘creative class’; a discourse that linked the emergence of temporary spaces with the development of cultural practices. The temporary use of urban sites in those cases was seen as an opportunity for users,
managers, producers and entrepreneurs to access affordable spaces to start up new adventures with low financial risk. As Ziehl and Oßwald put it linking both debates, ‘temporary uses have become an established tool in European cities for reactivating vacant sites and supply financially weak users with space’ (2015, 263). Finally, the temporary use of urban sites has been seen as a way to foster local development and community identity, linked to the broader narrative of ‘social innovation’ (Moulaert et al. 2010) and the promotion of new bottom-up models of urban development. In that perspective, temporary uses were argued to be an interesting means to incorporate local communities in city-making processes, and hence, allowing them to (literally) participate in the making of their own urban spaces. In theory, all three debates discussed the opportunities offered by temporary uses and questioned whether they could be part of new alternative models of urban development.

Vacancy, efficiency and productivity

Many discourses have coupled temporary uses and vacancy, including the one around efficiency and productivity. Urban spaces became vacant due to several reasons; among these reasons, three have been specifically pointed out in current literature. Firstly, the change towards a post-Fordist economy occurred at the end of the 70s was argued to lead to deindustrialisation of inner-cities and vacancy of former industrial land (Overmeyer 2007). Secondly, authors like Tonkiss (2013) underlined the relationship of vacancy with cycles of financial crisis and ‘austerity urbanism’ (Peck 2012). The 2008 financial crisis had a huge impact in the mortgage and real estate systems, producing disinvestment, and consequently vacancy of sites waiting for development. And finally, vacancy was also associated to the impossibility of the development of sites (Loukaitou-Sideris 1996); impossibility related to restrictions due to many different reasons, such as planning regulations, contamination of sites, conservation of ruins, residual location of sites, size of sites, and many others.

In this approach, vacancy was presented as an unproductive status of the urban, and vacant sites as decaying spaces. The words used to define vacancy were always associated with negative terms such as unbuilt, disused, unplanned, abandoned, empty or wasteland (Overmeyer 2007), implying that those spaces had a negative impact in the city. Thus, as productivity was understood as a necessity, the temporary use of vacant land was seen as
an opportunity (Overmeyer 2007): a profitable way of channelling the otherwise derelict spaces of the city. As Spiegl and Teckert put it, ‘the conception of an empty or unused space as economic fallow land is the product of a logic of exploitation that defines it as unused capital’ (2006, 102). From that perspective, urban planners and developers promoted temporary use in order to keep the system working until a more profitable alternative use could be developed. Temporary uses, hence, were considered mere time-gap fillers (Andres 2013). In that context, temporary uses were promoted just as a profit-driven instrument for future urban development (Andres 2013). Among many, two well-known examples in London could be accounted for: the Boxpark in Shoreditch (Cooper 2011)—which rapidly integrated into the urban fabric due to its profitability—and the interventions made by EXYZT collective in 100 Union Street (Lascelles 2011)—which, on the contrary, later led to the redevelopment of the site.

Two different responses challenged this discourse. The first one questioned why spaces had to be productive all the time and only in economic terms. Spiegl and Teckert (2006) considered that vacant spaces should be taken into account in the city as waiting spaces too. Indeed, that waiting status enabled a different understanding of productivity. For instance, in the field of architecture, Solà-Morales (1995) claimed the need to preserve what he called ‘terrain vague’. Wastelands and vacant sites were already valuable spaces when they were empty. They produced the city as a possibility, as a gap to be filled sometimes, but not always. It was precisely this negativity—the negation of urbanity—that allowed for more urbanity, he claimed. Similarly, landscape architect Clément (2004) advocated for the opportunities offered by the ‘third landscape’: the landscape self-generated in the interstices between the first and second landscape—respectively, the natural and the built. ‘Third landscapes’ developed in the left-overs spaces of the city—such as margins of roads, unused edges, or, importantly, vacant sites—where grass naturally took over. This way of understanding vacancy, in effect, invites to reconsider productivity from a wider perspective, not only economic, but also performative, relational and ecological.

Another question critically discussed was whether temporary uses were—or even should be—time-gap fillers (Arlt 2006; Kamvasinou and Roberts 2014; Lascelles 2011). Indeed, if we take into account that the city is ‘subject to a continuous, active process of construction and decay’ (Ronneberger 2006, 49), then every situation of an urban
element—being it built or in ruins—also adds and contributes to such continuous process of reconfiguration. Hence, for the temporary to be relevant in urban processes, we ought to look beyond its time-constrained meaning. Alternatively, it could be considered how the temporary is implemented; for instance, what the rhythms of the urban are; how fast or slow the urban is built and unbuilt; or how ‘obdurate’ its infrastructures are (Hommels 2005; 2010; 2014). Indeed, the aim when focussing on temporary uses as time-gap fillers was to implement bespoke temporary projects between past and future ‘permanent’ planned uses—i.e. the profitable ones.

In my opinion, such static and stable view of the concept of temporality is counterintuitive, for everything is in fact temporary. Conversely, the focus should be shifted to understanding the multiple rhythms of the city. Here, we can see the never-ending and unfruitful opposition between temporary and permanent, which I will discuss below. Instead, rather than producing solidified future plans seeking for static permanent solutions, it has been claimed that urban planning should move towards ‘process-oriented urban planning’ (SenStadt 2007, 101). In a process-oriented urban planning, everything is temporary—and efficient and profitable in its own multiple terms, not only economic ones—yet with different degrees of temporariness.

Creative class and processes of gentrification

Some authors have underlined the link between temporary interventions and the so-called ‘creative class’ (Colomb 2012; Honeck 2017; Stevens 2018) in line with Florida’s postulates (2005), who claimed the direct relation between the cultural production of the city and such ‘class’; young creators, artists, architects, managers, curators or performers who made, designed, performed, promoted and participated in temporary projects as a way to develop their own practice. This ‘class’—defined from a cultural point of view—participated in the emergence and development of temporary uses especially due to their necessity for affordable and available spaces to develop their work. The availability of vacant spaces at low cost—or sometimes even free—reduced their economic pressure and, hence, the possibility of failure. Attracted by this fact, many creative individuals embarked in the development of temporary projects as a way to channel their ideas and manage to materialise their projects.
From the middle of the 90s, the case of Berlin was paradigmatic. After the fall of the Wall and during the years of the reconstruction of the city, many buildings and sites remained or became vacant. In the beginning, the squatting movement spread, and with it the idea that such urban spaces could be used. After some time, owners began to offer possible tenants sites and buildings at low-cost, which was understood as a win-win arrangement for both (Honeck 2017; Vasudevan 2017a); on the one hand, owners reduced their fear of their sites being squatted and could earn some money, and on the other hand, tenants could pay cheap leases or even have their spaces for free in exchange of the security of having some sort of contractual/legal relationship with owners.

Despite the benefits for owners and tenants, it took some time until public authorities recognised the potential of temporary uses. However, public institutions and local authorities eventually changed their position over the years (Oswalt, Overmeyer, and Misselwitz 2013), acknowledging its importance and beginning to act as mediators. Such a mediation role materialised, for example, providing legal frameworks for agreement, facilitating access to infrastructure, helping with relaxation of taxation towards owners, funding initiatives with connections and benefits for local communities, and so on. According to Oswalt et al. (2007), this change of attitude happened due to several factors: the decreasing rhythm in urban development in the city after the initial boost of the first half of the 90s; the amount of undeveloped land in certain areas of the city; and, importantly, the potential that the creative class had for the development of such practices and for the image of such neighbourhoods and areas.

The combination of those factors linked the role played by creative industries with the possibility to use vacant land. Creative projects managed to promote certain urban areas by alternative means, which in many situations entailed personal economic investment on their part. In linking the creative class’ role and temporary uses, politicians and public officials began to foster and facilitate these practices in order to promote the city. That promotion associated temporary practices with the branding of the city and the new role played by the cultural industry as a driver of urban change. Even more, in several situations, public institutions provided public land for interim use—disassociating in those cases temporary uses and the direct profit-driven speculation of land. An example of this role of public institutions in relation to temporary use is, for example, the ‘Belin-Tempelhof Freiheit’ project (Hilbrandt 2017), which occupied the former Berlin-West
airport. Also, in Spain, several years later, we could find the *Pla de Buits* [Void’s Plan] in Barcelona (Ajuntament Barcelona 2019), which from 2012 up to 2015 offered a number of public sites for the development of temporary projects through a public competition. Actually, our case, El Campo de Cebada, also follows this same logic; the site on which the project was developed was a publicly owned site.

Voices against the promotion of temporary uses through this creative class logic have specially underlined the thin line that separates the promotion of urban development engaging cultural practices and the reproduction of gentrification processes (Colomb 2012). The relationship between cultural industries and gentrification has been widely researched (i.e. Zukin 1989; Harvey 1992). In the case of temporary users in Berlin, as Colomb (2012) argued, the ‘creative class’ had a double implication. On one hand, they participated in the development of processes of gentrification, and on the other, they suffered its consequences. Gentrification also affected temporary users. In some cases, they faced eviction and displacement due to the increased value of land they themselves had managed to raise. Such concern has been important in the discussion about temporary use, especially when in recent years this has become instrumentalised by developers, planners and politicians as a means to promote the development of certain deprived areas of the city.

**Social innovation, the involvement of local communities and self-production**

Finally, the third debate referred to social innovation and the involvement of citizens in temporary uses, and more broadly in urban development processes (Moulaert et al. 2010). What could citizens do? What would their role be in the development of temporary projects? Within such a perspective, temporary use has been understood to allow the production and reproduction of certain practices that fostered social relationships, social binding and bonding, the creation of social capital and the empowerment of local communities. According to Tardiveau and Mallo (2014) temporary uses challenged established urban planning procedures and governance protocols by stimulating flexibility, imagination and innovation emerging from social encounters. The idea behind this approach recalled the role of local communities as ‘experts-in-the-making’; that is, neighbours had the local knowledge needed to navigate and build their own spaces, something that other ‘experts’ were not able to do. Hence, temporary projects were able
to deploy a ‘socially engaged practice’ (Tardiveau and Mallo 2014) well imbricated in
the urban fabric of neighbourhoods and local communities.\(^7\)

Whereas these modes of production that fostered social innovation ranged from co-
production practices—where local authorities, producers and users had a similar level of
implication in the development of projects (Bovaird 2007)—to self-organisation—where
participation was done in a more autonomous manner (Vasudevan 2015; 2017b), the latter
was more common than the former. Despite local authorities in recent years began to
include temporary uses in their city plans—see the aforementioned example of *Pla de
Buits* in Barcelona (Ajuntament Barcelona 2019) or *Esto no es un solar* project in
Zaragoza (Hernández Pezzi 2012)—in most cases, temporary projects tended to end up
delimited and self-managed, only developed with the participation of local
communities, and having very little support from local authorities, especially in regards
to its financial sustainability.

What usually happened was that, even if local authorities allowed for the use of public
sites, they tended to withdraw as much as possible from the development of projects.
Some scholars (e.g. Tonkiss 2013) pointed out that this withdrawal might be problematic,
for it was seen as an opportunity by some local authorities to outsource service delivery.
In times of austerity, temporary uses could be fostered by local authorities as a way to
provide services to local communities—e.g. the development of cultural activities or the
caring, maintenance and repair of infrastructures and spaces. As a result, the responsibility
of delivering these services was eventually done by the same communities they were
meant to be delivered to (Tonkiss 2013). This has been seen by some authors as a way to
coproduce the city (Bovaird 2007); however, when that production and management
relies only on self-production and self-management, it could also be considered a way to
disregard public responsibilities.

Another issue to be mentioned is the question of participants’ legitimacy. Andres (2013)
pointed out that the temporary use of sites might empower specific local groups and
individuals to the detriment of others. That related to the democratic processes through

\(^7\) Note that in the following chapter I will critically discuss the term ‘community’ and this taken-for-granted
relationship to a certain territory or neighbourhood.
which certain actors might access certain spaces. Many times, temporary users had to deal with public authorities, developers or owners and, in consequence, gain positions of power in local governance structures when seeking to manage public assets. In those relationships, temporary users might be bestowed with legitimacy by other powerful actors, and as a result become spokespersons of local communities without the necessary support from the communities themselves. These power positions gained by some temporary users within local decision-making processes and forums lead in some cases to co-option (Andres 2013). That situation in turn, argued Andres (2013), empowered some temporary users while undermining the possibilities of other groups or individuals to participate in such processes.

In close relationship with this rhetoric, the self-production of temporary use has been also tightly associated with the rationale of the so-called ‘self-made’ urbanism (Ring 2013)—also referred to as ‘handmade’ (Rosa and Weiland 2013) or ‘do-it-yourself’ urbanism (Iveson 2013; Finn 2014; Fabian and Samson 2016). Temporary use has been situated in many cases in the middle of socially engaged practices, which also implied the materially engaged practices of designing, producing and building spaces and infrastructures, as well as repairing, maintaining and caring for them. ‘Self-made’ urbanism—also linked with austerity urbanism (Peck 2012) and its makeshift practices (Tonkiss 2013)—often developed its materiality around the practices of recycling, reuse and reutilisation, as ‘second hand’ practices (Ziehl and Obwald 2015); a production of urban spaces based on precariousness and low-budget materiality (Bialski et al. 2015).

In that context, the creation of value was claimed to be non-monetary—similar to what has been discussed earlier in regard to vacancy; namely, temporary projects created other values—i.e. social, cultural and ecological values (Tonkiss 2013). Indeed, Ferreri (2013; 2014) argued that temporary uses should be rather called temporary ‘reuses’, linking temporary practices to a certain way of materialisation. When studied from that perspective, temporary urbanism could be understood from the practices of ‘making’ and its relation to materiality. Hence, its study would focus on the processes of designing, managing and maintaining projects on site; a performative approach that would underline the increasing importance that certain actors would gain in such processes. As a result, those actors included not only (paid) planners, experts and professionals, but also creatives—architects, designers and artists—who acted both as social innovators—i.e.
engaged citizens—and volunteers—many times offering their labour for free. Even if these self-produced interventions were recognised to have benefits—e.g. they could serve as a platform to showcase the professional capacities—they also raised several issues—i.e. the aforementioned problems of outsourcing public services and questions around participant’s legitimacy and possible co-option processes. Still, the capacities deployed amongst local communities are worth studying further, especially in regard to the concept of public participation, something that I will come back to in the following chapter.

Before, let me contextualise my own understanding of what temporarily used urban spaces mean in this research.

**Moving beyond human-centered and structural perspectives**

In the previous discussion, I have briefly presented what the literature on temporary use has considered the possible advantages and disadvantages that the promotion of temporary practices could have in urban contexts. In general, discussions tended to look for ways to learn from specific cases in order to make that knowledge transferable to other cases, being the three debates commented clearly interconnected and overlapped. By recalling these debates, my intention was not to delve into that literature in detail; rather, my idea was to present an overview of current literature for the reader to be situated and for me to be able to articulate an alternative approach for the study of temporary uses. To move beyond, I will draw on an STS sensitivity and discuss three aspects that have been systematically avoided in these previous debates and will help us to shift perspectives: the mutable and multiple nature of actors, the particularities of the performance of practices, and the need to introduce complexity and heterogeneity.

According to current literature, the type of actors involved in temporary urban projects are many and their roles diverse. Temporary practices are performed by sites owners, users, audiences, the public, professionals, performers, community members, public authorities, developers, experts, laypersons, citizens, neighbours; all of them taking part in the development of temporary uses in different ways. In that regard, three things needed to be clarified. First, when identifying an individual with a specific role, there is a tendency to simplify the complexity of relationships. Labelling an individual—i.e. a neighbour, an architect, a developer—does not help; indeed, an expert may be at the same time a user, a developer may also be a politician, or a neighbour, or a performer, or part
of the audience of a concert, depending on the situation in which this specific individual is involved in a specific moment of time. Hence, roles are played according to situations, and individuals’ roles may be fluid and multiple. Secondly, those multiple actors are not only individuals; it should also be acknowledged the role developed by collectives too, which have different capacities to act than individuals. And finally, and here I begin to shift towards a different ontological framework, all these situations are also shaped and mediated by the relationships with yet another kind of actor: non-humans. Relationships with non-humans necessarily shape the role of human actors in each situation. For me and the troupe of STS scholars I align with, non-humans—which have been neglected as agents in human-centred frameworks—also participate in the development of practices due to their capacity to mediate relationships and deploy agency. Hence, to look for what the role of an actor is in temporary projects ‘in general terms’ does not make much sense. On the contrary, what I think is more constructive is to look at specific situations and describe the specific roles deployed there. Hence, my proposal is to look at the particularities of practices.

For me, practices are much more complex, situated, entangled and specific than presented in the previous discussions. Similar to the role of human actors—which may vary from each situation to the following or be multiple within one situation—I suggest that the enactment of each and every practice is particular on its own. In studying temporary uses from different contextual perspectives, scholars have attempted to unravel their complexity. In general, complexity has been acknowledged; however, it has not been dealt with enough depth. In my opinion, this is due to the tendency to look for similarities rather than looking for particularities; scholars have tried to find similar features and traits that could be applied to all cases—or the most cases possible—in order to find responses in the structure of the system. Both favourable and critical positions for and against temporary uses seemed to have failed to move beyond either simplifications or generalisations.

I, hence, could argue that current debates on temporary use are deeply embedded in structural thinking which, in my opinion, does not account for the complexity of these practices; and more importantly, they lack specificity in certain crucial aspects of temporary uses that I am willing to investigate in the present thesis. These aspects concern the research questions I have presented in the introduction: How do particular
communities and collectives emerge? What are the specific political mechanisms and governance devices performed inside these projects and how do they relate to the outside world? How are their everyday practices materialised? And above all, and as an overarching aim, how does the relationship between temporality and materiality ultimately affect the enactment of these practises?

All this said, it should be clear by now that this project diverges from current debates on temporary use from its very point of departure. In turn, the framework needs to shift towards a different ontological stance and epistemological practice. My proposal, in that line, is to draw on STS, and, in particular, on ANT (Callon 2001; Latour 2005b) and New Materialisms (Bennett 2010; Braun and Whatmore 2010). And I propose so because they foreground an analytical sensitivity fluid enough to account for heterogeneity, multiplicity, complexity and hybridity, and rather than proposing closed explanations of the world, they are open to embrace multiple—even supposedly contradictory—descriptions of overlapping worlds.

Among the several displacements STS proposes, I will highlight four that are crucial for this research. First, STS approaches enhance a symmetric analysis where humans and non-humans are considered equal _apriori_ and the agency of matter is acknowledged. Second, they understand the self as a relational entity; namely, actors are what they are in relation to others. Therefore, there is no difference between context and content; hence, the social is performative. Third, they do not use preconceived structural explanations as a point of departure for research; there needs to be an account, an encounter, a situation from where relationships emerge. And finally, they make a significant effort in accounting for hidden and taken-for-granted relationships, which aligns with feminist theories in foregrounding the political dimension of the domestic and the everyday.

All in all, STS proposes an alternative lens to study the ‘social’ (Latour 2005b) that moves forward and beyond the understanding of the social that both structuralist scholars and their counterparts—critical theorists—proposed. In effect, urban literature is now little by little incorporating this sensitivity, and many urban scholars are beginning to engage in STS discussions, as we have seen in the introductory chapter of this thesis. In my view, the debates discussed above regarding temporary uses either presented a (too) positivist vision of the phenomenon of temporary uses or critiqued it from the understanding that
some systemic and structural forces were shaping the relationships that emerged. Contrarily, this research will align with a more fluid manner of analysing the urban trying to avoid such preconceptions.

3. Conceptualising Eventual Urbanism

In this third section of the chapter, I will introduce the concept of ‘eventual urbanism’ which I hope will help us to rethink and reconceptualise the object of study. The intention is, by no means, to propose ‘eventual urbanism’ as an alternative concept to substitute the many other terms already in use, but on the contrary, to add one more different angle to these multiple conceptualisations in order to explore one specific facet of such practices. That is, in this work, ‘eventual urbanism’ is understood as one specific type of temporary urbanism, where ‘eventuality’ particularly refers to a material and provisional condition that emerges around a status that I have identified in Chapter 1 as ‘legal suspension’. Often, due to their particular circumstances, some temporary spaces develop their projects ‘isolated’ from regulation, similar to what Bey (1991) identified as T.A.Z.s (Temporary Autonomous Zones); namely, during their development, general rules that would be in use in the surrounding public realm and public spaces, do not apply in the premises, or alternatively, there are no existing rules that could be applied to their specific circumstances and characteristics. In turn, the users and promoters of those projects usually have to invent, prototype and test specific and bespoke governance mechanisms and regulation—i.e., create their own protocols, rules and norms. In that sense, I will explore ‘eventual urbanism’ as a ‘temporary urbanism’ where projects developed in a ‘legally suspended’ status and ‘legally withdrawn’ from the public space. That provisional and material status, as we will see below, allows for the assessment and reconsideration of basic and, many times, taken-for-granted socio-material relationships.

To conceptualise ‘eventual urbanism’, I will use four words etymologically linked that deploy slightly different meanings: Event, Eventual, Eventually and Eventuality. All of them will allow us to establish a connexion between temporality and materiality in different ways. First, I will use event to refer to practice rather than use, to look for an urbanism built in the concatenation of relationships and happenings. Second, I will refer
to eventual—understood from its Latin meaning—as provisional; practices happen for a certain period of time, and hence, deploy a specific materiality related to such temporality.

Third, using eventually will help me to relate to the actual materialisation of practices—accounting for an urbanism that is ultimately made, built, unbuilt, broken, repaired, reused, designed, managed, repaired, cared for and maintained—in order to counter distant, theoretical and abstract conceptualisations of the urban. And finally, I will use the term eventuality to account for the contradictory situations between the planned and the unexpected day-to-day interactions and encounters, in order to move the focus of our sight to the ordinary frictions and conflicts of the everyday.

**Event: practice rather than use**

In the discussion around ‘temporary use’, the term ‘use’ has been undermined and taken for granted. Use refers not only to an activity, but also to concepts such as access, right and ownership. As argued by Kohoutek and Kamleithner, ‘use is not a quality that is inscribed in a thing, building or space, but rather a social relationship in the triangle of property, possession and right to use’ (2006, 26, original stress). Thus, use can be understood in three different dimensions. First, use refers to the actual activity developed in a certain place during certain time, or more accurately, to the utilisation of a place and its infrastructures to develop such activity; for example, a square might be used to organise a weekly market. Second, use can be understood in relation to utility as a category. Use is the function that can be developed in a premises. This dimension refers to the programmatic characteristics of a space usually considered in design processes—including urban design. For example, that same square might be programmed, designed and thought to welcome weekly markets—e.g. there is enough specific space for the stalls and for the parking of delivery vans. And finally, use can be understood as a right according to rules and norms. In this sense, use is the capacity to access the usufruct of a property or a land. For instance, thinking of the same square, planning regulations could allow—or not—the development of the weekly market. In relation to these two latter meanings, use is linked to the ability to do something that is planned and/or legal. Thus, in order to acquire the legal capacity to develop an activity in a place, these conditions of use—namely, the functional planned adequacy and the right to access the usufruct of the space—have to be complied with.
In practice, the conditions that enable activities to happen are the overlay of many different rules, norms and agreements, which are not only related to legal requirements, but also to specific conditions and arrangements agreed among different parties—i.e. verbal agreements or ethical and tacit social norms. For example, when a temporary lease of a site is agreed, certain agreements, which in some cases are contractual, bind tenants, owners and users. Those agreements require the assumption of responsibilities. This fact results many times in disputes and conflicts between those who hold responsibilities and those who don’t—or those who, under different agreements, hold conflicting responsibilities. Here I refer, for example, to cases in which the management is private, but the ownership of land is public and hence, should be publicly accessible. The meaning of use, in this sense, is too narrow for my objective, for it is a term that does not account for the complexity of actual temporary practices. Agreements, rules and norms are only one part of the social relationships among different social actors unfolding from specific situations. Use, in my understanding, does not entirely cover the scope of those social relationship, as it does not reflect the relationships among actors from a symmetric point of view. Indeed, the term ‘use’ subordinates to some extent certain actors—non-humans—against others—humans.

In turn, I propose to use the term event, which is broader in scope, less bound to the legal restrictions or planned conditions, and refers more to the specific performance of practices. For me, events will be understood as the temporary material arrangements through which eventual urbanism happens. An event, in my understanding, is a situation, an encounter or a gathering between several actors that by the mere act of meeting sparks a social relationship previously non-existing. A practice is made of a multiplicity of events that one after the other reproduce the practice. Each enactment of a practice is an event. In addition, events incorporate a symmetric understanding of relationships. In those relationships—using STS terminology—the active participation of any actor makes it a ‘mediator’ (Latour 2005b). Being a mediator means being significant and meaningful within the relationship; namely, that its participation is necessary for the constitution of that relationship. Hence, events are constituted by social relationships in which all actors are mediators.
Chapter 2 _ Eventual Urbanism

**Eventual: provisional and material**

In theory and practice, temporality has been often directly opposed to permanency, situating temporary practices directly associated with a timeframe. Temporary uses have been considered time-gap fillers, that is, provisional stages between a previous use and a secure and stable future status. Some authors (i.e. Arlt 2006) referred to such stages more accurately as ‘interim’ or ‘meanwhile’, stressing the importance of their uncertainty compared to a ‘permanent’ future. This opposition between temporality and permanency has been repeatedly taken into account in practice, and in general, directly linked with issues of land vacancy and ownership, as we have seen above. However, as Haydn and Temel suggested, the temporary is not a concept which only refers to the ‘actual duration of time’ (2006, 17). It also implies processes, rhythms, recurrence, reiterations, repetitions, concatenations; namely, temporality entails a certain and specific articulation of and between practices.

The debate for and against such a vision of the temporary showed conflicting views. Critics of the mere time-gap filler solution advocated that temporary practices should be seen as a first step for longer processes, in which the ‘pioneer’ temporary practices are the enablers of the implementation of a long-term vision (SenStadt 2007); in other words, they considered that temporary projects should work as prototypes for the future. Corsín Jiménez (2013) proposed the introduction of the prototype culture in regard of collaborative and experimental urban practices; however, he argued that the prototype should serve as a way of producing a city in ‘beta’, a never-ending process that recurrently rethinks the city as a prototype; a prototype not for a static future, but which always remains being a prototype, and hence, is open to constant reconfiguration. In this same line, Spiegl and Teckert also underlined the idea that temporality should not be thought as a ‘mere prototype of a long-term utilisation’, because by doing so temporality ‘tends to counteract temporality itself’ (2006, 103). As they put it, ‘the political expression of this negative conception of temporality takes the form of excluding the very desires that are justified only as a passing phenomenon.’ (Spiegl and Teckert 2006, 103). In other words, the temporary should remain temporary.

There are other authors that have discussed the idea of permanency, rather than the idea of temporality. Bishop and Williams (2012), for example, referred to solidification in
relation to permanency. Interestingly, they explored materiality in that regard. According to them, before planning conservation policies were introduced in the 20th century, constructions and buildings in the city were not considered to be permanent structures—with the exception of public buildings such as churches and state buildings (Bishop and Williams 2012). Buildings were built to last as much as possible, but also were open to be refurbished, changed, adapted, expanded or even demolished and rebuilt if necessary. The city was considered to be a changing urban fabric that was constantly being adapted to new circumstances. Despite this fact, the idea of solidification became embedded in cities from the introduction of conservation policies in planning systems in the early 20th century (Bishop and Williams 2012). Subsequently, the preservation of history and the solid conception of materiality drove planning towards understanding permanency as a goal.

My proposal to understand these practices, thus, moves beyond this temporary-permanent opposition, shifts paths and looks instead to the materiality of projects and practices. If temporariness is understood as a quality referring to an intention to implement a project, then its material, spatial and physical qualities would directly be linked with temporality. A project which initially will not last long would deploy a different materiality than other which is meant to last longer. Thus, the way in which a temporary project would be materialised would focus, for example, on easy ways of assembling and dismantling, on placing things over the ground rather than excavating it, on the use of non-manufactured materials, on the capacity of things to be moved and be transported elsewhere, on the capacity of materials and details to deliver (or not necessarily) waterproof solutions, and so on. This inevitably implies that the intended temporariness of projects gives them certain distinctive material qualities and aesthetic values. In turn, the question is what those qualities and values are.

Hence, the temporary refers to certain qualities of the projects. According to Haydn and Temel (2006), the temporary should not only be associated with a limited span of time, but to the qualities of uses, projects and places that enable certain characteristics to emerge. This emergence would not happen if they were conceived as permanent. It is then the perception of the term that fosters certain situations to emerge. Ronneberger (2006) also referred to the temporary as a condition related to qualities such as spontaneity, flexibility, adaptability or informality. These qualities of the temporary are reflected in
the way objects and places are designed, produced and manufactured: namely, materialised. In consequence, the temporary defines the way in which practices are developed, and temporary practices foster certain ways of materialising things over others. In a similar line, Bishop and Williams (2012) suggested that the importance of temporality comes from its intention; namely, it is not a matter of span of time, but of the intention of being framed in such span of time. Hence, it is not important how long the project would stay; rather, what is important is that there is an understanding that agrees on certain longevity. This intended longevity deploys a specific materiality.

In my opinion, practices studied here should neither be considered permanent nor just temporary. Rather, they should be looked from the way in which materiality is deployed, and it should be discussed whether that materiality is linked to the understanding of certain temporality. Indeed, temporary and permanent should not be considered opposite terms. That is why I would introduce an alternative term, eventual. For me, eventual accounts for a ‘permanent state of temporariness’, which is stable by changing; it accounts for a ‘provisional materiality’, which will not last forever, and hence, will need to be taken into account, reconfigured, maintained, repaired and cared for. Eventual introduces the materiality of practices, and the design and management solutions linked to the qualities and conditions of projects related to an intended timeframe. Eventual is a status of possibility, actually happening and at the same time ephemeral and transient in its essence. It is indeed this capacity to remain in a permanent state of indeterminacy that allows the emergence of distinct and specific practices.

**Eventually: actually materialised**

Moving forward, I also propose to study practices not only through their materiality, but also through their processes of materialisation. The idea is to look for the actual materialisation of practices and the capacity of things to mediate such materialisation. In doing so, I understand agency as a collective endeavour where humans and non-humans participate. This does not mean arguing that things have agency in themselves, but that they—as part as complex assemblages—have the capacity to ‘translate’ relations (Callon 1986a; Law 2006) and ‘mediate’ among entities (Law 1992). As Bennett put it (2010), we should not to look for individual agency of entities but for the agency of collectives, the agency of assemblages.
The discussion of the agency of things and materials is long, especially in Material Culture Studies, and have been particularly developed by scholars drawing on New Materialisms (Coole and Frost 2010; Daston 2004; Bennett 2010; Braun and Whatmore 2010) among other frameworks. For Tilley (2007), the ‘agentic capacities’ of things referred by Bennett (2010) consisted in the affordances deployed by things and objects to change, enable or constrain behaviours. The difference between affordances and behaviours argued by Tilley, however, did not account for the symmetric understanding of the social that I am looking for here. Ingold (2007), in response to Tilley, considered that things do not act back; he said that things are just in a flux of events that is processual and relational, and the change occurs as the life of materials and its relationship with others eventually happens. Indeed, Ingold proposed an ontology which accounted for a world of materials, rather than a material world—different from the human world or the natural world. Ingold’s world of materials accounted for everything to be material first; hence, humans were also considered materials. This vision of the world, for me goes far beyond my intentions. I reckon than even if looking for a symmetrical understanding of the world, humans and non-humans have different roles within relationships and the constitution of assemblages. Still, what I will take from Ingold’s ontological understanding is the processual and relational perspective. For the understanding of agency, I will alternatively draw on Marres’ approach (2012a) which claims that collectives embody multiple modes of engagement.

In material terms, things are temporary; things stay and change at the same time. Things stay through the relationship between meaningfulness and materiality (Daston 2004). For Daston, things were ‘simultaneously meaningful and material’ (2004, 16). They were stable through meaning; but they also changed. For Braun and Whatmore, things were ‘eventful’ (2010); and Marres added that things were not just active participants in relations rather than inert, but they also ‘carry a margin of indeterminacy’ (2012a, xxi). For her, things were not only spatial and discursive, they also ‘temporalize’ (Marres 2010). Hence, the performance of things in temporary uses becomes crucial to understand how practices unfold.

Practices materialise and are materialised in certain things, certain spaces, certain displays and certain events. Those realisations are, as we have seen, eventual, material and discursive. They last for a certain period of time due to specific material conditions; they
are used during certain period of time through the specific deployment of social relations; and they are meaningful and discursive through certain aesthetic and political values. Values may render relevant whenever they are disruptive, but also when they are affective. Rancière (2010), for instance, underlined this disruptive condition by linking aesthetics and politics as a way to develop dissent. In the specific context of temporary uses, things acquire political relevance by generating disruption. But they also acquire political relevance when they are affective (Knox 2017), for things become visible and need to be taken care of.

In this dissertation, *eventually* refers to that actual materialisation of practices. By eventually happening, practices deploy certain materiality: something that previously did not exist and eventually emerged.

**Eventuality: the unexpected and the everyday**

To finish this attempt to explain my conceptual approach to ‘eventual urbanism’, I will now introduce the concept of *eventuality*. Eventuality accounts for contradictions and exclusions, rather than for commonalities and inclusions. Eventual urbanism constantly deals with the unplanned: all those events and happenings that are unexpected, deployed by actors not taken into account, enacted in situations not even considered beforehand. In that line, I would follow Mouffe (2005) and argue that eventuality refers to ‘otherness’ as a constitutive condition of practices.

A social relationship can be conflictual and transgress norms; in fact, social ‘contracts’ are often transgressed. Events—i.e. the aforementioned situations in which social relationships are sparked in temporary material arrangements—can also be unexpected and conflictual. Many urban practices confront normative relationships by introducing activities in places that are neither legal nor planned for the spaces in which they are developed. Events can be insurgent, disruptive, illegal or unplanned in spaces where access have not been granted (Hou 2010; Franck and Stevens 2007; Oswalt, Misselwitz, and Overmeyer 2007; Vasudevan 2017b; Pena and Scott 2013). Indeed, it is impossible to control and predict how the city would be used. Eventualities are the unplanned events, the unintended interaction, the accidents, the resistances. But also, the things that happen in the everyday, the very specific situations that cannot be controlled but are not
necessarily problematic, things that happen due to weather conditions, the traffic or a phone call.

I think at this point, it is not difficult to understand why STS, and in particular ANT and New Materialisms, have been chosen to support this conceptualisation of eventual urbanism. These theoretical stances are in line with post-modern, post-structural and post-instrumental accounts of reality, in which negation is the driving force: negation not understood as a closing unconstructive statement but as proposition for rethinking the complexity of relationships which opens new dimensions of knowledge and thought; negation understood in opposition to closed established set of rules, assumptions and apriorisms. As Latour (2005b) stated in his methodological approach to the study of the social, ANT research begins by denying or doubting about things that cannot be accounted for—i.e. abstract causes. Negation looks for the effects rather than the causes. Negation is, hence, used to deploy a non-finalist, fluid and processual proposal responsive to change. In being attentive to conflicts, unexpected situations and exclusions, which are evidenced once they eventually happen, I will be looking for the particularities of everyday practices.

4. Concluding remarks

The emergence of temporarily used urban sites has been claimed to be a trend of contemporary urban practices. The development of temporary practices has been praised in many different discourses, being considered as a constitutive part of an efficient, democratic and inclusive alternative urban model; a model which endorsed the participation of citizens in the construction of their city, the efficient use of vacant land and the promotion of urban culture. Discourses around efficiency and productivity, creative classes and social innovation converged in temporary practices. The many actors involved in the production and reproduction of such approaches have tended to agree that the development of temporary urban practices might be a win-win solution for everyone. Temporary practices have been understood as a ‘magical solution’ (Ferreri 2015), for they managed to merge positions that seemed to be irreconcilable. Yet, as it has been shown, the complexity and heterogeneity of such practices proved the endeavour of that
convergence, at least, challenging. Temporary practices are usually self-referenced and linked to very specific local issues and contexts. In many instances, temporary practices deploy specific solutions but also problematic issues—i.e. issues in regard to co-option, timeframes or legitimacy, among others—difficult to grasp when drawing on overarching understandings and generalisations. Thus, the exploration and description of practices, in my view, should be specific.

To move forward, I propose an alternative theoretical framework to study the urban phenomenon of temporary uses which draws on STS more broadly, and in particular in ANT and New Materialisms. In doing so, three things are foregrounded: the multiplicity and mutability of actors that include non-humans as agents; the relational and performative nature of such practices; and the complexity and heterogeneity of specific social relationships.

In considering that specificity, I have focussed on the relationship between time and materiality to introduce the concept of ‘eventual urbanism’, a particular type of ‘temporary urbanism’ that accounts for projects that are provisional and material and developed under a status that I have identified as ‘legal suspension’. Eventual urbanism refers to four things. First, I argue that it is more useful to look at practices rather than looking at use. This distinction especially underlines the importance of a symmetric understanding of the social in which all types of actors are considered active participants in social relationships. Second, rather than using ‘temporary’ as the adjective to specify the type of practices I am studying, I alternatively propose the term eventual, because it accounts not only for the temporary dimension of practices but also for the material one. Third, I claim that looking at the processes of materialisation of practices should take into account the examination of the processual and relational nature of things and their agentic capacities to understand the agency of collectives. Finally, eventual practices also include the unexpected situations that emerge from everyday life. In sum, eventual urbanism entails understanding practices as a multiplicity of related events, eventual as provisional and material, eventually as the actual materialisation of practices, and eventualities as the issues and unexpected contradictions of the everyday life of the urban.
Chapter 3 _
An STS Perspective on Public Participation

1. Eventually public

In the previous chapter I have discussed temporary practices developed in urban sites and shown various perspectives from which such projects have been studied. I have introduced some elements of an STS sensitivity and also proposed a conceptual framework to think about temporary practices using the concept of ‘eventual urbanism’, which accounted for the relationship between temporality and materiality in temporary used urban sites. In this chapter I will discuss the public dimension of such practices and its relevance, and I will frame my enquiry in relation to ‘eventual publics’, one distinct and specific enactment of ‘eventual urbanism’ practices. The idea behind this chapter is to question how public participation is enacted in temporarily used spaces, in order to develop a constructive debate that sets up the baseline for the empirical research presented in the rest of the thesis. In particular, the focus on public participation stems from one specific characteristic of the case that will be studied below that is widely shared with many other temporary practices: the site is a publicly own site and it is meant to be enjoyed by and with the general public. To do so, the neighbours that manage the space have a temporary and bespoke legal agreement with the municipality to let people access the place for free; namely, the site should be publicly accessible, and the practices developed there enacted and governed according to that openness. In consequence, neighbours and users not only go and use the site, but also make it. Accordingly, what interests me here is how that ‘making-the-site-public’ is enacted.

In this chapter I will present two discussions. The first one will explore public participation, and the second one will expand on three specific aspects of it: community, conflict and care. In order to understand what public participation is, the first discussion will begin by dealing with the concept of ‘participation’ and then will move on to examine the concept of ‘publics’. To do that, I will begin with a premise: what if, rather than thinking about participation as an instrument of urban planning and design, we consider it a socio-material performative phenomenon; in other words, what if, rather than trying
to design, organize, devise or implement participation, we understand it as something that already happens in everyday urban ordinary practices. Once the concept of participation is clear, I will move on to discuss its public dimension. Two perspectives will be presented, public as a common thing, or public as a specific and situated collective. In that later sense, ‘public’ will not be understood only as the representation of the state, nor the common worlds we all share. Rather, what a ‘public’ is will be understood from its Deweyian definition; that is, as the set of social actors affected by an issue and gathered around it to solve it (Dewey 1927). Following Marres’ socio-material perspective (2012a), I will include non-humans among those actors, and will consider publics as issue-driven. Finally, in expanding the Deweyian definition of publics, three questions will be explored in more depth, in order to set the basic theoretical line for our later discussion. These three questions are directly linked with the three sub-questions of the thesis: How are communities formed, and around what common characteristics? How is conflict overcome? And how are the invisible practices of care enacted?

2. Public Participation

In this section I will study two things: what participation means and how I understand its public dimension. In the first part, I will begin by reviewing literature on participation in the realm of urban studies and urban planning, which often understood it an instrument of planning. Then, drawing mainly on Marres’ work (Marres 2005a; 2005b; 2007; 2010; 2011; 2012b; Marres and Lezaun 2011; Lezaun, Marres, and Tironi 2017), I will propose a shift of focus that will imply two moves: first, the use of the concept of ‘material participation’ which will include non-humans as agents of participation, and second, the consideration of participation as a performative phenomenon. In the second part, I will consider the question of publicness and discuss two different conceptualisations of the word ‘public’: one that accounts for the things that are public—using public as an adjective—that is, those things that are commonly shared by everyone, and hence, supposedly accessible to all; and another conceptualisation that understands publics from early pragmatists political theorisation, that is, a public is a political group that joins together to solve a problem. In comparing the two I will coin the concept of ‘eventual publics’ that relates to a condition of publicness more ephemeral than static.
From instrumental to material and performative participation

Instrumental and normative participation

The concept of participation was introduced in political theory during the Progressive Era (1890-1920), a time of great ‘experimentation in US cities with participatory politics in education and grassroots debates’ (Amin and Thrift 2002, 133). In the 1960s’, public participation was reclaimed by citizens as a mechanism to develop democratic alternatives to counterbalance the weight of technocratic power. In 1962, the principles of participatory democracy were presented in the ‘Port Huron Statement’ (J. Miller and Miller 1987) opening the debate of the implications of direct citizen participation in the realm of political practice. Since then, from many different realms—including urban planning and urban policy making—participation has been claimed to be a political mechanism that might help coping with lack of democracy, generating open and accessible arenas for discussion, and fostering citizens’ engagement of all kinds (e.g. Pateman 1970; Cohen and Uphoff 1980; White 1996).

In urban planning, the concept of citizen participation was initially developed by Sherry Arnstein (1969) through her ladder of participation. In Arnstein’s ladder, eight different theoretical levels of citizen participation were defined confronting citizen power with state power. These eight levels ranged from full citizens’ empowerment to absolute state control, accounting for different modes of engagement between citizens and public institutions in decision-making processes. From more to less citizen engagement, the eight levels were: Citizen Control, Delegated Power, Partnership, Placation, Consultation, Information, Therapy and Manipulation. In those first conceptualisations of participation, the market was not considered to be a force affecting engagement; the debate was between individuals and the state.

In recent years, a ‘participatory turn’ has been argued to re-emerge in urban planning and urban design. As Krivý and Kaminer claimed, ‘[i]n the past decade, a ‘participatory culture’ has evolved and expanded dramatically, advocating participation as a radical form of direct democracy and demanding its implementation outside the traditional territory of institutional politics’ (2014, 1). Such demands were made, they argue, in order to claim the necessary involvement of citizens in the making of their own urban
environments. From participatory budgets to neighbourhood plans or consultation processes, participation has been fostered in multiple municipal agendas all around the world. In many cases, Arnstein’s ideal categorisation of participation informed both theory and practice, and stubbornly reproduced the confrontation of two types of actors, citizens and public institutions, which has also been equated with the laypersons-experts dichotomy—leaving again the market outside the equation. That confrontation and clear-cut division into these two stable categories has often hindered any possibility of imagining a hybridity of forums (Callon, Lascoumes, and Barthe 2009b) and considering the heterogeneity of actors.

In that sense, Healey’s work on Collaborative Planning (1997) was crucial to propose a change in the basis of how different tools and mechanisms would enable the involvement of multiple stakeholders—not only two—in decision-making processes. As she put it, ‘collaborative planning is a plea for the importance of understanding complexity and diversity’ (Healey 2003, 117). Based on Habermasian ideas, Healey proposed a planning system built on deliberative democracy, process and consensus. Whereas the consensual side of collaborative planning had its shortcomings—as will be discuss later in this chapter—Healey’s proposal should be praised for its capacity to overcome the laypersons-experts dichotomy. She proposed a way of delivering planning which incorporated different actors and stakeholders’ visions in processes understanding planning as a collective collaborative endeavour. Including different stakeholders and actors enriched the analysis and thus the outcomes of participatory processes were supposedly more attuned to everybody’s desires—later we will also see that such an assumption was problematic and paradoxical thought.

However, to deal with such complexity, academic debates in urban planning have widely centred their attention on the instrumental and normative dimensions of participation (Healey 2006; Forester 1999; Innes and Booher 2000); that is, planning scholars have looked at the different modes of engagement that were implemented and how they worked. They looked at ways to analyse participatory tools to understand them and then foster specific participation mechanisms in order to propose alternatives to those contemporary proposals that had ultimately failed in delivering their outcomes (Innes and Booher 2000). In turn, whereas practitioners have mainly focussed on how to deliver, translate or use citizen engagement to produce actual outcomes—e.g. new public spaces
and facilities, urban development plans, local economic investment, regeneration—scholars have researched and studied the mechanisms, norms, instruments and tools that allowed and fostered the engagement of citizens in decision-making processes (e.g. Bryson et al. 2013; Bovaird 2007)—such as participatory budgets, surveys, community meetings or focus groups. Following that effort, some Urban STS scholars have also studied such mechanisms in order to investigate planning processes, focussing on its materiality (Rydin and Natarajan 2016), or its political epistemology (Lezaun 2007). In understanding those mechanisms, they would be able to identify their limitations and develop alternative instruments that could remediate past failures.

In general, most literature on participation has highlighted its positive impacts and benefits when included in different development and decision-making processes, yet some academic positions have questioned that positiveness. For instance, the work on the tyranny of participation (Cooke and Kothari 2001; Pollock and Sharp 2012) underlined some negative and unexpected consequences of the implementation of participation. For example, participation in some cases had to deal with the problem of underrepresentation of specific communities, incapable of accessing or being represented in decision-making process—similar to what has been discussed in temporary uses in the previous chapter. Also, participation has been criticised as a buzz word; a tick box included in political programmes to cover the necessary quota of engagement with no real impact on actual outcomes. In addition, Miessen (2011) claimed that participation did not necessarily come without problems and highlighted the importance of taking conflict into consideration when developing processes of participation—I will come back to this point later too.

According to its proponents, the problem of democracy and representation in participation could be reduced to the simple—yet difficult to answer—question of ‘who participates?’ From a purely theoretical perspective the ideal of participation entails full participation—namely, everyone should participate. Jenkins and Carpetier in conversation (2013) questioned to what extent full participation would be achievable or even desirable. For Pateman, full participation would be ‘the equal power position of all actors in a decision-making process’ (1970, quoted in Jenkins and Carpentier 2013, 267). Put like this, both agreed that such situation would only be achievable in radical moments of equity. They argued that the only spaces in which such a moment could occur would be in what Bey (1991) defined as Temporary Autonomous Zones. In such places, radically segregated
from an external or superior political authority, full participation could be gained. Nevertheless, that situation would only happen during a certain period of time. As soon as the minimum connection to the world would be resumed, full participation would be no longer possible.

Often, to cope with such difficulty in planning and policy making, the goal in participatory processes has been maximising participation or achieving ‘maximum feasible participation’ (Sandercock 2005, my stress) rather than seeking full participation. That, however, has been a controversial goal, for it assumed that exclusion was necessary to a certain extent. Participation as an instrument depends on political decisions to be implemented, and such decisions—always specific and situated in a political context—could frame ‘maximum feasibility’ in vague ideological and economic terms. What is feasible is what can ‘be done’, and that depends, for example, on electoral cycles, local budgetary chapters, and so on. Hence, that scope of feasibility remains in the realm of politics. Still, maximising participation might entail in some situations an inclusion of diversity, which somehow could counter the exclusion of certain actors—for they might find ways to be represented.

In that line, the way of seeking democratic participation, rather than full participation, would be to look for heterogeneity. And here is where representation and mediation need to be introduced. Participation is not enacted in equal terms by different actors but in heterogeneous, multiple and complex terms. All actors may be considered, but not all from the same point of view; they should be considered in accordance to their capacities, capabilities and interests. Hence, equity does not mean to participate on equal terms, but to participate on actors’ own terms. In fact, understanding heterogeneity and multiplicity is to introduce the politics of difference (Young 1990) in participation.

Debates on public participation are still on-going and will be for a long time. My feeling is that they do not seem to get out of that loop of proposition and critique which recurrently revolts around the ‘who participates?’ question; namely, a basic question of legitimacy and representation in democracy that seeks full participation, but is limited to the ‘maximum feasibility’ principle—however such ‘feasibility’ is framed in each setting.

To overcome such stagnation, my research proposal displacement the focus of attention and proposes instead two questions: ‘what participates?’ and ‘how is participation enacted?’.
The first one refers to the entities and actors involved in participation and aligns with a project that seeks to incorporate more actors in democratic processes—i.e. in line with what Latour and Weibel (2005) called ‘making things public.’ The second question refers to the actual way in which participation unfolds; that is, participation understood as a ‘performativ[e] phenomenon’ (Marres 2012a). I contend both questions still relate to democratic issues; nevertheless, they move beyond human-centred perspectives and instrumental understandings of participation.

Against the understanding of participation presented above, I claim that eventual urbanism practices develop a distinct mode of engagement, one that is processual and relates to the actual making of the city. In consequence, eventual urbanism integrates direct participatory involvement that engages with things, builds its own infrastructures, and produces the city as participation happens.

**Material participation**

As we have already seen, participation has been perceived as a mode of engagement that could ‘solve’ the problems of democratisation of planning; I mean, it has been claimed to be an inclusive mechanism that by means of incorporating a wide range of positions would be able to present and represent (almost) all stakeholders affected and involved in planning processes. Indeed, the problems and issues that participation deals with could be equated with the ones of democracy; namely, the difficulty, even impossibility, of merging two seemingly irreconcilable rights: freedom and equity (Mouffe 2005). For Sandercock (2005), debates on the democratisation of planning dealt with two main concerns: the first one was the ‘crisis of democracy itself in its representative version’ (2005, 437); the second concerns ‘the crisis of expert knowledge’ (2005, 437), which, on one hand, referred to the content, outcomes and learning processes that resulted from the inclusion/exclusion of experts/laypersons, and on the other hand, to experts/laypersons themselves and the aforementioned stubborn categorisation of actors involved. According to Sandercock (2005), planning theory and practice found in public participation and direct citizen involvement in decision-making a possible answer to those crises.

In exploring the former concern—representative democracy—I agree that participation might be a way to solve that crisis; the more actors involved the better. However, my position seeks to incorporate socio-material participation in the equation, and that
incorporation indeed challenges the whole understanding of democracy itself, for it entails considering what Marres called ‘the project of extension of democracy’ (Marres 2012a, 131). In extending democracy, she claimed, all actors were considered to be involved and affected by issues, which meant non-humans had to be included too. That project, Marres argued, was paradoxical. On the one hand, the inclusion of non-humans extended democracy because it considered all entities as social entities. Including non-humans was a ‘further “democratisation” of democracy’ (Marres 2012a, 131); more entities were taken into account and the division between nature and society was overcome. However, on the other hand, from a liberal perspective that move also reduced democracy in terms of ‘autonomy and self-determination’ of humans (Marres 2012a, 131). Individuality was challenged because actors—both humans and non-humans—did not act independently—namely, entities were relational. In fact, that paradox could be argued to be linked with the ‘democratic paradox’ delineated by Mouffe (2005). In her understanding, representative democracy built on the impossibility of delivering both equity and freedom, as both concepts were mutually exclusionary.

To overcome that paradox, what Marres proposed with her project was to reframe what a political body was; namely, rather than looking at individuals, we should be looking at associations and relationships. What constitutes an individual entity is the social relationships in which it is embedded. In a way, including things, objects and materials in democracy entails understanding that political bodies are not individual entities alone—i.e. isolated from the rest of the world and hence recognised with autonomy; political bodies are those same entities and all the other social entities that constitute them and are related to them. Thus, in this research, political bodies—those who play a role in democracy, participation and beyond—are not isolated units with autonomous capacity of action, but collectives—socio-material collectives—which are affected by the very actors they are constituted by and affect one another through associations. Taking into account non-humans moves the discussion of democracy towards the performance of relationships where entities represent, mediate, translate and ultimately, constitute hybrid collectives between a multiplicity of things and individuals.

The question is then how these collectives participate in democracy—how they emerge, and how they deploy, mobilise and generate democratic relationships; that is, how they promote equity and freedom. Importantly, collectives are specific and situated actor-
networks that emerge and disappear around relationships. Hence, the agency of collectives is neither stable nor unitary, it is deployed each and every time a collective emerges. Thus, following Marres, the aim is to understand the ‘particular division of roles among the entities involved—things, people, issues, settings, technologies, institutions and so on’ (2012a, 2). Collectives embody multiple modes of engagement; each and every entity involved has a specific role each and every time the collective emerges. Collectives mutate and what is more important for us, collectives are ephemeral. So, in the present research, when I refer to an object, a person, or a plant, I will be considering all the entities involved in the practice accounted for in that precise moment. Actors, as Mol (2002) would suggest, are ‘multiple’ depending on the specific situation and set of actors they relate to. In each case, a specific actor might mutate due to the changing relationships of the practice involved.

**Participation as a performative phenomenon**

The second question proposed to displace my enquiry on participation towards the realm of STS is ‘how is participation enacted?’. In contrast to the instrumental understanding of participation, many fields have looked at participation from a performative perspective: participatory culture (Jenkins 2006); participatory art (Bourriaud 2002); participatory design (Sanders 2003); and more recently studies in participation in digital media and culture (Fish et al. 2011; Jenkins, Ford, and Green 2013), among others. Rather than exploring the design of the tools and mechanisms to make participation more efficient, they understood participation as a relational and processual happening; that is, participation was something that was produced in its very enactment. In consequence, they studied how participation was actually deployed and what was the role of things, devices and mechanisms in that process. In participatory art, for example, the artwork was produced by the public. When studying participatory art during the 90’s, Bourriard (2002) reflected on a series of artists and critics that produced a number of pieces that engaged with the public through artworks. In those pieces, the artwork acted as a mediator between the artist and its audience, and the pieces emerged whenever that mediation took place. Also, in industrial design, participation entailed not only the involvement of users as informants in the process of design, but also their implication in the process of production. For instance, Sanders (2003) showed how there was a step in the process of design that included methods that helped to understand users’ minds by involving them...
in making things. The introduction of ‘make tools’—objects, models and collages made by potential users—allowed an exploration of how users would ultimately use and understand products, becoming these ‘make tools’ mediators of processes of design. In this sense, from a material perspective, materials mediated participatory processes.

In that regard, Marres (Marres and Lezaun 2011; 2012b) specifically looked at the role of materials and devices in participatory processes too. For her, materials and devices had the capacity to be enablers of the ‘unfolding of spaces of participation’ (Marres 2012b, 27). Materials and devices mediate participation. But they are not only mediators; in my understanding, materials produced through processes of participation also represent its ‘embodied knowledge’; they are at the same time the means of participation and its outcomes. Interestingly, the performative dimension of participation enables the merging of both means and outcomes. Then, participation is not anymore about ‘delivering through’ certain means but about ‘making things along and with’ certain things. In a way, the process is also the outcome, and the means represent the embodied knowledge of that process.

So, in this research, participation is understood as a performative phenomenon. That means that participatory practices are the ones that deploy an active, fluid and situated way of making places and sites, more ‘hands-on’ so to say. In these practices, the producers of space—who are also its users—build artefacts and infrastructures and organise their own events. Thus, participation is not the production and design of strategies to implement future stable plans where citizens only give their opinion, state their position or are informed. Instead, participation is a socio-material relation between professionals, laypersons, users, things and spaces which is eventually materialised in everyday ordinary relationships.

In this sense, I will be taking into consideration what Marres has called ‘material participation’ (Marres 2012a), which allows stepping forward in three directions. First, it allows consideration of broader issues on democracy beyond a human centred perspective, as we have seen; second, it helps to rethink participation as an empirical field of experimentation; and third, it allows understanding the heterogeneity of the public and exploring how different and multiple publics—in plural—are deployed. Indeed, among all the possible modes of engagement, Marres and Lezaun identified participation as a
‘distinct mode of performing the public’ (2011). In what follows, the discussion continues to question what the public dimension of participation is, and how material participation provides such a ‘distinct mode of performing the public’ in public space.

**The space of eventual publics**

Now that my conceptualization of participation is clearer, I should clarify how the public dimension of participation is defined in this research. The clarification is necessary because two different ways of understanding ‘public’ will be taken into account: (1) ideas around the formation of ‘material publics’ and (2) ideas around ‘public space’. Hence, when using the word ‘public’ in this dissertation, I will be referring to two different and differentiated things. The easiest way to differentiate them will be observing its grammatical function. When ‘public’ is used as an adjective, the word will complement a noun, as in public space, public participation or public concern. In those cases, public will be understood from its usual and more generalized meaning: that is, it will refer to a quality opposed to private—i.e. something public is something for/of everybody, something ‘commonly’ owned and shared. On the other hand, when used as a noun—a ‘public’ or ‘publics’ in plural—I will refer to the specific use given by early pragmatists and its contemporary interpretation by STS scholarly; namely, a public is group of actors organised around a problem to address it. In other words, ‘public’ as an adjective qualifies something in order to understand it as commonly owned by a collective, whereas ‘a public’ as a noun refers to a performative and specific temporary enactment of a relationship among actors. In the following section, to build the argument of my enquiry, I will first discuss public as a noun, then move on to consider the implication of using public as an adjective, and finally propose how to relate both concepts.

*The early pragmatist approach and its reinterpretation by STS*

According to Marres and Rogers, a Deweyian public is a ‘set of actors jointly affected by a problem [...] [who] organize into a public, so as to assure that the problem is addressed’ (2004, 8). Indeed, the original definition that Dewey gave was:

> ‘The public consists of all those who are affected by the indirect consequences of human action, to such an extent that it is deemed necessary to have those consequences systematically cared for.’ (Dewey 1927, 45)
For pragmatists, a public was a broad group of people affected by a problem that needed to be cared for. A public was a collective that was constituted by multiple actors temporarily gathered around an issue that deployed networks of affection until the issue at stake was solved, moment when the public dissolved and disappeared. A public was a democratic mechanism that was triggered when a problem could not be solved by other means; when a public emerged, a new ‘community’ was formed. A public referred to a collective that emerged around an issue, which then implied that publics could be multiple, like issues. For me, when using the concept of the public, the task is, hence, to consider three questions: to define what we mean by actors, what we mean by ‘being affected’, and what we mean by ‘issue’.

The question of actors can be answered straight-forwardly if we consider a socio-technical perspective: in a socio-material public, an actor is any entity that is affected by the issue or mediates the relationship of other actors with the issue at stake, which includes both humans and non-humans. Note that this understanding is how contemporary STS scholarly interprets the original pragmatist definition. The inclusion of non-humans in the definition of publics radically changes the original concept from a ‘group of people’ to a ‘set of actors’. Interestingly, including non-human actors has been useful to debunk rigid understandings of publicness, especially those which demarcated a clear division between public and private realms. Importantly, STS and feminist sensitivities (Marres 2012a; Puig de la Bellacasa 2011) have contributed to the endeavour of debunking those understandings by extending ‘networks of affection’ into domestic and intimate realms. The home, the office or the spaces of leisure, no longer pertain to the secluded domain of the private (Marres and Lezaun 2011). Although certain material actors could be located inside private realms, as their networks of affection extended beyond those locations and related to issues that should be publicly addressed, they were included in publics. Thus, by understanding actors from a wider perspective, the original pragmatist definition of publics understood from a socio-technical approach allows previously hidden actors and places to be made politically relevant, because not only humans but also non-humans are affected by issues.

The following question to be considered is what it means to ‘be affected’. Actors are affected by issues and included in publics. Such affection refers to ways in which actors are somehow moved, displaced or changed by the fact that an issue emerges. Such
movement, displacement or change could be understood in socio-technical approaches as a ‘mediation’ (Latour 2005b) or ‘translation’ (Callon 1986a). Actors are affected whenever a translation—even a ‘treason’ (Law 2006)—of some sort happens. Such displacement, I claim, not only relates to the realm of being ‘negatively’ affected, but also to the domain of positive affectivity, which in my opinion, allows introducing a whole new range of actors and practices to what a public is: those with relations of affectivity, those that pertain not only to the ‘matters of concern’ (Latour 2004c; 2005a), but also to what Puig de la Bellacasa indentified as ‘matters of care’ (2011; 2017). In fact, this consideration of being positively affected leads us to the following and last question: what an issue is, and how it differs from a problem.

Thus, the last question concerns two considerations: what an issue is and how issues relate to publics. In regard to the later consideration, for Marres, as she bluntly entitles her thesis dissertation, if there are ‘no issues, [then there is] no public’(2005b), which is similar to saying ‘issues spark publics into being’ (2005a, 208). In democratic politics, this meant that publics emerge ‘through content’, or with Marres’ own words, ‘democratic politics is about addressing public affairs’ (2005a, 214). In this case, the type of matter at stake is no longer the actors of the bundled collective but the content that will be cared for. As she argues, a public emerges when an issue cannot be solved by other means; that is, when there is no existing institution or community that can handle it, public involvement is rendered necessary. Thus, she argues, the ‘issue must organize a community’ (2005a, 214 original stress); namely, a new bespoke political community is to be formed by members that share certain affection to a particular affair (Marres 2005a). What Dewey would argue in consequence, according to Marres, is that the particularity of the political dimension of the publics is not the processes involved in solving an issue but the incorporation of the content of politics and the formation of a community around it. For Marres, issues are what politics are about.

Also, and this is something that will be key in the discussion that follows, there is another consideration to take into account: what the difference between an issue and a problem is. Importantly, Dewey discusses ‘problems’—not surprisingly, he entitles his book ‘The Public and its Problems’ (Dewey 1927)—whereas Marres discusses ‘issues’. For me, the difference lies very particularly in the problematic dimension of issues; that is, issues can be both problematic—i.e., problems—or non-problematic—i.e., mere questions, matters.
or things that have to be cared for or taken care of collectively. I contend the non-problematic dimension of issues has been often overseen in current literature in contrast with its more appealing counterpart, the problematic and conflictual side of issues. Thus, taking into account such under-investigated dimension will, indeed, be crucial for the argument of this thesis.

In sum, in regard to materiality, there are two different things that affect publics: objects that are actors, and the content of politics. Hence, things and places are not anymore the context where individual humans relate. Indeed, Latour ‘dismantle[s] the assumption that the political life of things can be limited to that of passive means or tameable instruments of human action’ (Marres 2012b, 33). Moving towards an understanding of material publics is to introduce the politics of materials and their role in public political life. The recent ‘object-turn’ in political theory has focussed ‘on the capacities of things to facilitate, inform and organize citizenship and engagement’ (Marres 2012b, 7). From Object-Oriented Ontology (Harman 2018) to New materialisms (Coole and Frost 2010), there has been a shift to account for a post-instrumentalist way of understanding matter as political ‘beyond a narrow framing of the political role of material things as “mere means”’ (Marres 2012b, 30). Materials have been moved towards the public realm in order to incorporate a different dimension of the public. That new dimension of the public linked to the capacity of things to ‘mobilise publics’ (Marres 2012b, 30). And this is exactly one of the things that I will be looking for in this enquiry.

Introducing the idea of publics in the discussion allows to conceptualise a public dimension of participation that is relational, ephemeral, material and issue-driven. In addition, looking at it from a socio-material perspective helps to extend the number of actors and realms considered, focussing on certain specific types of affairs that are taken care of, and understanding affection both as being affected and being affective. Ultimately, the concept of publics and its issue-related nature will help us to formulate both ideas around the conceptualisation of community, the nature of problem-solving processes, and the affective qualities of issues. I will expand on these ideas in the following section. The questions that now follow if we are to discuss public space are then: what is the role of public spaces in publics? And, what happens with intimate and affective relationships that happen in public space? Should we consider them part of
publics? To begin answering these questions we then need to move on to discuss public as an adjective.

*Public space and the space of publics*

Public space has been traditionally opposed to private space. This made a distinction that directly related public space to those places which were under the responsibility of the state and public administrations vis-a-vis those other spaces that were the property of individuals. Public space could be defined as spaces collectively owned, used and shaped, and private space as spaces individually owned, used and shaped. However, this distinction cannot be presented so straightforwardly. For instance, it could be argued that there are public spaces that are privately owned and managed, such as cinemas, malls or bars; and also, there are publicly owned spaces privately managed, such as, for instance, the case of El Campo de Cebada. In those cases, the common characteristic of public space is that it is supposedly accessible to all. However, there are also publicly owned and managed places with schedules, such as parks or libraries, which do not grant access to people for certain hours. Also, there places that only allow certain individuals to get in—i.e. schools. Hence, accessibility is limited by schedules and by rules. Public space is, then, a space for collective gathering; still, these gatherings are shaped by the rights to access, participate and use, and are constrained by the rules that limit those rights. Public space is ideally inclusive and open to all; however, in practical terms, it is regulated and controlled, which makes it exclusionary to certain extent. Hence, public space is limited by regulation. Then, what makes a space public? Let me try with a different approach.

From a Habermasian tradition, the spatial conception of public space is commonly used as a metaphor for a political space. Public space is the forum where free individuals discuss public affairs in equal terms. Within that logic, many times public space has been directly related to the idea of the ‘public sphere’ (Habermas 1989). The public sphere is an ideally inclusive and consensual space for mediation between the private sphere and the State. So, in political terms, public spaces are not exactly spaces opposed to private spaces, but those where the rules and norms that shape freedom and equity relations are discussed and negotiated; public spaces are spaces for and of deliberation, ‘neutral’ spaces where all parties are welcomed and ideally represented in an equal manner.
This conception of public space as a deliberative forum, however, does not come without problematic implications. As a consensual and equal space to deliberate, the public sphere is assumed to be ‘easily’ accessible to all; that is, that any actor intended to participate in debates will do so if they want to. Unfortunately, such easiness rarely occurs. From postmodern and feminist approaches (e.g. Fraser 1990), this problematic-free conception has been extensively criticised as it does not account for the conflictual side of public space. Among other things, Habermas considered that the ideal public sphere was a clean and neutral place of mediating issues. Even though he was aware that such vision was conceptual and understood its practical difficulties, often his followers thought it was possible to materialise it. Against such vision, critics have specially underlined that there is not a singular way of mediation but a multiplicity of them. In particular, Fraser stressed that the ideal public sphere depicted by Habermas is in fact a direct representation of a narrow ‘bourgeois masculinist’ version of democracy (1990). In her critique, Fraser underlined four assumptions that the Habermasian conception of deliberation took for granted: (1) that actors involved in deliberative processes could always be considered social equals; (2) that it was necessary to step away from multiple forums; (3) that only public affairs should be discussed, and private interests should be considered apart; and (4) that there should be a clear cut division between civil society and the state. These four assumptions, she contended, could be countered by four considerations with their consequent implications: (1) actors were not equal, (2) forums could be multiple; (3) private matters should be included in public affairs, and (4) there was no need to separate the state apparatus and the civil society.

In effect, when considering what public space is from an STS perspective, we have already seen that we could move towards similar considerations. Public space should be a space where multiplicity is welcomed—and even fostered. Public space can be organised in multiple forums deployed for diverse and even opposite activities. Forums are, hence, potential publics’ spaces; namely, the spaces where assemblies of actors can be developed, and hence, where both public and private matters are to be considered. Such spaces are spaces of interaction, mediation, negotiation and representation. It could then be said that a public space is a space where publics can be fostered and developed, or the space where publics eventually emerge. The spaces of publics are spaces where issues are raised, and heterogeneous networks of affection are mobilised. Public space
can be hence thought of as the space where *multiple, diverse and distinct* forums for democratic encounters can be deployed. So, public space could be a space for eventual publics.

Still, two exceptions have to be taken into consideration: not every public space—in its traditional sense—is necessarily a space for/of eventual publics, and not necessarily every public is necessarily deployed always in a public space. In following the former consideration, it could be claimed that collectives that are not bundled around issues do not generate publics, and in following the latter consideration—as already suggested in the previous section—it could be said that publics bundled in and around domestic and intimate realms could also deploy and engage in public matters. For the sake of this dissertation, I would suggest, following Latour (2005a), that what makes a space for/of publics is its capacity to be politically relevant, a space that is performed in a political manner.

STS literature on ‘material participation’ and ‘publics’ has particularly explored how multiple and heterogeneous private spaces could certainly be regarded as spaces where publics emerge and develop (i.e. Marres and Lezaun 2011). In fact, most of such literature has focussed its efforts on foregrounding, underlining and highlighting how those issues, practices and matters happening in so-called private and intimate spaces—i.e., homes, workplaces and leisure spaces—were in effect politically relevant, as I already commented above. Issues, practices and matters that occurred in rooms on boats (Lezaun 2011), and engaged with plastic bottles (Hawkins 2011), domestic smart electricity meters (Marres 2011), or hotel keys (Latour 1992) were among the many discussed in such literature. Having gained those insights from studying the public and political relevance of such intimate and private realms, the aim of this thesis is to go back to public space and revisit its features and practices with that perception in mind; that is, the idea is to find the political relevance of certain practices that happen in public space but has remained unnoticed.

In that line, in the chapters that follow I will show and argue that intimate encounters that happen in public space are an integral part of the spaces of eventual publics, for the invisible practices developed there are ultimately relevant in political terms. In that sense, when thinking about the political relevance of practices, I will underline and foreground
the invisible, hidden everyday practices that happen in public spaces. In fact, reading STS and feminist approaches helped me to make that round trip making visible the invisible that takes place in public spaces. This is, I content, one of the very particular and most relevant proposals with which this thesis deals with, for it enquires how publics are developed in public space; something that has remained under-researched in STS academic literature. An exception to that lack of research, though, is the ANT work developed by scholars at Lund University (Kärrholm 2012; Magnusson 2016; Brighenti and Kärrholm 2018; Citroni and Kärrholm 2019). One of the aims of that research is, in a way, an endeavour to expand specifically on that topic: to study the intimate and ordinary practices—even infra-ordinary practices (Perec 2008; 2010)—that happens in public space.

By considering the possibility that the invisible, mundane, ordinary practices in public space could be politically relevant, I follow Marres and Lezaun (2011), whose purpose was to go beyond the ‘sub-political’ category ascribed by Foucauldians to the ‘politics of things’. What Foucauldians would argue, according to Marres and Lezaun (2011), was that this ‘sub-political’ category of things—related to the ‘sub-legal’ and ‘sub-discursive’—was a silent and tacit quality of things. In pointing to this quality, things were already recognised with some faculty of influence, yet not with the capacity of action or mediation. What I will be looking at, instead, is ‘the explicit political and moral capacities [of things]’; namely, ‘how objects acquire ‘powers of engagement’ and how those powers of engagement are articulated, discussed and contested in the public domain’ (Marres and Lezaun 2011, 495 original emphasis). What they proposed was, then, to foreground the explicit capacity of intimate matter when being intertwined in public affairs. In sum, what I am proposing here is to investigate how things are explicitly politically relevant by ‘making things public’ (Latour 2005a).

Latour (2005a) suggested that such ‘making things public’ happened in forums. Similarly, Marres and Lezaun (2011) suggested such publicity happened in agoras. However, those forums or agoras were not exactly considered in the usual sense—i.e. a formal space designed for the assemblance of individuals where discussions and debates occur. For Latour, a forum ‘has its own architecture, its own technology of speech, its complex set of procedures, […]’ (2005a); which meant each forum had its own characteristics, its own and specific communication channels, and its own participants. Latour did not refer to
forums in the Habermasian way neither; the Latourian way to conceive forums was wider and more complex and heterogenous. Latour thought of heterogeneous gatherings, of hybridity, of parliaments of things, and of assemblies of assemblies (2005a). When multiple forums related to each other, an assembly of assemblies was enacted. And when rethinking ways of assembling things, he envisioned political spaces where speech was not necessarily the main medium to communicate and represent anymore, nor deliberation the necessary way to relate. Note that forums are not necessarily publics, for the condition of being public is not directly linked what a forum is; namely, forums are not public in themselves; forums are potential spaces for publics. In turn, forums may host publics temporarily, and other collectives too; forums may be mediated in multiple ways. Also, publics can be present in multiple forums; so, issues and networks of affection navigate amongst forums and beyond. And forums become spaces of publics as long as they manage to deploy the political relevance of its actors. Then is when forums can be spaces for/of eventual publics.

To conclude, let me recap some ideas about how the concept of eventual publics in public space is used. Whereas I will use the concept of socio-material collectives to identify assemblages of heterogeneous actors bundle around a practice, I will refer to publics when identifying some of those specific collectives that are politically relevant and bundle around an issue, and to eventual publics when such issues are related to eventual urbanism practices. Eventual publics can be multiple. Eventual publics are situated, ephemeral and specific. Eventual publics are not static but unstable states of affairs which are assembled for a purpose. Eventual publics emerge both in private and public spaces, and in open and accessible spaces as well as intimate ones. Public space can host eventual publics—and other type of relationships too. The condition of publicness relates to the political relevance of issues and actors. Forums are not necessarily public spaces but can become temporary spaces of/for eventual publics. Forums can be multiple and allow the navigation of issues and the assemblage of networks of affection. And finally, eventual publics are those publics where eventual urbanism practices meet public participation.
3. Community, Conflict and Care

In this section I will expand on three notions that affect the formation and development of eventual publics: community, conflict and care. According to pragmatists, as we have already seen, a public is a ‘set of actors jointly affected by a problem […] [who] organize into a public, so as to assure that the problem is addressed’ (Marres and Rogers 2004, 8). It is precisely around this short definition that I will enquire into the political implications of our case, making three related questions: (1) what set of actors and how does it bundle together? (2) how to engage with a problem? and (3) what does it mean to care about a problem? The first question discusses how ‘political communities’ are formed; the second question concerns the ways in which consensus and conflict are dealt with; and the third one considers how care is enacted. It is important to note that these three themes—community, conflict and care—are linked with the discussions proposed in the three empirical chapters later, and also with the three sub-questions of this research. Even though the three themes will be present in all three chapters, it could be said that each of them will be more relevant in certain chapters. The first theme, community, will be mainly investigated in relation to practices of accessing El Campo in Chapter 5; the second one, conflict, will be discussed around a noise complaint dealt with in the assembly of El Campo in Chapter 6; and the third one, care, will be presented along the description of the watering practices of the garden of the place in Chapter 7. Here, I will make a short review of these three topics and highlight some of their theoretical implications.

Community: territory, practice and affect.

For the study of the enactment of participation, one key aspect to be understood is what are the actors that take part in it, especially those who are supposed to be the legitimate actors that have to be included: i.e. who and what they are and how they are bundled together into a kind of entity that is usually identified as a ‘community’. Even though I hesitate when using the term community due to its extensive use that somehow has made it lose its meaning, I will discuss it here in order to, at least, explain how I understand group formation in relation to participation and eventual urbanism. This exercise will help us to find out how others consider the term, especially in the realm of urban planning, and allow me to define the theoretical stance of this research. In addition, in the rest of the research I will also use other terms to refer to what a ‘set of actors’ is that I consider might
be more attuned to our enquiry, such as ‘socio-material collective’, ‘association’ or ‘assemblage’.

A community is usually understood as a group of people that has some sort of legitimacy over an issue due to a shared belonging that links them to that issue and often opposes them to others. A community that has a stake in an issue is often identified with locals, citizens and/or laypersons and is usually differentiated from professionals, public officials, practitioners and/or experts, who come from ‘elsewhere’ to participate legitimised by their knowledge or by some sort of position of power. The community is considered to be a legitimate actor that emerges from the ‘bottom’ and goes ‘upwards’: i.e. the quintessential ‘bottom-up’ actor.

In eventual urbanism practices, it is difficult to outline the community that participates. That is because it is difficult to differentiate who—among all the professionals, experts, laypersons, residents, producers, users and consumers—are indeed part of the ‘community’ and who are not; who participates from ‘inside’ and who does so from ‘outside’. In fact, the associations and collective networks that take part in the development of eventual urbanism practices are many times composed by multiple human actors with a variety of profiles that overlap different roles, belongings and knowledges, as we have seen in the previous chapter—e.g. local professionals or users which do not live in the vicinity. The difficulty of demarcating a community concerns to a certain extent the relationships among actors: i.e. what they share with others and what are the features that define a certain common attachment or belonging. In the literature, apart from racial, religious or ethnical issues—which I will not touch upon here—there are at least three different ways to define that attachment: territory, practice and affection.

In urban planning, the term community has been usually loaded with Euclidean static qualities. In many cases, communities are assumed to be formed by members of constituencies; bounded spaces that are considered fixed in time and space. Indeed, most planning practice still considers that legitimate communities are those who are related by contiguity or proximity to certain places: namely, the community is usually linked to a territory. In fact, several authors, when advocating for the development of ‘community planning’, have referred to communities as those residents and neighbours directly affected by plans (Wates 1996; 2000; 2008; Moulaert et al. 2010). In those views,
neighbours were the legitimate actors to participate, and hence the ones that should be
given a central role in decision-making processes in order to generate bottom-up
proposals and foster social innovation. That understanding of community polarised the
type of actors involved in possible processes of public participation, dividing them in two
different categories: those who were local and those who were not local, which relates to
the discussion between ‘local expertise’ vs. ‘professional expertise’ (Bovaird 2007).
Those who participated were either part of the ‘community’ or others; and in all cases the
community was directly attached to a bounded territory, often the neighbourhood.

Hillier and van Wezemael criticised those positions, deeply embedded in planning theory
and practice, when noting that ‘people with postal addresses within a particular
geographical area do not automatically constitute one or the “community”’ (2012, 321).
Instead, for them, communities were far more complex and relational. As they claimed,
communities were multiple networks that ‘exceed the physical area of the place, [as]
relevant voices may not be found elusively within that area’ (Hillier and van Wezemael
2012, 321). Healey also criticised such territorial understanding and claimed that
planning—‘collaborative planning’ in her case—should be ‘a plea for the importance of
understanding complexity and diversity’ (2003, 117), as we have already noted. In the
same line, Amin and Thrift referred to communities as something that ‘cannot be entirely
fixed in space’ (Amin and Thrift 2002, 31). In fact, their idea of community was built
around the concept of encounter, rather than around location.

In STS terms, using the concept of ‘topology’, rather than territory, is better as a spatial
term to understand issues of attachment and social performance. Indeed, for Mol and Law
(1994), regions—bounded and Euclidean territories—were only one of the possible ways
of categorising socio-spatial relationships. In addition, they also proposed two other
topological categories: networks and fluids. Both networks and fluids constituted spatial
terms that allowed understanding the performance of social relationships beyond the
Euclidean, continuous, static, stable and bounded category of the territory. In
consequence, to overcome such narrow understanding of territorial communities, it would
not be too illogical to consider communities from those other spatial terms; that is,
networked or fluid communities. In any case, I am not denying the capacity of territories
to bundle together certain groups of actors; what I am implying here is that territories are
only one of the multiple ways in which attachment, belonging and legitimacy can be
understood and accounted for in spatial terms. Indeed, as we will see in chapter 5 and 6, there are some specific ways of ‘territorialising’ (Kärrholm 2012) that are in fact crucial for the formation of certain ‘eventual publics’.

Another way of understanding attachment and belonging among members of a certain group is looking at practice. Taking Amin and Thrift’s idea of non-fixity further, communities could be argued to be constantly in the making. In that line, it is worth recalling the term ‘communities of practice’ coined by Wenger (1998), which linked community formation and knowledge production. In Amin and Roberts’ terms, communities of practice were ‘drivers of learning and knowledge generation’ and referred to practices that fostered ‘knowing in action’ (2008, 353). Thus, participating in such communities meant taking part in knowledge and learning formation processes. That is, participation related to how knowledge was generated through making, and consequently, communities of practices were fluid, for they progressed along and through the enactment of specific events.

In so doing, communities of practice deployed an ‘embodied knowledge’ materialised in things, artefacts and objects which in effect could constitute in some cases what we have already identified as material publics. The organisation of specific events, and the design and management of specific infrastructure for those events, allowed for the construction of material eventual publics. In our case, as we will see, this definition of community fits well some of the ‘eventual publics’ that were formed. In some situations, El Campo’s community gathered together to build their own infrastructures and organise their own activities. However, even if the term might fit well for certain specific practices developed in the case, it still does not take into account those who did not join those specific activities; it excludes the ‘inactive’, those who ‘only’ gathered and used the site and what was built in it. In my opinion, those ‘inactive’ users were also part of the community, yet the conception of ‘community of practice’ situates them as ‘others’.

To account for otherness, Wenger (2000) identified boundaries as the spaces between communities that, rather than dividing or separating them, were the spaces where encounters could be developed. For Wenger, the ‘boundaries of communities of practice [were] usually rather fluid’ (2000, 232). That fluidity could be deployed through different modes of engagement, being one of those modes the mediation of ‘boundary objects’
According to Star and Griesemer (1989), boundary objects were ‘both plastic enough to adapt to local needs and constraints of the several parties employing them, yet robust enough to maintain a common identity across sites’ (1989, 393). Thus, relationships among different communities of practices could be mediated by those objects. The ‘community’ of El Campo, hence, could be understood as a wide and fluid community formed by multiple communities of practices and the boundary objects that relate them. Hence, boundaries are key for this thesis, for I will specifically account for relationships on the ‘margins’.

Indeed, rather than using the concept of ‘boundary object’, I will borrow instead the alternative concept of the ‘marginal’, which also comes from Star and Griesemer’s same paper about ‘boundary objects’ (1989). There, they explained how they considered the term, but decided against it due to its negative connotations. For me, however, using the concept of the ‘marginal’ will be useful for two reasons. First, because it will somehow distance the discussion from the overwhelmingly used ‘boundary object’. And then, because its supposedly negative meaning will help me provide certain ‘tension’ to the concept; indeed, I prefer to use an ‘edgy’ term which relates to the unseen and forgotten to underline their usual invisibility. In consequence, taking Star and Griesemer’s suggestion further, I will explore the concept of the marginal from their explanation. That is: a margin is not something external to practices, but something that belongs to different ‘social worlds’ at the same time (Star and Griesemer 1989). In addition, their definition of boundary object is also useful for us for two more reasons. First, because it allows ‘thickening’ the boundary materialising it. And second, and as a consequence, because it allows for multiplicity. By ‘thickening’ the boundary, by giving it a ‘robust enough’ character, margins are able to travel, be adapted and translated, be shaped and negotiated, and be related to multiple different ‘social worlds’—not just two.

It is precisely in those liminal spaces, where no community is constituted around a specific practice, that certain relationships emerge. Indeed, rather than looking at specific communities of practices developed around events and their formal practices, I will be looking instead more carefully to its margins, and especially to their materiality. Such materiality could foster, depending on the situation, not only engagement, but also separation. Certain processes of separation in fact might generate new relationships due exactly to the enactment of practices of seclusion, differentiation or distinction. As Marres
and Lezaun underlined ‘the separations, demarcations and forms of containment that create discrete, active publics are drawn at a much higher level of specificity and acquire their particular texture from the specific objects at play’ (2011, 500). Hence, it is not only a question of looking at the unity that might generate a greater community, but also to ‘isolate discrete publics, to separate them from external influence or attention, or to snare them in new constellations and alliances’ (Marres and Lezaun 2011, 500) in order to foster new social relationships. In that regard, for me the idea of intimacy will be a specific feature to be attentive to. In sum, understanding processes of community formation not only refers to ways of engagement but also to ways of disengagement, to managing difference. It is in that interplay that collectives and associations emerge and become relevant within communities.

Finally, a third way of understanding belonging is through Marres’ post-instrumentalist use of the term ‘communities of affected’ (2012a). For her, the community of the affected allowed to explore modes of engagement from different perspectives. One of those perspectives drew on ‘new materialism’ and understood that ‘the formation of such community involves the development of the ability to enter into affective relations with things’ (Marres 2012a, 33). Looking at those perspectives, Braun and Whatmore (2010) claimed that affectedness is crucial to understand relationships. In fact, they built on what Latour would call ‘learning to be affected’ (2004a) and what Haraway would call ‘response-ability’ (2008) to understand that the formation of publics is directly related to the ‘capacity of all manner of things, human and nonhuman, organic and nonorganic, to affect and be affected by others’ (Marres 2010, xxv). In that sense, new materialism is an approach to material publics that ‘proposes to attend to the normative capacity of things to activate and mobilize publics’ (Marres 2012a, 33). Interestingly, in that regard, I understand that communities are not groups of people ascribed to a certain territorial boundary or to specific practice, but collective formations of all manner of entities. In turn, the different actors that participate in the development of practices that constituted communities are socio-material collectives. If communities are seen from that perspective, it could be claimed that they are groups or gatherings of multiple, heterogeneous and fluid socio-material collectives. Communities in that sense are neither static nor stable but are fluid imbroglios of all manner of entities.
Consequently, in the present research proposal, communities are considered assemblages of socio-material entanglements of humans and non-humans which in a fluid manner progress through the enactment of practices. In addition, knowledge is in fact embodied both in the enactment of practices and the objects produced. These embodied knowledge and practices are relational, hence, social and material. The questions that follow then are: how are those relationships that constitute those communities eventually enacted in practices of socio-material participation? And what is the nature and characteristics of those relationships? In what follows, public participation is explored through the nature of its relations. Specifically, it will be looked in regard to consensual, conflictual or agonistic relationships, and how they affect the progress of socio-material participation in different ways.

**Consensus, Conflict and Agonism**

Issues have to be addressed; the question is how. There are multiple ways of ‘solving’ an issue or ‘taming’ a conflict. In urban planning, many scholars and practitioners have advocated for consensus-based processes as a way to develop, design and deliver different outcomes—such as plans, programmes, regulations and agendas—and settle unresolved questions. Consensus has been one of the basic principles that have guided the design of public participation processes. In particular, one of the most influential proposals in that line was Healey’s collaborative planning (2006), which mainly drew on Habermasian communicative rationality, building on his ideas of deliberative democracy and consensus-based processes. Consensus has been seen as a means to conflate different confronted positions together, and thus, as a way to develop processes in an inclusive manner.

However, the question for me is whether consensus really fosters the generation of new knowledge and outcomes and allows for the development of process-based and performative participation, or if on the contrary constrains it. Four problems with consensus-based processes can be identified. First, paradoxically, while consensus-based processes might broaden the scope of voices that participate (Healey 1997), at the same time, this broadening process may also constrain and narrow the outcomes resulting from it. When more voices take part, consensus is likely to simplify the outcomes in order to match most interests. Second, processes based on consensus seek to ‘solve’ issues, and in
reaching those goals—i.e. getting to a final agreement—the very process ends and closes, and the outcomes freeze in time. It is true that in processes of negotiation certain milestones have to be reached and overcome; however, the idea of closing performative processes of negotiation denies the very nature of processes themselves. Third, consensus-based processes have been also criticised to be ‘often a mask hiding relations of domination and exclusion’ (Callon, Lascoumes, and Barthe 2009a, 4) which I would argue is due to the way in which representation is enacted. In such processes, representation is often and still delivered by homogeneous profiles: competent speakers that have self-appointed themselves as spokespersons. Diversity and heterogeneity are hence difficult to foster due to the deliberative and discursive nature of relationships. Only those who are capable of discussing are ‘admitted’. In fact, the fourth problem with deliberative politics is exactly that: its reliance on discourse, communication and language, assuming the capacity of all parties to use it in an equal manner.

At this point, it is worth to mention a controversial character that participates in processes of negotiation who Stengers calls the ‘idiot’ (2005). Idiots are actors involved in decision-making processes that are neither experts nor do necessarily understand or follow the processes of negotiation, which is often driven by the urgency to get to an agreement. The idiot disturbs deliberation processes. For Stengers (2005), ‘idiots’ are crucial for the development of negotiation processes due to their ‘ignorance’ that necessarily ‘slows down’ politics. That slowing down of politics for me is key for the development of nuanced thinking processes and subtle and careful discussions. In addition, the presence of the ‘idiot’ also highlights the always problematic question of communication. As already noted above, Fraser (1990) underlined the problem of the supposed parity among actors and claimed that actors should not be considered equal. In turn, in regard to communication, alternative means to communicate beyond discursive language should be considered and taken into account.

In effect, these communicative shortcomings many times drive negotiation processes to conflictual relationships rather than to the generation of consensus. It is in those instances where ‘translation’ (Callon 1986a) needs to be taken into account. For ANT scholars, translation is understood both in terms of displacement and discourse. In Callon’s words, to ‘translate is to displace […] but also to express in one’s own language what others say and want, why they act in the way they do and how they associate with each other: it is
to establish oneself as a spokesman’ (Callon 1986a, 214). When conflict emerges that means that in many cases ‘translation’ becomes ‘treason’ (Law 2006). Conflictual relationships have been claimed to be also part of participation processes and considered even necessary to keep those processes open.

Whereas for some consensus should be the limit of participation, and hence the limit to the way in which democratic processes should be developed, others (e.g. Rancière 2010) considered that including conflict and dissensus would open up spaces for more participation. Including dissensus could be a way to cope with lack of democracy or a way to reformulate it. Miessen, for example, building on the concept of ‘conflictuality’ developed by Mouffe (2005), argued that participation ‘is already a form of conflict’ (2011, 91). From that perspective, a wider range of practices that build on conflict, protest and dissent could be included in the realm of participation opening up again the question of what exactly is to participate. Demonstrations, occupations or protests, rather than reactions against the powerful, could also be considered legitimate ways of participating in public affairs with capacity of action. In fact, in the case I will study we will see that conflict is not avoided but often even fostered; as the people of El Campo repeatedly said: ‘Inhabit the conflict!’. Thus, what we see is that conflict and dissent might foster continuity in processes, managing to keep them alive by always enriching the process through new controversies. In a way, whereas consensus might eventually get to an end, conflict and dissent might allow for permanent indeterminacy, or put it differently, for a status of continuous availability and the opening of new negotiation processes.

Hillier, exploring dissent in urban practices, suggested that planning practice should draw on a Mouffe’s ‘pluralistic agonism’ ideas (1999), more constructive than consensus, and less destructive than antagonism (Hillier 2003). Indeed, the aim of Mouffe’s project was not to reject antagonism as a possibility, which she understood was inherent to social relations; on the contrary, Mouffe’s position intended to incorporate it into democratic processes by transforming it into ‘agonism’ (1999). Agonism, and especially its pluralistic version (Mouffe 2005) combined with STS perspectives, concerns the idea that rather than looking at inclusion we should be attentive to exclusions (Hillier 2003). That would require recognising difference and building on the introduction of the adversary, someone who would be acknowledged as a legitimate actor but who would be considered as an opponent in ideological terms. This move allowed incorporating others—they as
opposed to us—in the democratic debate. Hence, pluralist agonistic relations recognised that ‘conflictual differences between different groups […] are not negatives to be eliminated but rather diverse values to be recognised in decision-processes’ (Hillier 2003, 41). This also meant acknowledging the condition of impossibility of the perfect harmonious consensus in decision-making processes. In doing so, Hillier confronted Habermas’ ideas, and hence, critiqued Healey’s proposals of collaborative planning. She underlined, in consequence, that rather than working on inclusion, institutions should work on identifying exclusion (Hillier 2003)—i.e. others; that is, rather than trying to move and displace others towards one’s own position, it would be better to acknowledge the difference and recognise multiplicity. Working with agonistic participation thus would imply that both commonalities and differences would be acknowledged in the enactment of practices.

For me, the discussion of whether to foster consensus, acknowledge conflict and embrace agonism is a way to underline that specific emphasis should be given to heterogeneity and complexity. In chapter 6, I will deal with conflict and negotiation, and show how the incorporation of materiality will help to account for a different and distinct kind of negotiation practice. I will show how certain political mechanisms related to the ‘slowing down of politics’ (Stengers 2005) manage to keep on controversies open without necessarily inhabiting a continuous status of conflict. In fact, we will see how the weekly assembly of El Campo de Cebada managed to navigate conflict using exactly those political mechanisms. In studying rules and the making of those rules, we will understand how they were discussed, and see how consensus was met but only temporarily, playing with mechanisms of agreeing that allowed for the possibility of yet another reformulation.

**Matters of care and caring about matter**

Linked with the logic of affect and the importance of affectivity in practices, a final question to be posed is about how we care about things and people in participation. STS and feminist studies are realms that have given great attention to the matter. In fact, feminist studies is the discipline that first focussed on the political dimension of care. Feminist scholars have pointed to the invisibility of much women’s labor in order to stress the political relevance of such practices. In STS, care has been specially studied particularly looking at the role of technology, settings and things in multiple care settings:
from health practice (Mol 2008), clinics, homes and farms (Mol, Moser, and Pols 2010), to repair and maintenance practices (Denis and Pontille 2015), or even telecare (Mort, Roberts, and Moreu 2013). In considering the question of care, I will draw on the work of Puig de la Bellacasa (2011; 2017) who proposed the notion of ‘matters of care’. Considering care in ‘eventual publics’ means introducing a distinct sensitivity on practices and enquiries; one that listens, accompanies and sees others, and acknowledges and recognises difference. Also, I will specifically look at care given to no-humans—objects, animals, plants, infrastructure—and hence, consider the affective relationships care fosters, and vice versa, the caring practices affectivity deploys in urban settings.

Latour (2004c; 2005a) developed the concept of ‘matters of concern’ to overcome the rigid, static and mostly problematic understanding that scientific knowledge was developed based on facts; that science was objective. By foregrounding the agency of things, he managed to ‘de-objectify’ knowledge and at the same time include things into the realm of politics. Things had to be taken into account because they mediated relationships and produced effects that necessarily displaced results of scientific enquiry. This idea is mainly what Science and Technology Studies is about: things are social entities.

What Puig de la Bellacasa (2011) suggested, to overcome and expand Latour’s concept, was that understanding both ‘matters of fact’ and ‘matters of concern’ as ‘matters of care’ ‘thickened’ the politics of socio-technical assemblages, and that was due to mainly four reasons. Firstly, care practices related to trouble, worry and affect. Through care, interest in ‘others’—whoever or whatever ‘others’ are—is shown. Here, I am interested in care as a consequence of having been looking at affect in publics. Care, as Puig de la Bellacasa put it, ‘connotes attention and worry for those who can be harmed by an assemblage but whose voices are less valued, as are their concerns and need for care’ (2011, 92). Looking at care was understanding and foregrounding less valued voices; and to that she added that ‘the point is not only to expose or reveal invisible labors of care, but also to generate care’ (Puig de la Bellacasa 2011, 94). Secondly, care was linked with everyday life, with mundane invisible practices that generated care; domestic and intimate gestures that valuated bodies and things. ‘Care is a signifier of devalued ordinary labors that are crucial for getting us through the day’ (Puig de la Bellacasa 2011, 93). Thirdly, ‘caring involves a notion of doing and intervening’ (Puig de la Bellacasa 2011, 93). In that sense, care was
a performative practice, required time and related to the material doing of things. It, thus, entailed an intrinsic timing needed to do all the very little labours that manage to maintain, repair, and control processes of deterioration, ageing or decline. Finally, Puig de la Bellacasa also emphasized the ethical dimension of care; care was an ‘ethico-political obligation’ (2011). That ethico-political dimension of care concerned, according to Tronto (1993), to moral boundaries and the definition of who was central in power practices. For Tronto, the move to make was not only to relocate those in the margin into the center, but also to relocate their marginal practices in the center, ‘because they are different from those already there, but have something valuable offer to those already there’ (Tronto 1993, 15). That ethical dimension of care, which other practices do not take into account, is essential for me, for it (dis)places marginal practices in the center of enquiries.

Then, in caring for matter, the necessity of others to be cared of is also acknowledged, and as matter is different than humans, the evident consequence is that heterogeneous relationships exist. Care practices are reciprocal; the relationships emerged in caring go back and forth, but not necessarily in equal terms—i.e. what one gives is different than what one receives. Many authors have studied these type of asymmetric relationships with animals (Haraway 2008), plants (Head, Atchison, and Phillips 2015; Hitchings and Jones 2004; Wilson, Kendal, and Moore 2016), water (Anand 2011; 2012; Anand, Lewis, and Straw 2017), soil (Puig de la Bellacasa 2015) and infrastructure (Star 1999; de Laet and Mol 2000; Gamble 2017). Among many others, some have studied maintenance and repair as care practices of infrastructure (Denis and Pontille 2015) and highlighted the relevance of affectivity in such relationships (Knox 2017). In ‘eventual urbanism’ practices, it is common that infrastructures are built by those who will use them. In many cases, those infrastructures are fragile and often built from recycled material. Giving a new ‘life’ to these materials generate actual attachments to things. One of the main activities in ‘eventual urbanism’ practices is, indeed, the constant and necessary maintenance and repair of such fragile objects and infrastructures. Similarly, gardens and plants are many times grown in premises to give former derelict spaces both a better feel and a ‘productive’ character—when including vegetable gardens. Plants and infrastructures are taken care of, and in doing so, very specific relationships are deployed, relationships that will be studied in Chapter 7. In effect, we could think that ‘eventual
publics’ generate ‘ecologies of care’. Indeed, if we think of a community, El Campo’s community most resembles an ecology of care.

4. Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I have proposed an STS framework to study eventual urbanism and public participation, and I have discussed several issues steaming from the use of such framework. The first issue concerned whether current debates on participation would benefit from the introduction of a socio-material approach, which mainly means to consider if the ‘project of extension of democracy’ outlined by Marres (2012a) could be a way to overcome the ‘crisis of democracy in participation’ argued by Sandercock (2005); that is, if there is a way out that manages to consider participation different from the mainstream understandings of it as an instrument of planning. The hypothesis is that if we understand collectives—constituted by humans and non-humans—as political bodies and the practices they are involved in as participation, then there is a possibility to move beyond; and that is understanding participation as a material and performative phenomenon. The second issue considered has been the reconceptualization of publicness and public space from the idea of spaces for publics, understanding publics from its Deweyian definition. This understanding of public space is political, and it does not consider all the spaces and actors that participate in urban life, but only the ones that are politically relevant. That framing, in fact, challenges usual definitions of public space, because, on the one hand, it includes actors and practices previously ascribed to domestic and intimate realms, and, on the other hand, it excludes practices that are not related to issues or public affairs. Hence, I deal here with spaces that are specific, fluid, mutable and networked in affective relationships.

To further conceptualise my enquiry and also begin considering the three research sub-questions of the thesis, three topics have been studied in regard of what an eventual public might be: community, conflict and care. In relation to communities, we have seen three possible ways to associate actors together: territories, practices and affect. These three modes of understanding self-recognition, attachment or belonging are indeed at play and overlapped in the account that will follow and, as we will see, shape the way in which
‘the community’ of El Campo is thought about. Then, when discussing about consensus and conflict, I have underlined that fostering conflict and agonistic relationships in some situations might indeed help progress projects, for they might slow down politics and enable a continuous status of openness, not necessarily available when consensus is sought for. And finally, I have drawn attention to practices of care, because in many cases its study foregrounds the invisible practices otherwise overlooked by research practice. In our case, this attention will materialise in a thorough description of affective relationships with and among actors in the everyday practices of El Campo.
This chapter is about the journey I experienced during the process of research and how I managed to shape it from the initial intuitions emerging from the literature review through to the analysis of data and the final reflections. The chapter deals with two intertwined elements: methodology and the object of study. It is structured chronologically considering three different periods of time: before, during and after the fieldwork. In the accounts of each period, I discuss both methodological questions and issues related to how I managed to learn things about the case I was dealing with: El Campo de Cebada. As we will see, both elements—methodology and the object of study—informed each other. In fact, some methodological shortcomings were solved by understanding the field, and also some difficulties encountered in the field had to be dealt with by testing and proposing specific methodological tools.

On one hand, the chapter discusses several methodological topics: what the epistemological approach was, how ethical issues were considered, how the subjective perspective of the researcher was overcome, and how the analysis of data was dealt with. In such discussion, visual ethnography is presented as the main epistemological device used to engage with the field; a methodological approach attuned to ANT sensitivity and my own previous experience as urban researcher and architect. On the other hand, along with the methodological explanation, I introduce El Campo de Cebada and how I managed to, little by little, get involved in and with it. I begin by explaining what I knew before going to the field, and then show how I manage to become acquainted with the space, its people and its protocols, and also describe some of its features in order to set the basic information needed for navigating the following empirical chapters. However, before delving into the ethnographic processes of building my case, let me introduce the methodological standpoint of this thesis.

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8 Note that El Campo de Cebada translates into English as ‘The Barley Field’, a fortunate and useful play of words between El Campo and The Field.
Methodological standpoint

‘Doing ethnography is like trying to read a manuscript—foreign, faded, full of Ellipses, incoherencies, suspicious emendations, and tendentious commentaries, but written not in conventionalized graphs of sound but in transient examples of shaped behavior.’ (Geertz 1973, 10)

In Urban Studies, the case study methodological approach is a common and proven standard, for it offers tools and methods to research in depth specific cases that later can be compared to other cases in order to understand both commonalities and differences which ultimately could lead to find trends that might explain specific relationships (Silva et al. 2015, Flyvbjerg 2011, Platt 1992, Yin 2018). Usually, choosing a case study approach relates to a ‘how’ main research question (Yin 2018). As Duminy puts it, ‘the real practical value of the case study is its capacity to show what has actually happened in a given setting, and how’ (2014). The type of methods and design, however, varies and adapts to the specific case to be researched; ‘case study research comprises an all-encompassing mode of inquiry, with its own logic of design, data collection techniques, and specific approaches to data analysis’ (Yin 2018, 44). In fact, for those who choose to use case study approaches, that entail a previous organization and design of its methods before going to the field, a well-defined strategy for the collection of data and an apriori formulation of a clear set of research questions. In many cases, a case study approach comprises the organization, development and analysis of a number of structured interviews and/or focus groups, and also the collection and analysis of secondary data, such as documents and reports. Often, its analysis entails codification which might ultimately allow to study and understand the discursive nature of relationships and practices. ‘Given this close attention to empirical detail and process, case study research is well suited for the analysis of complex causality and power relations, as well as the practical ethics and judgements that inform real-world planning outcomes’ (Duminy 2014).

However, this research does not engage with the traditional case study approach as it would be expected in Urban Studies, and that is mainly because it was not applicable to my research’s purpose, aims and objectives. Rather I embarked in the more reflexive, inductive, ‘improvised, strange, irregular and inexplicit’ (Geertz 1988) methodology of
Chapter 4 _ El Campo, the field

ethnography—more suited and aligned to an STS research. Thus, I engaged with participant observation and thick description; and I proposed so for two reasons.

First, I chose ethnography because my intention was to understand the processual side of practices, the way in which they were enacted and experienced; that is, I did not intend to make a discursive or rhetorical analysis of what my informants told or said, but to generate such knowledge from a situated experience (Haraway 1991), an experience shared with the people in the field. My purpose was not to understand the ‘important’ things told and said in meetings and interviews, or written in documents and agendas, but other things; in that sense, ‘the improvisational praxis of ethnographic attentiveness [was] especially suited to discovering what these other important things might be’ (Pigg 2013, 128). To gain that insight it was crucial to develop a methodology close to the field, or better, embedded in the field (Marcus 1998). As Mol would suggest, ‘if logics are embedded in practices, articulating them demands that we go out into the world and immerse ourselves in those practices’ (2008, 10). Indeed, the aim of participant observation is to ‘enter as deeply as possible into the social and cultural field on research’ (Eriksen 2001, 26). Certainly, participant observation is an unstructured and vaguely defined research technique; as Eriksen claimed, ‘the methods must be tailored to fit the requirements of the subject, but is it difficult to be more specific’ (2001, 26). Hence, I left the tailoring to be decided ‘during’ the field and not before. What had to be decided before hand, however, was the topic of investigation and the amount of time to be spent in the field that would allow me to acquire what Eriksen identifies as ‘the local viewpoint’ (2001). In my case, the topic was clear—‘public participation as a socio-material performative phenomenon’—and the time that I thought would allow me to deeply understand the field too—between 5 and 6 months. The rest was something that I hoped—and I proved right—would emerge during the field.

The second important reason to choose ethnography was that it would allow me to engage with the materiality of practices, something, I contend, impossible to understand without embodying them and embedding myself in the field. That experience, thus, later helped me to thickly and thoroughly describe materiality and its relationship with practice. The process of first experiencing and then writing about it is what the ethnographer does. In Pigg’s words, when stressing the ‘performative, corporeal, and interactive aspects of the doing of ethnographic fieldwork’, she claims that ‘ethnography produces knowledge on
the spot, in the doing of the sitting, through a doubling or folding back on the everyday’. Furthermore, as Geertz puts it, ‘what the ethnographer is in fact faced with is a multiplicity of complex conceptual structures, many of them superimposed upon or knotted into one another, which are at once strange, irregular and inexplicit, and which he must contrive somehow first to grasp and then to render’ (1973, 10). Such grasping and then rendering of experience is how knowledge is produced, and that happens once you confront the collection of apparently irrelevant, messy and subjective data gathered during the fieldwork. Ethnography, since the 1920’s has proved be widely valuable methodology that has managed to generate ‘a vast and sophisticated disciplinary conversation about intersubjectivity, knowledge claims, positionality, and reflexivity, a conversation that probes not only epistemological issues but also ethical ones’ (Pigg 2013, 128). In this work, what I have tried to do is to include yet another discipline—i.e. Urban Studies—in such conversation.

1. Before the field

When I began this research project in 2013, it was quite vague for me the way in which I was going to respond to my objectives and aims; as in any other research project, I had some intuitions, but I did not know what to focus on and how. I framed my questions in relation to very different and even contradictory topics, such as collective action and social movements, social networks, governance and social justice, or actor-network theory and material agency, which was basically mixing diverse and somehow incompatible realms of thought, something that I realised later. I was confused; a state, on the other hand, usual for a PhD candidate. Little by little, I managed to organise my thoughts, find my way, decide to follow certain paths and forget others, and set the basic research questions of my research. That took me a while. However, what was clear from the beginning of the research was my object of study, temporary urban sites, and in particular, the case: El Campo de Cebada.

I learnt about El Campo de Cebada sometime before I started my PhD. In 2012, the year before enrolling at the UCL, I went to meetings and presentations in Madrid given by people interested in the phenomenon of activist politics where El Campo was mentioned.
and praised, and I met some of the individuals that were involved in the project. Thus, when I proposed my thesis project, even if not explicitly, the questions I made and the ideas that I had were always tested against El Campo in my mind. If I asked, for example, ‘what the relationship between collective action and material entanglements was in temporary urban sites’, the question I was asking to myself was ‘what that relationship was in El Campo de Cebada’. If that question made sense to me, then I kept on working in that direction, for I thought that there was at least one possibility to answer it.

But what was so interesting in El Campo that caught my attention? Why was El Campo a suitable object of study for a thesis like the one I was embarking in? And more importantly, if El Campo was going to be my case, what were the questions I was going to make and how was I going to manage answering them? These were the questions that I posed before going to the field and in parallel to setting up my theoretical research framework.

**What I knew about El Campo de Cebada before going to the field?**

![Map of the surrounding urban fabric.](image)

Before delving into how I ended up working with/in El Campo, let me give you a first glimpse of what I thought and what I knew about El Campo prior to my fieldwork experience. El Campo de Cebada, as far as I knew, was a project developed in a temporary urban site in the centre of Madrid; a citizen-led project developed in an empty site that
was publicly owned by the municipality and leased since 2011 to a group of neighbours for its management. The site was empty since 2009 as a result of the demolition of a public sports centre. In September 2010, a cultural event organised in the city—*La Noche en Blanco* [The White Night]—chose that empty site as one of the locations for its activities. For that event, a temporary wooden structure was built resembling a pool: a ludic space that also worked as a demonstration object to flag the lack of sports facilities in the area due to the demolition of the previous building.

That intervention called the attention of some neighbours whom since that night began to get together in order to get access to the site. During that winter of 2010-2011, some of them temporarily occupied the site, and at the same time began a process of negotiating a lease with the municipality, which they managed to sign in early 2011. To sign the lease agreement, the group or neighbours put together a document which was the base for the project and also for their relationship with the municipality. They intended to open a space for the community; a space opened to everyone and free to access. They wanted to develop and manage an urban infrastructure that would fill the void left by the sports centre and compensate the neighbourhood’s lack of meeting places: a space for cultural open-air events, such as concerts, cinema, theatre, sports or gardening, but also a space to gather, play, relax and meet other people; a public space, after all.

The 15th of May of 2011, the space was opened to the public for the first time. Since that day, the space was used on a regular basis, mostly on weekends, when scheduled activities tended to cluster. The people involved in the management of the space were heterogeneous; they were brought to the place and the project by multiple and quite different interests and agendas. Some people were related to different cultural scenes, other individuals came from activists and more politicised realms—such as the 15M and other related movements—others joined due to their interest in urban design and architecture, others were ‘just’ interested in plants and urban gardening, and so forth.

That is more or less what I roughly knew about the project and the space before getting to know them better⁹.

⁹ Most of what I learnt during my first academic research year came from news in social media and other internet sources (among many, for example Lozano Bright 2013; El País 2013; Agrohuerto 2014; Pina
Figure 5. Plan of the El Campo de Cebada with its main features.

2014; TPX 2014; Ruiz 2014), including El Campo’s own webpage now disappeared (El Campo de Cebada 2014a; 2014b) and also from public lectures and conferences (e.g. El Campo de Cebada 2014c) where sometimes the people of El Campo were invited to present their project and their work.
So, during the first academic research year—and with all those ideas about El Campo in mind—I set up the ground rules for the theoretical framework of the research. After that setting up, the first thing to be decided was whether I should go for a comparative analysis involving several temporarily used urban sites or a more in-depth account of a single one. To choose between those two possibilities, I decided to conduct a research based on secondary data to account for sites across Europe that could fit the description of temporary urban sites, and also sites that were ‘public’ and complex enough to be comparable to El Campo. I checked for examples in Spain, Italy, Germany and UK, all of them contemporary to the research; that is, projects that were active during the time I was doing the research—and specifically that were likely to be still alive during the time I was planning to do my fieldwork few months later. Once I collected more than twenty projects, I developed a list of their characteristics and began a systematic analysis looking for possible relationships with the socio-material enquiry I wanted to make; however, I did not get much further, it felt like a dead-end for me, or better a too open-end: too many projects, too many possibilities, too heterogeneous.

To reduce the number of options, I then shifted towards methodology; that is, I moved to consider the different possible tools and methods I could use to develop my fieldwork to see if making sense of them would help me to move forward. Among the possible methodological perspectives, I felt ethnography—and particularly visual ethnography—was the proper epistemological approach to work with my research intentions. At that time, ethnography constituted a challenge to me, because I did not have a previous experience and I was alien to the discipline—i.e. understanding ethnography as the usual methodological approach mainly used in anthropology. Contrarily, I was confident to conduct a visual project, because my academic and professional background had equipped me already with certain visual skills that might—and I later corroborated to—be helpful. I felt being in a delicate situation; I was embarking myself in a research methodology that I knew little about. Still, I was lucky and confident that certain ‘skilled vision’ (Grasseni 2004) could provide me thought-provoking insights. So, before deciding between El Campo as a single case or a comparison among different sites, I conducted a small pilot case in order to test what I was going to do later; that is, testing the different methods and tools I was planning to use in the future and understand how
they might eventually help me to answer the questions I had in mind. Hence, in 2014, before my upgrade, I went to El Campo for one week for the first time.

Then, I contacted one member of El Campo and asked him if I could join a workshop they were planning to develop in July; he soon replied that they were happy to have me around. So, the 12th of July of 2014 I began my first fieldwork experience. Participating in that workshop was a test for my methodology. The ‘Handmade Urbanism’ workshop was developed for a group of 56 Colombian students on a fieldtrip to Madrid; it was held for five days, and the plan was to build new urban furniture for the space, because the one they had on the site was already broken and deteriorated due to its intensive use.

It was not until that moment that I realised I should think systematically about methodology. My intention when participating in the workshop was to develop a visual ethnography. That entailed not only registering situations by observing and writing words, but also participating in the activities and at the same time taking photographs or even drawing. However, I soon realised visual ethnography was more than just registering (Banks 2001). It was about building a relationship with the field that could expand beyond the field. It entailed thinking about and taking into consideration how the registering of data would relate to a future analysis and presentation of it. Hence, it was during the pilot case that I realised it was going to be necessary to engage with literature on the matter (Banks 2001; Pink 2007; Corsín Jiménez and Estalella 2017; Estalella and Sánchez Criado 2018; Gubrium and Harper 2013; Rumíng 2009; Wang and Burris 1997; Lury and Wakeford 2012; Henare, Holbraad, and Wastell 2007), for I noticed my ability to be attentive to certain levels of engagement and my capacity to deal with informants and information was diminished due to my lack of knowledge and experience. Soon after the workshop I began the process of understanding the implications of doing ethnography that for me basically entailed learning how to relate with the field in a collaborative manner. Before doing that though, I developed the pilot case; during that experience, I did what I could.
Figure 6. ‘Handmade Urbanism’ Workshop.
The workshop was hectic for me. Whereas I was kind of helpful for the workshop itself—I participated as an assistant helping students with specific tasks, such as, for example,
drilling holes in metal slabs, or organising and setting up different workshop areas—I was really overwhelmed by the amount of things I had to cope with in regard of registering. I wanted to register everything, but, as so many different things and situations happened at the same time, I stressed going up and down taking photographs, taking notes, trying to draw and, at the same time, trying to be helpful. I tried to be a participant and an observer at the same time, but that required skills, a mode of being attentive that I was not used to. And more importantly, it also required time, a lot of time to be acquainted with the rhythms of the practices that were taking place. One week was not enough, especially if I was going to answer research questions about the mundane, ordinary, everyday practices that ultimately constituted what I hypothesised participatory practices were in the space.

Accordingly, after the pilot case, I abandoned the possibility of comparing different sites for two reasons. First, because the more I worked with the questions and the theoretical framework, the more I leaned towards a qualitative methodology that ought to engage with a thorough and in-depth knowledge of the field and that would require in turn a long qualitative fieldwork on the site. Developing an ethnographic account, I thought, was at odds with a possible comparative analysis of different sites because it would require at least 4 or 5 months on each site, and that was not a realistic timeframe for a doctorate research. The second reason was related to El Campo itself. The project and the site—as we will see below—were complex enough to concentrate in it; the multiplicity of practices overlapped on the site offered enough material to work with. Hence, rather than comparing sites I could compare practices instead.

So, the pilot case helped me to decide focussing on one single case, and also allowed me to question about the tools and methods that I was planning to deploy later, and how they could be helpful, not only to register my data, but also to relate to the field. How could notes, drawings and photographs help me do that? And also, how could those data might eventually help El Campo itself? What were the different levels at which that relationship between El Campo and my research could be enacted?

**Photographs, drawing and the ethical dimension of visual ethnography**

Taking photographs, recording videos or making drawings in the field were not just actions to register my data—that is, they were not only ways to collect evidences of some
of the situations I encountered—they were also epistemic practices that helped me engaging with the field (Banks 2001). One of the very first things I realised when I began taking photographs was that doing so was not a neutral task (Pink 2007). Being there with my camera—and also my DIN A3 sketching book or my tablet, which I used to draw—was somehow a way of flagging my engagement, and a way of situating myself in a very specific position: showing that I was doing something in/for the space, that I was somehow participating in its development. When I was a note-taker, I was usually quite an invisible figure, someone that hid behind a small notebook engaged with an indecipherable handwriting who did not clearly show an engagement with the field—I might be writing about whatever passed through my mind. In contrast, as a photographer—and also as a draughtsman—I showed a direct relation to the object I was depicting, and I even had the possibility to share the result of my register quite easily with the field—i.e. by showing the photographs in the display of the camera or the drawings in the sketch book. And I did so in several occasions as a way to get closer to the people that surrounded me. In addition, I also had to engage with whomever, or whatever, was the target of my visual register. Thus, the camera mediated my photographer’s actions (Pink 2007) and, depending on the type camera, the relationship might go in different directions—i.e. it is not the same using a mobile phone, a compact camera or a seemingly-professional reflex one to take a picture, for it might generate a sense of uneasiness that had to be taken into account (see for example Martín Sainz de los Terreros 2019). I had to be attentive to that too.

When I got back from the pilot case, I had a lot of material. I had many photographs of people working with and building things—i.e. tools and benches. There was, however, an ethical dimension of those visual registers—in particular video and photography—that needed to be taken into account (Pink 2007; Pink, Kürti, and Afonso 2004). When taking a photograph, it was not clear how to get consent. Many times, consent was reached by a fast eye contact or a silent petition moving your eyebrows and the camera upwards like saying ‘do you mind?’ However, in general, you could not explain yourself, nor would it have made too much sense to do so. Sometimes, when being closer to the target, the same ‘do-you-mind?’ sentence could be enunciated. Still, it was very rarely that the action of asking for proper formal consent was delivered.
When asking for the ethical approval of the research, I focussed on that matter: how to treat visual material—beyond legal requirements—with care and respect for those depicted in them, and the way consent was going to be acquired if necessary. It was very important for me that the research’s ethics were not constrained to the limited scope of legal requirements, for research is a practice that also involves a relationship with the field that is built on mutual trust and reciprocity, especially in ethnographic research, when many times the researcher-informant relationship lasts for months, and even beyond the fieldwork itself—like the case of this research. Hence, it is not just a matter of legality, but also a ‘matter of care’ (Puig de la Bellacasa 2011); here again, one of the aspects of care: the ethico-political dimension of care in research practice.

Even if taking photographs in an open public space might be legal\(^{10}\), certain type of pictures that would depict vulnerable individuals or collectives—e.g. homeless people, illegal migrants or children—should be treated with care and respect. Indeed, in El Campo, the three types of collectives just enunciated could be found. But not only those types were to be considered, there could also be other individuals that might be reluctant to be depicted. Here I am thinking, for example, in people that might be doing something illegal like smoking hashish, or even selling it—something, on the other hand, common in El Campo—or simply someone with no interest in being photographed. If taking pictures of them, was I going to use those images? Was I even interested in them, in their faces, in the specific individuals? And if so, how should those images be treated? It was impossible to ask for consent in El Campo, where a great amount of people was likely to be there, and it also seemed quite inconsistent with the type of space I was dealing with—i.e. such a formal procedure in such informal context would have not really worked there. The only coherent option I thought about was to assess each situation separately and to be open to erase images if necessary or requested. But, more importantly, the best option would be to avoid those difficult situations as much as I could.

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\(^{10}\) The article 35.2 of the Spanish Copyright Act 1996 establishes that ‘Works permanently located in parks, streets, squares or other public roads can be freely reproduced, distributed and communicated through paintings, drawings, photographs and audiovisual procedures.’
Concerned by that specific issue of how to treat visual materials in ethnographic research, I joined an anthropologist friend in an experimental workshop on research ethics where we discussed with two other anthropologists what ethical implications, opportunities and constrains visual ethnographic research should take into account. In that workshop I posed two questions that I was concerned with since my pilot case: (1) how to deal with consent in informal environments—such as El Campo—and (2) how to deal with anonymity. The workshop stretched along several sessions where we met via Skype. The result of those sessions was published in two blog posts in the website of the experimental workshop (Anonymous 2015). From those conversations we had, I learnt not only about ethics, but also about the possibilities of visual ethnography as an epistemic practice. I especially learnt to be attentive to the subjectivity of the researcher and the implications of framing, which in our case literally meant the physical framing of images; that is, taking into account not only what you register but also the context in which that picture, video or drawing was taken.

From that workshop I took several ideas that a later incorporated in the methodological approach during the main fieldwork and also to the subsequent analysis and representation of the research. The most important one for me was the idea of framing. When thinking about how to register images, I realised photographs and drawing could help me to interrogate materiality, to ‘interview’ objects and materials. Framing in that way—basically targeting objects within practices rather than people in practice—would help me to overcome the two main problems I had with anonymity and consent. That decision, which originally arose as an ethical issue, indeed mutated into a methodological opportunity to change the focus and displace it towards materiality, which was indeed perfectly aligned with my theoretical approach.

So, tools and methods were clear, and the decision of choosing one case agreed with my supervisors. Then, it was time to decide when I was going to do the fieldwork and how I

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11 https://problematorio.wordpress.com/

12 Due to the confidential characteristics of certain conversations developed in the blog, which dealt with multiple ethical problems on ethnographic research environments, the whole blog was anonymised. In the specific blog post referenced here, I participated in the conversations and the later edition of the text. However, I have decided to reference it as ‘Anonymous’ due to the multiple authorship of the blog post and the confidential characteristics of blog.
was going to convince the people of El Campo to let me to do it. The decision of timing was easy: the spring and summer were the busiest periods of the year in El Campo so a fieldwork that would last about 5 months should comprise that period. I decided that the period between May and September 2015 was perfect. The second question, gaining consent from El Campo, was easier than I expected. In late November 2014, I sent them an email and they said I should present the project in the weekly assembly, which was the forum where things were decided. In December I was planning to go back to Madrid for Christmas, so I decided to take that opportunity and go and present my project during those days. The 22nd of December, after quite a weird encounter with the field—which I will account for later in the empirical chapters—the project was accepted.

So, I moved to Madrid at the end of April with the idea of going at least four or five days a week to the field to join as many—and the more heterogeneous—activities as possible, being either a participant or an observer, or both at the same time. The plan was registering the different practices developed in the place with visual methods—photographs, videos and drawings—and of course with note taking. In doing so, I was going to be attentive to materiality in particular, for I wanted to look at the agentic and mediating capacities of it. Also, I planned to talk and engage with individuals, and informally chat with them; that is indeed the most important task of the ethnographic fieldwork, not only to register data but to let yourself be affected by the field, and engage in relationships of mutual trust, respect and, if possible, collaboration. After each fieldwork day, I would sit on my computer and write for about two or three hours about what happened; usually, that desk writing would happen the following day in the morning, before going back to the field again. And finally, the main idea that should drive my fieldwork was to be as open as possible to whatever would happen in the field, not narrowing my sight to only try to respond my questions, but also to be attentive to the possible new questions emerging from the field.

2. During the field

The assembly

My first day of fieldwork was the 27th of April of 2015; it was Monday and it was also assembly day. That day I wanted to introduce my research project to the weekly assembly.
I had already sent several emails with a detailed explanation of it, but I was asked to explain it in person in the weekly assembly. I was told that for the project to be accepted ‘formally’, the assembly had to approve it, like any other activity in El Campo. Soon I learnt that to become part of the space, every activity with certain impact had to be presented, discussed, agreed upon and eventually approved by the assembly. In that sense, the assembly was the main channel through which information and knowledge passed by, the main political space of the project. They thought that by channelling issues through it, El Campo would manage to make sure that no individual could exert authority over others. The assembly intended to be a horizontal forum, and a political body who decided together matters related to El Campo. Hence, the assembly was where the governance of the space was usually deployed, or at least, that is how it was thought so.

I attended to 18 assemblies during fieldwork, between the 27th of April until the 21st of September. Usually, the assembly began around 7:30pm and lasted for about two hours. The space for the assembly was often arranged in a place with sufficient seating for everybody. There were usually between 8 to 12 people in the assembly; sometimes more—I counted up to 20 once—and sometimes less—in one assembly in August, it was only me and another person, so we decided to cancel it. To sit they used benches, chairs, tiered seating structures or any other element that would work for that purpose. The assembly usually found a place to be develop and organise the space accordingly taking benches and chairs from here and there. If the space was busy and no seating could be found, they also had some chairs stored in the container for those specific occasions. Sometimes they used a makeshift table and makeshift benches too.

After the assembly, those who remained until the end usually extended it moving to a nearby bar. Those bar chats were more relaxed and friendly. Whereas in the assembly the tone was a little bit more formal—they had to keep it serious in the presence of strangers—in the bar it was much more informal, and even critical with what just had happened. My first day in El Campo, I joined them during the assembly, and I was also invited to the very first of many chats over some beers. The assembly was usually organised and managed by specific neighbours who were acquainted with the assembly’s protocol; at least, one of them had to be present. I will call these individuals ‘members’—I will explain what ‘members’ mean below. They usually decided on the agenda of the meeting and also wrote down the minutes that would be sent via email few days later.
Figure 8. Assemblies
Chapter 4 _ El Campo, the field

The agenda was often divided into two different parts: one part devoted to organising and deciding future activities, and a second part where issues related to El Campo were discussed. Usually, during the first part, there were external people that might want to use the place to develop an activity. If they needed the space, they had to present the activity they wanted to do to the assembly, and the assembly would usually approve it and then find a date to develop it. Those who asked for a space could be people actively participating in the space already, but also people coming from elsewhere. There were some rules that needed to be followed, a sort of ‘protocol’ that was usually told to anyone who wanted to use the space. To access the space, those rules—which adapted in each occasion to the activity to be developed—had to be accepted.

In the second part of the assembly, issues regarding the space were discussed, if there were any. Those issues were often brought and discussed by individuals or groups of people that were actively involved in activities and directly affected by those issues; sometimes issues arose from external relationships between El Campo and other actors—like the one I will explore in Chapter 6 about a noise complaint. The second half of the assembly, hence, was the space were things could be negotiated and discussed, and eventually arrive to some sort of agreement. Even, the rules that were presented in the first half as ‘protocols’ could be changed in this second part if someone considered they

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13 There were very few rare occasions where the assembly did not accept an activity, and when that happened, it usually was done so to avoid possible confrontational conflicts regarding certain antagonist and violent ideological positions—e.g. extreme-right groups that in several occasions intended to generate great trouble in the premises.

14 Rules were usually verbally told with variations, depending on the specific situation. Four were the most commonly repeated:

(1) **Responsibility:** The people organising the activity were responsible of the space. That meant—among other things and if not stated otherwise—that they could set up the space as they wished, but had to tide it up, clean the whole space—regardless of how much space they occupied—and close it if the event finished at the time to close the space.

(2) **Free of charge:** No entry fee should be asked for; every activity should be free and open to all. That rule was decided in accordance with the lease agreement that stated that ‘no profit should be gained from the exploitation of the site’.

(3) **Madrina:** Every activity had to have a madrina. A person from El Campo that mediated between the activity and the assembly and welcomed and helped those promoting the activity to access the space and use its infrastructure.

(4) **Amplified music:** Three things were considered in that rule: (a) No amplified percussion instruments or bass; (b) no more than three hours of music in one day; and (c) respect of specific schedules—i.e. no music during siesta time or after 22h (except for cinema).
should be discussed. The second part of the assembly was, then, a space where ‘publics’ could emerge and develop.

After a while—I do not remember when, but possibly after a month or so—one of the people of El Campo told me that they were surprised that I kept on coming back; they had had other people presenting their research projects in the past promising a steady engagement, but, she said, they eventually withdrew from going back after some time.

By being present and willing to participate, I began to be bestowed with some legitimacy. That materialised after several assemblies, when I was invited to take notes and write the minutes; I was becoming part of the project! Being invited was a consequence of being present, but it was also related to the lack of people engaged at that time at a management level too. I accepted the task; however, I did so not without reticence from my part. Would writing the minutes of the assembly affect the field? I mean, was my implication likely to ‘pervert’ the neutrality of my data? Well yes, of course; I was going to be actively involved in their politics and that put me in an uncomfortable position at first. I decided that if I was going to do so, my writing style for the minutes should remain as neutral as possible—a style at odds with my fieldnotes, which were full of personal appreciations and subjective comments. That style matched both my intention to be detached and also the ‘professional’ or ‘serious’ style the minutes were expected to have, for they were the written archive of the development of what happened in the space. In addition—I thought—by being in charge of the minutes, I could be in the ‘middle’ of things, but at the same time detached from them, for I could manage not being actively involved in the decision-making process; I would just write down what was discussed, what they discussed.

In fact, after some time, those ideas proved wrong; the fact of deciding what was included and what was excluded from the account of the assembly was a way of affecting the field. Indeed, I was a ‘mediator’ (Latour 2005b), and I inevitably shaped the field somehow; I realised that later. However, it was also later that I understood that the important thing was not exactly to be detached and neutral from the field, but to acknowledge whatever engagement I would have, rather than withdrawing from it—e.g. accounting for it as I am doing here in this chapter and also sharing those ideas with the field. So, after a while, I decided I was not going to refrain from doing things I was asked to do, but I would take into account how those actions affected my relationship with the field and my fieldwork...
in particular. In any case, the people of El Campo always welcomed my help; so, in a way, I developed along with them a collaborative mode of developing the ethnographic work (Estalella and Sánchez Criado 2018; Marcus 2014)—i.e. they had my contribution in certain activities to El Campo’s development, and I learnt from their experience in exchange.

Soon, I began to be known as the ‘anthropologist’. That nickname—even if it honoured me—also triggered an uneasy feeling; I thought I was being an impostor, someone that I was not. I thought it would have been more accurate to say that I was just an ‘urban researcher’ learning how to do the work of an anthropologist. I tried to undo the misunderstanding several times, but they did not really care. They were happy to have me around, and at the same time intrigued about what I was doing. Calling me ‘their anthropologist’ was their way to legitimise me, to include me in their project. I tried to explain them my research in several occasions, but my explanations were a bit obscure for them; I was not clear enough. Note that what I mean is not that they were not interested or could not understand my explanations because their lack of capacity; that is, here I am not intending in any sense to diminish their position and knowledge from my part. The entire contrary, it is just that my capacity to communicate my research did not coincide with their way of experiencing and thinking about their own experience; we did not share the same interests. Still, even though I understood our agendas were divergent, I thought I had to make some effort to overcome that lack of communication with the field.

So, I decided to create a web blog\footnote{https://eventualurbanism.wordpress.com/}. The blog emerged with two main objectives. First, it was meant to be a space for devolution; and then, it could be used as a communication channel where I could elicit information—if I manage to engage someone. At the end, the blog worked well for the former intention—i.e. as devolution—but not as a communication tool with the field; they received it well, but they did not utilised it to reply to me in any manner; the place for replication was the field itself, El Campo’s site and its activities. In addition to those original objectives, I later realised that the blog also delivered two more outcomes: it was a good way to systematically organise my thoughts in a day-to-day basis during the everyday of the fieldwork, and, after the field, it worked

\footnote{https://eventualurbanism.wordpress.com/}. I recommend a quick visit to the site to understand the type of work developed in it.
very well as platform to show the type of visual ethnographic material I was working with.

The blog was organised around several categories and subcategories that I created during the fieldwork. Those categories were between playful and academic; the idea was to generate a place for engagement that catered more than just an academic audience. There were some parts where I wrote about the research project and the ethnography, but other parts were more ‘artistic’. The most important part of the blog was the news page where I published a post after every fieldwork day—labelled ‘Campo#[Date]’. Every day I went to the field I posted something on the blog. Each post was a short selection of the photographs of the day, each of them with a very brief caption, sometimes even a hieroglyphic caption that no one but me could make sense of it. Images were chosen to highlight the most important impressions of my day. The number of images ranged between 3 and 16—depending on my mood and the type of pictures; they were usually photographs, but sometimes I also included one or two of the drawings of the day. The images were selected among the hundreds of the day and helped me to structure my thoughts before writing up the fieldnotes. I used them as benchmark, something that had to be remembered, and also as a parallel narrative to the fieldnotes. Once a post was published on the blog, I shared it in different social media, in particular, on Facebook and Twitter. So, I began to publicise my work through there, trying to expand the scope of my research.

Behind the creation of the blog was the idea of ‘experimental collaboration’ proposed by Estalella and Sánchez Criado (2018). How could research be done in a way that does not only imply extracting data? Following on Marcus (2014), Estalella and Sánchez Criado proposed ways of understanding ethnography were collaboration with the field and ‘informants’ could work in a reciprocal way, or as in this case, as a way to make visible the field; that is, the researcher’s and the field’s agendas might coincide or complement in order to work together towards something common.

However—and this is something I realised later—in regards of the theoretical approach to our work, the people of El Campo and myself came from different standpoints. Indeed, each of them had their own specific agendas and objectives. There was, however, something most of them had in common. They were sympathetic with the 15M movement.
and its proposals, each of them in their own way. Hence, whereas El Campo’s people implicitly accepted what could be a realm of thought that was close to critical theory positions and aligned with Havey’s and Lefevbre’s idea’s around ‘the right to the city’ (Lefebvre 1996; Harvey 2003), my own research had driven me towards a much more materially engaged epistemic practice. In that regard, my theoretical approach was much more connected with their practical work than with their ideas. Hence, an epistemic partnership around a theoretical discussion was not possible, or at least, not really productive. Still, despite not sharing ideological/political agendas, what was indeed possible was to explicitly collaborate with them in the development of their own practices and making of the site. So, I did not manage to make an epistemic partnership in relation to common discursive academic knowledge; however, I did manage to engage in a partnership that produced, at the end of the day, what could be called ‘embodied and situated knowledge’ (Haraway 1991).

Thus, during my fieldwork, I explicitly engaged collaborating in doing things in El Campo and with the people that participated in the project. I participated in assemblies, I took care of the garden, I helped setting up concerts, and cleaning at the end of day. I wanted El Campo to benefit from my participation, and found those ways taking part of its everyday life—which was indeed a great achievement. Apart from that, I could not find other ways of explicitly collaborating at that time. The blog did not work as I expected, and I felt at times as an intruder in the field, as someone taking some benefit of the space without sharing anything back. However, afterwards, once I have thought about the whole process, I feel the blog—somehow—and this thesis in particular are doing more than that; I mean, that my research is contributing not specifically to El Campo itself, but I hope to thinking about other projects and experiences that might resemble to El Campo.

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After several weeks in the field, I had the feeling that most of the work in regard of understanding the organisation of the place was done. I knew the people that managed it and also had been in multiple activities already. I had already met Sofía, Luis, Jaime,
Jose, Pablo, Andrea and Ana\(^\text{16}\); some of the people that will appear in the following chapters. I corroborated some of my intuitions about what El Campo was, something I knew before going to the field; and I also discovered new things that I did not even imagine, things that were very valuable findings for the research. However, something was missing; the questions I wanted to answer were not covered yet.

It was then that I realised that during those first months of the field I had only focused on the core of activities, but I missed its peripheries. I had concentrated my energy in being part of the field, in becoming one of ‘them’, in managing to speak from the ‘us’. That was clear when reading the fieldnotes; there was a certain moment in time that the use of ‘us’ and the use of ‘they’ become to blurred. I was not any more someone external to the field; I was at the same time inside and outside the field; I was a ‘member’ of El Campo. Hence, in becoming a member, I concentrated on my relationships with ‘members’ and their activities, but not on the rest of people and activities that happened around them. I focused only—possibly too much—on what I understood was the core of El Campo, the assembly. Realising such bias, it was then when I began to open and shift my focus to pay attention to the ordinary everyday practices.

**Naming people: ‘members’, ‘regulars’ and more**

I think it is now when is important to introduce the human population of El Campo, because I think it is crucial for understanding El Campo’s ‘community’ that will be discussed later and how it was shaped by different socio-material collectives that formed it. In doing so, I will explain the different types of people that inhabited the space and the different types of engagements they had with it. Note that the terms that I will use hereafter to name certain people refer to qualifications taken from the field; that is, those are not categories that I am applying, but names that were used by the people of El Campo to talk and think about themselves. In particular, the specific ways of naming I will use have been taken from the way used by those who usually attended the weekly assembly, who were the people I usually related to and the main informants for this thesis. Hence, I

\(^{16}\) These names are anonymised. Even thought, the individuals I met in El Campo did not explicitly asked for their anonymity, as a general rule I have used this strategy in the main text. In the acknowledgements, however, I have named them all with their real names, in a way to thank them for their engagement.
will especially borrow two terms—‘members’ and ‘regulars’—reproducing their own way of using them.

The wider community of El Campo—if there was any—could be said that was formed by a multiplicity of different groups, sub-groups and individuals that participated in its activities and everyday life in diverse manners and with different degrees of involvement. Some academics I had the opportunity to discussed with would refer to those different groups as ‘tribes’ (Fernández-Savater and Fernández-Layos 2016); distinct groups of people with their own specific idiosyncrasy and their own habits and practices, who had to necessarily relate with others somehow to manage to use the same space. Among them there were ‘members’, ‘regulars’, users, audiences, public in general, and so forth. Let me now expand on the two main groups I will be accounting for later: ‘members’ and ‘regulars’.

So, as I was saying, at some point in time I became a ‘member’ of El Campo, even if I did not fully act as such—because I had the researcher’s reticence of not willing to be ‘too’ engaged with the field. ‘Members’ were those who took part in the management of the space. A ‘member’, for example, would be someone who regularly participated in the weekly assembly; or someone who often proposed and developed programmed activities, and so on. Qualifying oneself as ‘member’ of El Campo was quite a loose statement though. For instance, even if I could say that I was a ‘member’ of El Campo for several months, I cannot, however, clearly explain how one became a ‘member’ of El Campo, or when exactly one would gain the status of being a ‘member’. I feel it was mainly related to the ‘sense’ of engagement and belonging one would be able to externalise; not the way one participated, but how that participation was shown and made visible.

Different things allowed qualifying oneself as a ‘member’, for instance: the way in which one would engage in activities, the amount of responsibility one was able to demonstrate or willing to take before others, or the availability and willingness to be involved in other activities beyond the ones one would propose—for those later ones would entail working for oneself and not for the rest of El Campo. As I participated in most of the assemblies since I arrived, and helped in the development of many activities, I soon was considered part of the team; I became a ‘member’ and I was often acknowledged as such in the
assemblies. So, another way of saying it could be that being a member was something that was bestowed by others.

During the first days of my fieldwork I quickly understood who was and was not a ‘member’ of El Campo by only attending to the assemblies. Members were also referred as ‘the grown-ups’, or the ‘managers’, or just ‘those of the assembly’. They were implicitly legitimised as people that could take decisions. Importantly, the idea of who was (or not) a ‘member’ was very much ‘assembly-centric’; that is, people were qualified as ‘members’ especially if they regularly attended to the assembly and demonstrated commitment. It was also the assembly itself which qualified one as a ‘member’. Contrarily, the assembly also qualified some people as ‘not-members-anymore’; for example, when people decided to withdraw from their involvement in the assembly and the development of programmed activities.

Having said that, I would like to clarify that a ‘member’ was not a ‘formal’ figure, and the responsibility and power they had was accordingly quite blurred too; no rule was written, no protocol was established. The only thing that was acknowledged by the assembly was the capacity of a ‘member’ to become a ‘madrina’. Allow me, then, to make a short explanation about what a madrina was in El Campo.

Every activity organised in El Campo had to have a madrina. Madrina means ‘godmother’\(^\text{17}\) in Spanish and was a term used in El Campo to indicate the act of amadrirnar (‘godmothering’ or sponsor). In El Campo, madrinas played the role of mediating among the assembly, the activities and events held in the space, and any other party that might be implicated in an issue. Madrinas provided information about rules, helped organising the space and gave access to equipment if requested—such as sound-systems, projectors, cables, chairs, and so on; indeed, they played a crucial role in the development of the activities. According to El Campo’s rules, madrinas were a necessary role for any activity that wanted to be included in the agenda of El Campo. In general, any member of El Campo could become voluntarily a madrina if they wanted to. In fact, if no one agreed on being the madrina of an activity, the activity was not approved by the

\(^{17}\) Note that the term was used in its feminine version regardless of the gender of the person acting as such.
assembly and could not be developed. If any member wanted to ‘godmother’ an activity, he or she would propose him- or herself to do so.

Becoming a madrina was not straightforward. One could become a madrina by showing ‘enough’ commitment towards the space. Such commitment was usually acquired by being known by the people that regularly attended the assembly. The more they were acquainted to the person that wanted to be a madrina, the easier was to become for that person. Still, becoming a madrina was easier than it seems, because there was usually a shortage of madrinas; not many people was committed with the space in that sense. The process of assigning (or volunteering to be) the madrina of an activity was indeed a passive way to control what activities could be held in the space and what ones could not happen. The decision of accepting activities was left to the availability and empathy that those who were ‘eligible’ to be madrinas had towards the specific activity.

Then, there were the ‘regulars’: individuals that used the space on a daily basis but neither attended to the assembly, nor necessarily developed any organised or scheduled activity. They were usually neighbours that inhabited the space during weekdays and weekends regardless of the development of programmed activities. They used El Campo as a public space: as the park or square near home to gather with friends, chat, and have some beers. Some ‘regulars’, as we will see, assumed certain responsibilities, such as opening and closing the space. Some ‘regulars’ were also well-known; their presence was apparent in the space. After some time in the field, I met some of them. In general, they were young people, in their late teens and early twenties. ‘Regulars’ were also referred to as the ‘youngsters’, the ‘boys and girls over there’—pointing out to their typical spot to hang out—or the people of the ‘basketball’ (la gente del ‘basket’), for in the beginning of El Campo’s development, some of them constituted a basketball team that played in the municipal league. Those ‘regulars’ that engaged in management activities in the space and held responsibilities such as opening and closing or cleaning, were bestowed with certain responsibility, but not in the same way as those that participated in the assembly. In my opinion, they were considered ‘others’ by ‘members’; and they had to ‘prove’ they could be trusted. For the argument of this thesis, it is key to take into account this delimitation of ‘otherness’, because it has important implications in the way things happened in El Campo.
In addition to ‘members’ and ‘regulars’, other types of individuals populated El Campo too, like in any other public space. If someone was not considered a ‘member’ nor acknowledged as a ‘regular’, they would also be part of El Campo’s imaginary and discourse. Indeed, during assemblies, it was usual to hear sentences such as ‘if you do something in El Campo, you are part of El Campo; you are El Campo’. That was said to involve people coming from outside and trying to engage them in situations and activities that would extend beyond, for example, the activity they were proposing to develop. Other terms were used to refer to those who engaged with the space not in a regular manner: e.g. users, participants, neighbours, visitors, tourists, audiences. Users were the people that were in the space in a certain moment in time, irrespective of their relationship with it; for example, someone who would pass-by and stay for a while would be a user. Participants would be those who actively participated in activities but not in a regular manner; for example, a group of people that organised and performed a concert one day. Neighbours related to the space in a broader sense; they were part of El Campo even if they were not physically present. For instance, the neighbour was a figure present in assemblies, for rules were developed many times on their behalf and for their well-being. Finally, there were visitors, tourists and audiences that participated in the everyday of El Campo and its activities but not in a regular manner nor as part of their organisation.

After two months in the field, I realised I knew very little about ‘regulars’ or any other population beyond ‘members’. I knew little about their activities, their schedules and their things. It was then that my attention shifted from core to periphery. I tried to be more attentive to the relationships among all the actors present in the field and not just to the activities scheduled, and to build an understanding of those relationships. Still, gaining access to those ‘other’ people and their practices was much more difficult than accessing the assembly, for regulars’ and others’ spaces did not really have a clear channel to get in. They just hung around in the space. Then, how could I understand their practices? What did they exactly do in the space? I understood that it was the ordinary, everyday practices that they shared what brought them together. It was how they looked for a seat in the space, how they handled their rubbish at the end of their meeting, how they drank their beers, how they got in and out of the space, and so on. The everyday actions and practices—and not the ones organised and scheduled—then emerged as key components of my fieldwork observations. And importantly, it was then when my initial intention to
bring materiality to the fore eventually began to make sense. Hence, those everyday activities and their materiality become the target of my fieldwork.

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July and August passed, and September arrived. By that time, I reckoned that the amount of data I already collected was enough. Yet the last days of my fieldwork I concentrated only in the materiality of the space. I tried to make an inventory of the space in order to record every corner of it. The first week of the field, back in April, I had made a similar exercise, and comparing the evolution of the field could be another interesting possibility of the analysis work.

September was also the time when I focussed in more in-depth conversations with several individuals. Those fieldwork conversation —that could be also called ethnographic interviews due to its improvised and unstructured nature—were done in the field and lasted between 1 and 2 hours. I had nine conversations, out of which I later transcribed six, the most interesting ones. Once I transcribed the conversations I send them back to the individuals I chat with, because I wanted them to check the material and amend it if they thought it was wrong or inaccurate, but also if they wanted to change any susceptible comment or even erase some quotes that might make them uncomfortable if they would be published. I only received three or those transcribed conversations revised with very little amendments. Those three texts were the only ones that I later directly quoted.

The 22nd of September 2015 was my last day on the field. That day I had a very nice day. Sofía and Jaime were around, and the three of us transplanted some plants and built a new flower bed. We also cleaned the storage room and managed to throw some things away. That day I was really happy to finish but very sad too. The experience of living in the field for almost five months had been really rewarding. The following morning, after writing my last fieldnotes and saving the last pictures in the computer, I was ready to go back to London for the second part of the fieldwork: the analysis of data.
3. **After the field**

When I got back to London at the end of September I had about 9 audios from fieldwork conversations, 50 drawings, more than 400 short videos, more than 4000 photographs, and a text longer than 100,000 words written. A strategy to make sense of that amount of information was needed. So, first of all, I read the text in order to get back to the space and learn about it again. The text was in Spanish, because it was easier for me to relate to the field in my mother tongue; notes were easily taken and also, my relationship with El Campo was developed in that same language too. It was written in a very informal language and accounted for many different situations. It explained how activities were developed, how I felt during certain day, what the weather was like, and also included comments related to possible theoretical and methodological insights of certain situations. It was very heterogeneous, but when I read it altogether, I had the feeling that it was honest, something that I was looking for since I began my research; the text was somehow giving back to me a sincere experience. I remember me laughing out loud many times in my desk with my own comments. Reading my fieldnotes was one of the most amusing moments of the research; I felt rewarded.

Then, I checked the images and videos, which also had their own narrative. They framed situations; however, they did so in a different way than the text did. Most of the images—especially the ones after the second month—depicted the field from two different perspectives. The majority of them focused on materiality, on the materials, devices and objects used in the performance and enactment of participatory practices, whatever they were. They accounted for details; for instance, there were a lot of pictures of hands with objects on them, or pictures of objects or places, but without people. There were also other images that depicted general views of the space with a clear intention of not framing one specific situation but the overlapping of multiple situations; the intention of those images was to reproduce complexity and account for interaction and interrelationships. It was only when I checked the archive as a whole that I realised that I rarely depicted one situation including all its actors. It was either a detail of a situation, a partial framing, or a general view of the space where several overlapping encounters could be seen.
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Figure 9. Playing football.

Figure 10. El Campo in the shade. Evening sun.
Figure 11. Under the container. Hot and sunny day.

Figure 12. The container and a tiered seating structure in its process of being repaired.
Finally, the drawings I did usually showed general views of the space and tried to account for the colour palette, very bright in those summer sunny days. Drawings at that point of the research—i.e. analysis—were less useful I though, for I mainly used them to learn things from the space while I was on the site. Drawing was indeed a practice that allowed me to deeply understand the space, because it entailed tracing lines that are copied from reality. Indeed, drawing was for me an immersive experience, it took time. Hence, contrarily than taking photographs, it was the practice of tracing the site. Later, during the analysis, I did not relate much to the drawings for their function was somehow over. Now, in the representation process I have recovered them from the folders to show them back again. For Taussig (2011), drawing would be a way to recall feelings and to focus on specific details lost when writing. For me, drawing was a way to be in place, and be attentive to all the very details one has to draw. Every line was a thought; every little shadow took time and was decided to be registered. That time taken to draw was key for my fieldwork experience and the sediments it left in me.

Once I read the fieldnotes for the first time and checked all the images, I decided to concentrate on five themes that were related to the most ordinary practices of the field, and that could be found across the entire fieldwork. Those practices were developed almost every day and focusing on them would allow me to understand the space beyond its organised activities; that is, it allowed me to move towards the periphery. The five themes I chose were (1) accessing the site, getting in and out, opening and closing; (2) watering the plants, and all the related activities around gardening practices; (3) cleaning dirt, which entailed not only the everyday action of dealing with rubbish, but also the scheduled events were the site was specifically taken care of; (4) seating—as in making/building seats—and sitting—as in the action of gathering together; and (5) making music and/or noise. All those themes related to different practices and different material entanglements. Once I had those themes decided, I began coding the fieldnotes accordingly.

After that second reading, I introduced the fieldnotes in Atlas.ti, a software that allowed me to easily code the texts and also the images and helped me extracting the different quotes related to the codes to work with them. On top of that initial coding strategy of five categories, I overlapped another coding strategy less rigid and more complex that developed a list of cross-cutting codes. I used a list following Law and Mol’s (2002) ideas
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that challenged categorisation as a closed set of groups and in favour of listing, as an open epistemic practice. Those cross-cutting codes included, for example, concepts such as conflict, governance or legitimacy, but also methodological and theoretical ideas. Then, I began extracting vignettes that related to the themes chosen: small fragments of the fieldnotes that could somehow be put together to build a cohesive narrative for each theme. Once the vignettes were developed, I began writing the empirical chapters.

It was at that point where the writing strategy and the narrative style of the thesis had to be decided. I had to decide what my voice was and how I was going to write about the space. For instance, was I going to describe it from inside or from outside? Was I going to use the first person or the third person, or both? Were you—the reader—going to be addressed, and if so, how? It took me a while to understand what I was going to talk about. I wrote and rewrote the five themes, trying to understand whether I should name them from the objects—keys, plants, dirt, chairs and sounds—or from the actions—opening, watering, cleaning, seating and making noise. After several rounds I decided the framework had to concentrate around practices and collectives and their mode of articulation.

Reframing the thesis from modes of articulation

Ultimately, this thesis is about group formation, about practices enacted that generate collectives. Practices are relationships between several actors that collectively enact an action. In consequence, collectives are defined as the multiple entities that participate in an event, the situated and temporary performance of relationships among an assemblage of actors. A collective emerges as soon as certain actants perform a practice. Such performance, following Latour (2005b), always leaves a trace, and that trace is what I had to engage with. A collective could be a man sweeping, which would include the broom used and the dirt displaced; or a group of people gathering and having some beers, which would also include the seats used, the beers drank and the cans disposed; or a bee flying around a flower; or a group of documents used to allow certain activities to happen; or, as the opening vignette of the thesis, a rope, a screen and some footprints. A collective, always eventual—actual and provisional—could last for seconds or months, could be located in one specific site or disaggregated in multiple places, and could be constituted by multiple actors—human and non-human—with no necessary coherent relationship
among them beyond the specific situation. Reframing the understanding of participation moving from ‘human groups’ towards socio-material collectives allowed me to freeing the account; that is, the capacity of describing and explaining participation was more fluid.

The five different themes that emerged from the fieldwork—access, sound, dirt, plants and seats—deployed five different ‘repertoires’ of practices and collectives. Reading Mol (2002), the key to understanding participation in this specific research was not focusing on the objects—that could be multiple—but on the events of practices and the collectives—the situated and specific relationships in time and space—and more importantly, looking for to the ‘modes of articulation’ of those practices, the relationships created between them. Hence, the key was then to try to look at El Campo from what Mol called ‘praxiography’ (2002). Praxiography, Mol suggested, analyses the multiplicity and complexity of materiality by understanding that different practices enact a multiplicity of objects, even if those multiple objects are called the same—e.g. in our case, key, access, sound, dirt or chair—for objects are not stable and unitary, but multiple depending on the type of practice they are part of. Objects are enacted in practices; objects are then situated and specific in time and space. In her book The Body Multiple (2002), Mol explored the different ways in which atherosclerosis could be enacted and accounted for and how those different atherosclerosis related to each other. She claimed different modes of articulation could be found between different practices, between multiple enactments of objects. Her findings pointed to several modes of articulation—i.e. ‘coordination’, ‘distribution’ and ‘inclusion’ (Mol 2002); modes, on the other hand, that she underlined were not constrained to specific three, but could be more.

In our case, the idea of modes of articulation of practices was helpful to organise the empirical chapters. Rather than focusing on what I found in themes, I could focus on the relative relationships between practices, its objects and its repertoires. I found out that it was possible that the same practice had a specific relationship with itself or with a similar practice that could happen before or after it; for example, the watering practice, that happened day after day in a similar manner. I also realised that there could also be a mode of articulation between different practices within the same repertoire of practices; for example, the relationships between opening and closing the site, that even if being different they were necessarily linked to each other. In addition, there was also the
possibility that one object could enact different practices; that was the case of sound, which depending on the practice or collective that emerged as a consequence of its enactment could be music or noise. And finally, there was the possibility of a relationship between different practices that pertained to different repertoires; for instance, the action of cleaning was directly linked with the action of closing the site. All these ideas, of course, needed unpacking. That was then the task I embarked in. I unpacked practice’s relationships, or what Mol graphically refers to as ‘unbracketing’ practices, which is also a way of saying ‘un-black-boxing’ the site (Callon 2001; Stengers 2010a).

The chapters that follow will explore three of the five themes I chose to study in-depth: in Chapter 5 I will discuss how the site was opened and closed, in Chapter 6 how sound was made and listened to, and in Chapter 7 how plants were watered. There are two of the five themes—cleaning and seating—that have been left outside the account. Leaving those themes outside was not because there was not enough material to work with them, but, on the contrary, because there was too much material to include in this thesis and comply with regulations of length. As Latour (2005b) suggested when his student asked him ‘when do you stop?’, he answered ‘you stop when you have written 50000 words or whatever is the format here’. The limit in this case is 100,000 words; I have stopped when I reached that limit of words. Hence, what I present here is not a full and complete description of the practices I dealt with, but just a description within a format that has to be complied with.

So, the three empirical chapters that follow are organised as follows: the first one describes how the access to the site was managed; the second one explores the case of a noise complaint; the third one deals with how plants were watered in El Campo. In all of them I have tried to engage with materiality and temporality as much as possible, and I have studied the distinct modes of articulation of different practices trying to take to the fore the different collectives that emerge in the enactment of those participatory practices.
Chapter 5 _
Access: Coordination and Reconfiguration

_The fight_

Today, Monday 22\textsuperscript{nd} of December 2014, is the first day I visit El Campo since I have decided to work with it as my only case of study. I am back home for Christmas, and I have taken the chance to visit the site. It will not be until April next year that I will do my ethnographic fieldwork though. Today I only want to introduce myself and begin making some contacts and connections. Luis, the only person I know from El Campo, has told me I have to go to the weekly assembly in order to have its approval to conduct my fieldwork in the space.

It is 7:15pm and I am waiting in front of the door to attend the weekly assembly; they told me it usually begins at 7:30pm. The door of the space is closed. This morning I have been told that currently the space only opens when there is an activity programmed and someone can take care of opening and closing the site.

While I wait, some people jump the wall and get in. From the other side of the street I take photographs and videos; unfortunately, it is already dark, so the quality of them is not very good. There seems to be a lot of movement. It is not even my first day of fieldwork and there are already some unexpected situations happening.

Fifteen minutes after my arrival, two women approach the door and wait in front of it too; it is already time for the assembly. I assume they are also coming to the assembly, like me; so, I approach them and introduce myself. Indeed, they want to attend the assembly, but they do not know if it is going to take place. They don’t have the key to open the door. One of them asks—via a WhatsApp group conversation—if someone is going to come with the key and if the assembly will take place today. Four people answer in the same forum saying they are coming, and at least one says he has a key.
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Figure 13. Closed door and police cars.

It is already 7:45 pm and the door is still closed. Suddenly, coming out of the blue, four police cars approach driving very fast towards the site and stop in front of the door of the space. More than 10 policemen—some uniformed, others undercover—run around the site. It seems that there is a fight inside the space; two rival groups are fighting as revenge for a previous incident. The police want to open the space by breaking the chain that closes the door by force. One of the waiting women asks them to wait; ‘someone is about to arrive to open the door’—she says. The police agree to wait. While some of them wait near the door, others go around the site to make sure no one is leaving the space through a different way; that is, jumping the wall through a different place. Few minutes later, someone with the key arrives and opens the door. Once the door is opened, the police get in. In the threshold of the door they stop and check out about fifteen boys and girls—maybe more—and arrest three under-aged kids. Despite the efforts of the police, and according to what was heard, some of the people that were inside have managed to jump from inside to the street and have disappeared without being caught.

Half an hour later, the police are still around. The place is now accessible. Many people have gathered around the door. There have been fights outbreaks, shouts and verbal disputes; the kids are still hot from the fight. The police have found several makeshift weapons and some handmade shields.

It is late, and the discussions among different people and groups have been tiring. Today the assembly does not take place in El Campo; too many things have already happened. However, ‘we deserve a beer!’—someone says. So, some people—among whom I can find Luis, my contact—go to a neighbouring bar. I join them. We make a sort-of assembly, very informal indeed. We spend more or less half an hour commenting on the events before calling it a day. I do not manage to present my
project properly as I intended to; however, just before leaving—and understanding my frustration—someone approaches to me and says: ‘Just send us an email with your proposal. Don’t worry, it is going to be accepted anyway.’

These lines are how my field notes began. I spent no more than a couple of hours in the space and I already collected interesting material to work with. There was already a conflict. ‘Wow! This is promising!—I thought to myself—How thrilling!’

* 

It was not until I analysed all my data that I realised that the situation I lived during my first day in the field could be looked from a different angle. Rather than looking at that specific conflict, I could underline the seemingly irrelevant margins of events; I could account for the actors involved in the practices that mediated and facilitated—or constrained—the relationships deployed around and through the accessing mechanisms of the space, the door and otherwise, focussing on the role of materials that allowed the opening and closing of the site, not only in that specific event, but also in the everyday life of the space.

Thus, this chapter is an exploration of the repertoire of accessing practices, and in particular, of opening and closing practices. Other related practices, such as, for example, jumping the wall or cleaning the space—which is even outside the repertoire of accessing practices—will be included too, but always in relation to these particular two. Specifically, what I will do is to study the mode of articulation between the enactment of opening and the enactment of closing the site, and between different enactments of opening and/or closing. To do so, I will describe in detail the socio-material collectives that emerged in those enactments.

The particularity of accessing practices lies on their complementarity. It seems fairly obvious, but for closing to happen a previous opening practice needs to occur and vice versa. However, as we will see, opening was not just the reverse action of closing, like in a door of a home where one just has to turn the key clockwise or counterclockwise. In the account that follows, opening was different to closing due to the socio-material collectives that each practice deployed. It could be claimed that closing was an effect of opening and opening an effect of closing. But what needed to be coordinated in their
deployment? What were the collectives formed around them? Were opening collectives similar to closing collectives? And how did such collectives relate? These are the type of questions I will answer in what follows.

It is important to clarify before anything else that the site was an open-air space. I will consider this matter in the following chapters; nonetheless, it is worthwhile to make a very short, seemingly obvious, yet important clarification here. Birds and insects could fly freely in and out the space. Also, the sound could get in and out, and the wind, and the rain, and the sun. There were also other ways to get in and out for infrastructural matter, such as electricity, water or sewage, via wires and pipes. However, for the sake of simplicity of this chapter, let me concentrate on the accessing materiality and temporality constrained by gravitational forces attached to the ground, that is, practices like walking, crawling, climbing, running, dragging, rolling, and so on, that were enacted when crossing through the elements that constituted the physical solid barrier attached to the ground.

Two parts organise this chapter. In the first one, I will describe the collectives that constituted the boundary of El Campo particularly concentrating on their materiality. Along with that description, I will also introduce several considerations that will link the account with opacity and marginality, both understood from a distinct perspective. In the second part of the chapter, I will explain how opening and closing were managed, organised and enacted through time. In doing so, I will show how opening and closing coordinated, and what were the material elements that allowed or constrained such coordination. And I will finish the chapter presenting a number of exceptions that in some cases generated the re-articulation of coordination by introducing a material readjustment, and in other cases fostered the reorganisation of its performance by means of changing the rules and protocols of opening and closing along with those who managed such practices. In consequence, in this chapter, I will foreground the complexity deployed in the accessing practices, understanding not only the way in which materiality participated in opening and closing, but also how both practices were temporarily articulated.
1. **Boundary matter(s)**

**Opacity**

![Figure 14. Jumping, waiting and opening.](image)

It is 5 pm and the space is still closed. I imagine it is a matter of minutes that it will be opened; so, while I wait, I go to a bar on the other side of the street, sit on a table from which I can see the door and spend some time observing it. Several people jump the wall beside the door and get inside. Some just arrive there and jump. Among them, a few also jump with bicycles, basketballs and even a dog. Others, thinking that the space is about to be opened soon, wait for a while—some minutes—and send messages. They seem to be trying to understand why the place is closed. They just want to be inside and spend some time with their peers on the premises. It is not a ‘normal’ situation. Usually, the place is opened at this time; it is already 5pm!

Jumping in entails a simple but risky action. One should place their hands over the wall, then raise a foot to stand on the handle of the door and push up in order to manage to sit on top the wall. Once over the wall, one has to pass their legs to the other side where there is a railing that can be used to stand before jumping to the floor. If one fails to do this operation they can fall. The fall is 4 metres height. So, it is simple, but risky.

After half an hour, Jaime arrives with the key and opens. When we get in, there are around 20 people already inside. Apparently, they are not doing anything ‘wrong’ or ‘bad’; they just seem to be having fun.
Not only once or twice I saw people jumping the wall during the months I spent in El Campo. Those who jumped were usually ‘regulars’ that thought the place should be already opened; the space was usually open during the day. In 2015, El Campo had been already running for more than three years and many people in the neighbourhood had incorporated it into their daily habits and routines. The space was a gathering space to meet friends and colleagues after class or work, to chat for a while, to have some beers. And it would have been ‘normal’ to find it opened, for it was usually open already after noon. However, why did they jump? Why risking it? Why not going somewhere else? What was El Campo offering them that other places did not offer? I could simplify it into two words: seclusion and intimacy. Let me expand on this.

The door, the fence and the wall

El Campo was also called the ‘hole’ [el agujero] by those who inhabited it. That name came from its physical configuration; the site was located in a void left by a former public sports centre demolished in 2009. Its ground level was sunken from the level of the street and divided into two different platforms, one bigger platform in the north and a smaller one in the south. The former was higher in level—about 3 metres below street level—whereas the latter one was lower—about 5 metres below street level. Both platforms were connected with a wide tilted surface. To solve the difference in level with the street there was a vertical containing wall that supported the surrounding soil. To connect the street level and the sunken platforms of El Campo there was a ramp that linked the tilted surface with the street. The ramp was quite steep, because it solved a 3 metres difference in height in less than 20 metres of length. The entrance to the space was on top of that ramp.

The ‘official’ entrance to the space consisted in a door, only one door. This is important because it entails that the space was a final destination, not a passing-by place, which means the things and people that populated the space arrived there ‘on purpose’. Hence, the door was (supposedly) the (only) entry point of the space—I use the brackets because in the opening vignettes of the chapter I have already suggested other less orthodox ways to enter and exit the space.
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Figure 15. Schematic plan and cross-sections.

1. Access
2. Ramp
3. Upper platform (-2.00/2.50 level)
4. Lower platform (-3.50/4.00 level)
5. Street level (+/-0.00)
6. Market building
The door was a heavy metallic sliding door of about 4 meters wide by 3 meters high. The door could be locked with a padlock and a chain that linked two handles situated in the street’s side of the wall: one attached to the door and another one attached to the wall in which the door was placed. The door was part of the boundary that enclosed the space. That boundary separated the site of El Campo from the street. A public market facility—*Mercado de la Cebada*—was the limit of the site in its western edge. The other three sides were surrounded by three streets. To enclose the site and segregate it from the streets there were two different elements on top of the containing wall along the different edges: a fence and a wall.

![Figure 16. The door.](image)

The fence stretched along all the northern edge and part of the eastern side of the space. It was a metallic fence of about 2 meters high and made of thin metal slabs supported from inside the space by a tubular structure. The slabs were thin and three-dimensional; that is, they were not completely flat but had regular longitudinal corrugations in order for them to be rigid enough. The fence was difficult to climb and jump; it was too weak to support anything beyond its own weight and the force of the wind. In addition, if someone would intend to jump over it, they may also damage their hands, for the metal slab cut.
Along the southern edge and the rest of the eastern side of the space, a concrete wall was built. It rose up to 2 meters higher than the level of the street. That wall was a vertical continuation of the containing wall that solved the difference in level between the street and the site. That made the wall very high from the inside—about 6 or 7 meters high. The wall was 30 centimetres wide. In that case, climbing the wall from the outside was not difficult; however, letting oneself fall from top of the wall to the ground of the space was risky: it was very high and, if jumping, it was likely that one would be hurt—i.e. ankle/knee breakage as a possibility—something that happened indeed in several occasions while I was in the field. That left only few specific spots suitable for jumping in or out, including the sides of the door itself. Hence, if jumping in or out during closure hours was to be prevented, only a few spots should be fixed or reconfigured.

The door, the fence and wall were opaque; that means that the site could not be seen from eye level from the street—and vice versa, the street could not be seen from the inside out.
That opacity of the boundary reduced the visibility of inner activities from the street, and hence, visually segregated the space from outside. However, that opacity was neither completely nor always the same. When the space was closed, there were three holes in the fence through where the space could be seen. The holes were about 40cm wide circular openings built from recycled washing machine door frames and attached to the metallic fence in several positions. These holes were often used to look from the outside inwards; people passing-by were usually attracted by them, and many times curious individuals plugged their heads into them to get a better look of the space. These holes were only reachable from street level. Sometimes, when the space was closed, ‘regulars’ used them to look inside to check if their mates were in or not—in order to decide to jump in or look for them somewhere else.

Figure 19. Holes in the metal fence.

And of course, when the space was opened, the threshold left by the door was also an opening to see the site through, a spot from where the space could be looked over and watched. Many passers-by stopped for short moments to look inside the space when the door was opened. From the outside, the opaque boundary of the space was not really inviting strangers to get in. It was not clear for someone alien to the space if the place was a private or a public site, neither was clear who managed it nor how it was managed. For the general public—people not familiar with the space—seemed no more than a fenced space with a lot of recycled stuff inside. If an event was going on inside, sometimes it had music, and that was likely to be more inviting though. The threshold of the door gave the opportunity to glance over. It was the highest point of El Campo, so it could also work as a viewpoint. Curious individuals and tourists happening to be around sometimes approached the space and even stepped in a little bit inside the ramp wondering what was
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going on. There, near the entrance, on the left-hand side there was a board with a text explaining what El Campo was about; however, without reading it, it was difficult to understand what was going on in the site.

Figure 20. The threshold of the entrance.

Hence, it could be argued that the sense of seclusion given by the opacity of the boundary was something appealing for some people. Some of my informants linked that appeal with the idea that the site ‘invited’ for certain ‘specific’ activities to happen—meaning illegal activities—something that ‘dissuaded’ other people to enter too. In several occasions, the space was also referred to as a ‘space of tolerance’, in reference to the permissiveness bestowed to certain groups of people to develop certain activities inside the space. Indeed, those activities—such as selling beers (illegal in a public space

18 This is the translation of the main text: ‘El Campo de Cebada’s Cultural Association: (1) All of us take care of El Campo, please be respectful; (2) Pick up your rubbish, through it in the bins or take it with you; (3) El Campo is opened and closed by neighbours to develop activities agreed on an open assembly every Monday, Participate!; (4) Street trade and peddling is not allowed.’

And then, a smaller and almost unreadable text was written: ‘El Campo is a space leased by the Municipality to the FRAVM, who delegates its organization and use to El Campo de Cebada’s Cultural Association. Since 2010, individuals and collectives develop their activities in a free and assembly like manner. Everything comes from citizen efforts. We invite you to enjoy it and give us a hand.

19 When talking about illegal activities I am not implying either a positive or a negative connotation attached to them. Both the terms ‘invitation’ and ‘space of tolerance’ were expressions used by my informants and colleagues in the field. In fact, ‘invitation’ was used by someone that was against illegal activities to happen on the site, whereas ‘space of tolerance’ was used by someone that was in favour of generating such secluded spaces, in the line of what Bey (1991) called Temporary Autonomous Zones.
without a permit), dealing with drugs (illegal in any case), but more importantly, drinking such beers\textsuperscript{20} and smoking such drugs\textsuperscript{21}—constituted several of the most popular activities developed in the space along with gathering and chatting. In my experience, illegal activities were only a small part of the activities that happened inside the space and were intertwined with everyday life. Many people, the majority I would claim, went to the space to do something else—e.g. play basketball, sunbathe, walk their dogs, or just meet their friends.

My point, thus, is that the opacity of the boundary generated an atmosphere of seclusion and isolation, a sort of intimacy and domesticity difficult to find in other public spaces. It could even be claimed that one of the most appealing features of El Campo was its seclusion from the streets that surrounded it; it was a place not only to escape from the private realm—the homes—but also from the public realm too—the streets. Being inside the space and not being seen, controlled, watched or judged by others—i.e. being ‘detached’ from the outside—was something that was looked for by some of those who inhabited the space on a daily basis.

Such detachment, I would claim, aligns with Marres and Lezaun’ idea that public participation also requires forms of ‘separation and extrication’ (2011, 500) to be developed. In our case, the physical separation between two different public spaces generated attachment and belonging to those who looked for that characteristic of the space. That, however, did not mean that the people who used the space looked to hide to do ‘illegal stuff’. On the contrary, I suggest that what was looked for by those who chose to inhabit the site everyday was a space that provided a place to be together in a different manner than the one offered by neighbouring public spaces. Compared to an open park or a traditional square imbricated in the urban fabric with no physical and visual barriers, El Campo hosted people who looked for privacy and intimacy; hence, it configured a sort-

\textsuperscript{20} Drinking in the public spaces in Madrid is a common activity among young people. Generally, it is a culturally accepted practice called \textit{botellón}, and it is usually developed during weekends by those who cannot afford going to a bar or those who just want to be outside drinking with friends. Since 2002, such practice is prohibited by law (BOCM 2002). That is why it is important that this practice is underlined here, for the specific space of El Campo indeed provided a very particular space to develop such activities segregated from the street.

\textsuperscript{21} Here, when talking about drug consumption, I specifically refer to smoking soft drugs and in particular hashish.
of ‘domestic’ open-air space. And such domesticity and seclusion were even more severe when the space was closed, for the inside and the outside of El Campo were almost completely separated. That is, I think, why people jumped. In a way, those who jumped did so as a consequence of the opacity of the boundary. Hence, jumping was an effect of the materiality of the boundary. But also, jumping eventually materialised in and around the boundary’s materiality—i.e. stepping on the handle, sitting on the edge of the wall, and so on. When jumping, the specific spots where it happened were revealed.

**Objects of the margins**

The people who opened and closed were not always the same people, and who they were depended on how they organized around the objects that allowed the enactment of opening and closing practices: a padlock and several copies of the keys.

*Choosing a padlock*

To close the door from outside, there was a padlock and a chain that could be joined together. The chain linked two handles: one handle attached to the door and the other one attached to the wall. The chain was made of metal links; to close it, a padlock could be used to join two random links. During my fieldwork, the padlock used was a padlock with a turning key; that is, a padlock with a little hole to insert a key and turn it to open it. In previous years, however, they also used padlocks with codes—with numbered wheels and no key—and also padlocks with magnetic keys—with no key holes. The way of managing the different types of padlocks differed. Whereas using a key entailed more engagement from those who had it because they had to be available to open the space and get there when necessary, using a code was easier. Also, using a padlock with a magnetic key was more secure than using one with a turning key, for the magnetic key could not be copied.

But, if it was easier or more secure to use other padlocks, why was it decided to use a padlock with a turning key? There were two reasons. First, getting a ‘copy’ of the code was much easier than getting a copy of the key. The code could just be told to someone and remembered, whereas copying the key implied that a physical hard copy of it had to be made. That might be—the reader would think—a reason for using a code rather than a key. However, that situation turned out to become an issue: the code was too easy to ‘copy’ and consequently, difficult to control. If the code spread, that meant that the
capacity to open could rapidly extend to many people and get ‘out of control’; that is, those ‘responsible’ for the space could not know who could open the space the next day, and hence, there would not be a clear and direct link between liable individuals and persons opening and closing. Nobody could respond before the Cultural Association or FRAVM\textsuperscript{22}—who were responsible of the lease with the Municipality—or the police in case ‘something’ happened. Conversely, if the padlock had a key, it could be more difficult to copy and easier to track. That does not mean that copies of the key were always under control; still, they were more difficult to spread than the code.

![Figure 21. Opening the key, the chain and the padlock.](image)

There was, of course, the possibility of changing the code every now and then in order to control the way the code spread; however—as they told me—when the code was changed, it tended to spread too fast, and the changing of the code had to be done too often. The question of what was too often—which is the same as saying how many people is too many to know the code—is something important here, for it directly refers to the issue of accessibility; I mean, how is access managed in the space? Who can open the space? Too many people according to whom? In this case, how much was too often was decided by the assembly, the main governing body of the space. Hence, too often was ‘more often than convenient’ for those who managed the opening and closing of the site.

The second reason to have padlocks with turning keys is that they were cheaper than padlocks with magnetic keys. I was told that during certain period of time (previous to my fieldwork), many days the padlock was found damaged when opening the place. Sometimes a little bit of glue was found in the numbered wheels; other times bits and pieces of little wooden sticks were inserted in the keyhole. They said it was someone from the neighbourhood that was annoyed with them; but nobody claimed those actions. In any

\textsuperscript{22} Regional Federation of Neighbourhood Associations of Madrid.
case, they had to buy almost every week a new padlock, and make copies of keys, and distribute them among the people that were meant to open the space. Tired of that situation, they tried to use a padlock with a magnetic key. That padlock had two keys, and as it did not have a hole or a little rolling mechanism it was more difficult to hack. The magnetic padlocks were expensive compared to the other ones thought, and it was very difficult to make copies of the keys. Eventually, the padlock ended up damaged too: the hook was glued! So, they finally decided that the simpler the padlock, the better; a padlock with a turning key was the most convenient for them: neither too expensive nor too difficult to control. That is why there was a padlock with a turning key during the time of my fieldwork.

Padlocks with turning keys were chosen as a controlling mechanism. They were the balanced result of a controversy around control, responsibility and accessibility. Other padlocks could not manage to get that balance between opening too much or little. Whereas the management of the code presented a difficulty in controlling the too much opening—the code would spread and the space would be more time open; the conflict deployed around the glue and the little sticks linked to a difficulty in controlling the too little opening—for the hacking of the padlock would prevent opening the site. Thus, the affordances deployed by the padlock with turning keys were the most convenient for the necessities of El Campo. Eventually, the ‘publics’ around padlocks were solved.

Copies of the keys

The keys of the space were the keys that opened the padlock. Each new padlock was bought with two keys. Copies of these keys were distributed among different people each time the padlock was replaced. Depending on the amount of time the padlock remained undamaged, more or less copies were managed to be distributed. Just before I arrived at the field, the regular hacking of the padlocks suddenly (and mysteriously) stopped. That is why there were very few copies of the keys when I began my fieldwork. During the time I spent there, however, the number of copies of the keys grew steadily. Copies of the keys could be easily made in a nearby hardware store.

23 There were other keys too, for example, the ones that opened the storage room, but here we will focus on the ones that opened the padlock of the main door.
The copies of the keys were distributed among those who were interested in having them and among those who had already ‘proved their commitment with the space’. Therefore, only ‘willing to have’ a copy of the key was not enough; one had to prove they ‘deserved’ it. It could be assumed that the reason for that was that having a key implied certain responsibility. Such responsibility, however, was informally distributed; there was no ‘official’ document or agreement that accounted for it. Hence, those who wanted a copy had to be bestowed with legitimacy by the assembly.

Proving commitment could be done, as far as I was able to observe, in three different ways associated with different temporalities and their related visibility. The easiest way was participating regularly in the weekly assembly, for it was decided there who would get a copy of the keys. Going to the weekly assembly showed others that one engaged with the space simply by the fact of attending it—after some time in El Campo, I was even offered to have a copy of the key, something that I kindly declined. Another way to prove commitment would be engaging, more generally, in programmed activities that were organised in the space, but not necessarily attending the weekly assembly. Doing that, however, was less effective: those individuals were less ‘visible’ in the assembly. Finally, a third way to prove commitment could be done by being present and ‘performing’ caring attitudes towards the space. That ‘performative’ way could be reckoned in the way some young men and women that populated the space during
weekdays got their access to the key. Their way of showing commitment was related to the way they inhabited the space, and in particular, their regular presence in the space. Those who were interested in accessing a resource—e.g. the key—would ‘perform’ their presence in order to be seen. They would, for example, brush the space at a distance while the assembly took place, or water the plants when ‘members’ were around, or clean during closing. Such way of proceeding was subtle and tacit, and I would say even unconscious. In those cases, the time to get the recognition of the assembly would be much longer, in some cases, years—as someone told me. The point I want to argue here is that, in general, the more time someone was present in the space, the more visible and known by others was—especially those who managed the resources—and consequently, the easier would be for them to access those very resources—including the key.

Thus, the key connected different ways of commitment; those who had the key had to coordinate among themselves in order to decide who will open and close and when. All those who had a copy of the key formed a specific collective in El Campo: the ‘people with a key’; a fluid and mutable group constituted by individuals that belonged at the same time to a multiplicity of other ‘labelled’ groups: ‘members’, ‘regulars’, the people of the garden, the people of the platform of artists, and so on. From each of those groups, there was usually one person with a key, or at least, they knew someone who would open
for them. The ‘people with a key’ never joined altogether, nor necessarily knew each other. All of them, however, had some sort of connection with the assembly.

Within the wider group of El Campo—if you like, the loosely defined, fluid ‘community’ of El Campo—there were multiple and overlapping belongings. These belongings were defined by type of activity, affinity, regularity, visibility, and importantly, by the deployment of certain specific materialities. Even if there was a conscious effort to overcome differences in El Campo, and to be as much inclusive as possible, it was difficult to avoid them. Differences—regarding commitment with the space, ways of doing things, ways of living its everyday life, ways in which the space was used, personal interests, and so on—were present in the everyday of the space and segregated people into different ‘labelled’ groups. Such labelling was present in discussions and assemblies when groups were referred to; for instance, ‘regulars did this’, ‘the people of the assembly did that’, ‘members whatever else’, ‘the ones from the garden otherwise’. Those identifications were ways of making explicit the difference. However, and here is what I wanted to get to, there were some of these groupings that were not explicitly named, like the ‘people with a key’, but deployed certain explicit material agency that succeeded to bridge those communicative categories. Those material agents were part of specific socio-material collectives that I will identify as ‘marginal collectives’, using ‘marginal’ in the sense Star and Griesemmer (1989; citing Park 1928) referred to; groups formed by people and things that belonged at the same time to multiple social worlds. Such marginal collectives, I argue, managed to bridge, and somehow bond, other more stubborn groups and closed categories deployed in El Campo.

2. The articulation of opening and closing

Coordination

Weekdays and weekends

El Campo was opened when ‘they arrived’ and closed when ‘they left’—as it was claimed in the sign that was written outside on the wall just besides the door; a vague statement that was qualified by a second line which said: ‘Maximum: Sun to Thurs 11-23h, Fri and
Sat 10-23:30h’. Despite the statement specified certain timings, the first part of it was more accurate than the second one; the daily schedule was loosely managed depending on the availability of those who had a copy of the key. Furthermore, the schedules were also affected by programmed activities on the site.

During weekdays, in the first months of my fieldwork, El Campo used to open between noon and 5pm and close between 10pm and midnight. Two ‘regulars’ were given copies of the keys in order to open and close during weekdays. They were two of those young individuals that used to gather in the space on a daily basis. It was easier for ‘members’ of El Campo to lend them copies of the keys than opening the space themselves. The two men organised between themselves to open and close the space.

Weekdays were usually free of programmed activities. With the exception of some cinema screenings in June and July every odd Wednesday and some other specific activities like the weekly assembly every Monday, during weekdays El Campo was usually opened just for neighbours to hang around, gather and meet friends and acquaintances, like a public square—yet with a schedule. Programmed activities were rarely calendared during weekdays; that, however, does not mean there was no activity on the site. For example, in the afternoons there was often some activity in the garden. Also, spontaneous gatherings and situations happened; it was usual to find people around the sports court doing a variety of things. For instance, often there were kids playing

Figure 24. Schedules on the wall.
basketball or football. Also, during late afternoons and early hours of the evenings, sometimes parents gathered, letting their children play around. Individuals going on their own used to sit, read or simply relax for a while in the space too. During the mornings and the beginning of the afternoons, if the space was opened, it tended to be quiet. On the contrary, the most active period of the day happened in the late hours of the evening when groups of young people gathered. So, during weekdays, the space was quiet in the mornings and afternoons, and often more active during the evenings—between 5-6pm (after siesta) up until more or less 9-10pm (just before dinner time) \(^{24}\).

During weekends the schedule was different. Most of the programmed activities happened either on Friday evening, Saturdays or Sundays and opening and closing directly related to those activities. Hence, the protocol for opening and closing—agreed on the assembly—changed. If a programmed activity was happening, the space would be opened and closed by those in charge of the activity to whom a key would be lent for that purpose. So, the space would be opened for the activity and, during that time, the responsibility of the space would (supposedly) rely on them—that is what people developing an activity were told in the assembly. Responsibility was loosely bestowed—again, no contract was signed, so no legal bond was established. As already presented in chapter 4, to manage such responsibility there was a madrina, a person who performed a mediation role between the weekly assembly and the activity taking place. Events and programmed activities were usually organised by people alien to the space. The protocol to ask for the space, entailed going to the assembly, agreeing on following rules verbally explained there and managing to convince some ‘member’ of El Campo to be their madrina. The role of the madrina was, as we have seen, to take care of the space during the activity and respond before the assembly if anything would go wrong. Madrinas also helped the people that organised the activity to navigate the space: providing equipment and materials if needed and available—e.g. a sound system—explaining rules and protocols in more detail, dealing with eventualities—e.g. a police visit—and so on and so forth. So, during weekends, or better, during the days on which programmed activities happened, the schedule was shaped in accordance to such activities.

\(^{24}\) Note that usual eating hours in Spain are 2-3pm for lunch, and 9-10pm for dinner, and usually 3-5pm for siesta time.
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The reason of such dependence between the schedule and activities during weekends was that the neighbourhood was a very popular entertainment area in central Madrid, and it attracted a lot of people. The area had a lot of bars, cafes and amenities, and during the weekends the footfall in the nearby streets multiplied exponentially. In consequence, the space also had many more people during that period of the week. Whereas in a typical weekday, no more than 30-40 people would be inside the space, on a regular Friday evening, one might easily find more than 200 or 300 people inside the space hanging around—and even more if there was a programmed event happening. In addition, every Sunday morning, one of the most popular flea markets of the city—*El Rastro*—took place. The area, and specially the market, attracted not only people from all over the city, but also tourists, who, in the event of passing-by in front of the door of the space, would take the opportunity to get in and hang around for some time in the sun. Furthermore, *El Campo* offered a kind of space few other public spaces offered in the area, and hence was very popular. Accordingly, to avoid issues related to overcrowding, on Sundays in particular, if there was no activity programmed, the space tended to remain close; or alternatively, it tended to be opened soon and but closed soon too—before all the people from *El Rastro* began to arrive, more or less at 5pm. And why was that? The reason was given straight forward when asked to those in charge of opening and closing: ‘when the space is full of people, it is very difficult to close; because to close, one has to convince all those people to leave in order to empty the site’.

Schedules hence were performed according to two things: the commitment and availability of those in charge of opening and closing during weekdays and the intention to avoid as much as possible the neighbourhood footfall during weekends. Thus, weekdays were different than weekends. Interestingly, here is the first important difference between opening and closing. Whereas opening did not necessarily imply a relationship with groups of people—the space could be opened only by one person—closing was directly related with people, especially during weekends; it entailed managing to empty the site of multiple groups of people. The more people inside, the more difficult the process of closing would be.
Calling a marginal collective

Many days, when I go to El Campo, I do not really know whether it is going to be open or closed. Today, I get there no later than 4 pm and the place is closed again. I image it is a matter of minutes that it will be opened; so, I wait. While waiting, I send a message to Jaime asking him whether the space will be opened today. I send him a message because I know he has a key and, as he lives nearby, he could come straight away if necessary. He replies and asks me if I want to open, and I reply there is no need, I prefer to wait until those who were supposed to open arrive. But after a while—half an hour or so—I think there is no point on waiting longer so I ‘exert my power’ and ask Jaime to come to the space and open up ‘for me’. The place should be open sooner or later—I think to myself; there is an activity happening from 7:30pm onwards. So, Jaime comes after some minutes and diligently opens the place.

It was different to have a copy of the key than committing to open and closing the space. Those who usually opened, some days did not come. Those who had the capacity to mobilise the key—like me—did so; contrarily, others, who did not have that capacity, jumped, as we have seen before. To cope with that possibility of not following a schedule, there were people that had a copy of the key but were not involved in the everyday opening and closing of the site. They had a key as a sort of backup. They were those who could open and close the space without following schedules. Jaime was one of those people. He even referred to himself as the *sereno* \(^{25}\) [key-keeper] of El Campo. If there was a need to opening the site, Jaime was usually the person that was called\(^ {26}\).

So, Jaime, rather than opening following a schedule, opened as an effect of a call—mine that specific day. He opened because he was called, or better, because the key he had was called; he acted as a facilitator of the opening process. For the process of opening, the key was the crucial actor, not the one who carried it. However, without his specific mediation,

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\(^{25}\) *A sereno* is a historical figure of the public space of Spanish cities. The *sereno* was a public servant in charge of watching the streets—like watchmen—managing street lighting infrastructure—basically lighting candles of streetlights—and keeping the keys of buildings and homes to assist people opening their places.

\(^{26}\) Jaime was a young man; he was 23 years old when I did my fieldwork. Despite his youth—which would situate him closer to the ‘regulars’—he was one of the more active ‘members’ of El Campo. He was a very important individual for the dynamics and the management of El Campo. Apart from his implication and engagement, he was one of the few persons I personally met that had a fluent relationship with ‘regulars’. The rest of the people and groups that were engaged in the management of El Campo—those self-nominated ‘members’—were older, most of them between 30 and 50 years old.
that specific copy of the key would not have arrived. And here is the second difference between opening and closing: to open the space a key was necessary, but not to close it, because the padlock could be closed without the key depending on how the padlock was managed, as we will see. Still, opening should always be done with a key.

From opening to closing

To open the space a key was needed. The material deployment of the opening process was not complicated. The one in charge of opening would open the padlock, slide the door to leave it completely opened, take inside the rubbish containers that were in the street in front of the door and distribute them in the space. Once that was done, opening finished and coordination began, and that happened when the padlock had to be dealt with.

When the padlock was opened, three different things could be done. First, the padlock could be kept by the one that opened the space. That would be done in order to prevent the padlock to be stolen, not the chain though; to prevent the chain to be stolen, sometimes a second padlock was used to link the chain to one of the handles. That first possibility constrained who would close later—i.e. either the person who had opened in the first place or someone else they would meet during the day to give the padlock to. Keeping the padlock linked to a person limited the capacity of it to be used by someone else other than those around the one that opened in the first place. A second possibility would be leaving the padlock hanging in the chain, and within this second possibility two different ways. On the one hand, the padlock could be locked in the chain and the chain around a handle. Doing that would prevent the padlock and the chain to be stolen; however, it also would entail that someone—whoever—with a key should close the space later. On the other hand, a third possibility would be to leave the padlock hanging linked with the chain but without locking it. That third possibility entailed taking the risk that the padlock could be stolen; yet it would leave open who would be in charge of the closing procedure, because there was no need to use a key in that procedure. Three possibilities that would deploy different closing collectives: (1) the same opening person or acquaintances, (2) other people with a copy of the keys, or (3) anyone in charge of closing—with or without a copy of the key.
In short, once the key was used, the space was opened. Once the space was opened, another process was triggered: coordination. Interestingly—and fairly obviously—the opening practice triggered the responsibility of closing, or, at least, of finding the collective who would close the space later. That would entail firstly controlling and locating the padlock—and a copy of the key if necessary—and then, finding someone willing to engage in the closing process. Let me now describe how the process of closing was usually enacted.

From closing (and emptying the site) to opening

The closing practice did not only entail closing the door and locking the padlock with the chain; it also entailed other actions, already suggested above. For instance, it entailed cleaning (and/or convincing other people to clean) and emptying the space (of people). And that took time; it could take from 15 minutes up to an hour depending on (1) the amount of people and rubbish inside the space, (2) the number of people helping to close and clean, and (3) the capacity to persuade those reluctant to leave and clean.

Usually, about three or four individuals—sometimes less, sometimes more—would join together to close in what they called a ‘closing party’. Those who would close met to begin the process more or less half an hour before the time agreed for closure; say, for example, if closing time was supposed to be at 11pm, the process of closing would begin at 10:30pm. To close they would go around the space telling all the different groups that the place was about to close and that they had to leave. At the same time, they would suggest people to take their rubbish with them. To set into motion the closing procedure and before getting to talk directly to the different groups, it was usual that each of those
in charge of closing would take one rolling rubbish container. When rolling, the container made noise and showed people that it was time to leave. While rolling the container, they shouted out loud something in the line of ‘…time to leave, party is over…!’; or ‘El Campo is closing, please leave and take your rubbish with you!’ They also cleaned at the same time; they took cans and bottles left in the seating areas or the floor and threw them inside the container making noise on purpose; sometimes glass bottles would break. They ‘performed’ and showed up that closing was happening.

In response, people were often collaborative. However, in some occasions, few people were oppositional, especially if something did not fit their expectations. For example, one specific day, due to some previous incident with neighbours, the assembly decided to close no later than 10:30pm—earlier than usual—in order to reduce the possible annoyance. That day I participated in the ‘closing party’:

… It is 10:15pm. Time to close. The place is full of people and two of El Campo’s members and I have met to close the space. We go around and kindly ask people to leave and, on their way out, to clean their stuff and throw it in the bins. Most groups respond nicely; we thank them while they leave.

However, there is one group that resists. It is a group of about 10 people, young boys and girls. They are used to stay longer in the space and do not understand why they have to leave so early. I am the one that talks to them and tell them that if they do not leave, we would close the space with them inside. They do not care; they could jump afterwards. I insist that if something happens inside there could be problems. The group repeats that they do not care. They want to stay and will stay regardless of what I say. I refrain on insisting; I go to the people I was closing with and comment the situation. We are hopeless. We leave the space and close with the group inside.

In that occasion, we failed to close the space as it was supposed to, because we left people inside. Just like opening later than usual, closing earlier made visible what I felt was a sense of entitlement; a particular and very peculiar way of deploying attachment to the space. When the space was not opened and those who felt entitled to use it wanted it to be open, they jumped. Similarly, when the space was about to be closed, but they felt they could stay, they did not leave the space, staying after the closure.
Another responsibility of those who closed the space was to take all the rubbish containers outside to the street, in order for the rubbish trucks to empty them during the night. The rubbish trucks usually passed by around midnight. So, if the place was not cleaned and the rubbish containers were not outside in the street to be emptied, an issue might rise the next day, an issue that would affect the following opening process: cleanliness was likely to be a problem the next day, especially if the footfall was expected to be high, which might trigger the possibility of not even opening in order to avoid such nuisance. The rubbish containers were usually full almost every day—especially on weekends—and not emptying them was problematic, for the rubbish might accumulate. So, emptying the space was a requisite of closing. It meant, as Douglas (2001) would suggest, ‘displacing’ people and rubbish—or at least attempting to; it had to be emptied and cleaned. It was only then, when the door would be closed, and the padlock locked.

Hence, people and rubbish were to the closing practice what keys were to the opening practice. Both people and rubbish were part of the socio-material collectives that participated in closing, mediating its practice. In a similar way, rubbish containers were to the coordination from closing to opening what padlocks were to the coordination from opening to closing. The way of managing padlocks during opening constrained or allowed the emergence of certain closing collectives. Similarly, dealing with rubbish containers would constrain or allow the capacity of the place to be opened the following day. Hence, whereas the keys, the people and the rubbish constituted the socio-materiality of the opening and closing practices, both padlocks and containers mediated the temporary coordination between them.

Such is the way in which the place was usually opened and closed in the first part of my fieldwork; that is, during the months of May, June and July. It is, however, not the way it was always opened and closed. During the August and September, things changed.

**Reconfiguration**

Opening and closing were not always done in a similar way. Exceptions to the practices I described above happened, and such exceptions changed the way opening and closing were enacted later on; practices were reconfigured. In what follows I will describe three
different situations. Each of them is related to a friction, something that was neither done according to expectations nor following a protocol or a rule. Some of these situations triggered a reconsideration of those same rules, and they re-articulated the relationship between opening and closing; other situations reconfigured the materiality of the practices: repairs and adaptations were made; yet some other situations were only understood as exceptional, that is, they happened outside the rules but without changing them later. The three examples, as we will see, deployed a different way of dealing with the materiality and temporality of opening and closing. In this section, importantly, rather than dealing with day-to-day interactions we will see that other temporalities emerged; rhythms, paces and timings associated to accumulation.

Revealing a blackbox

At the end of July, a change in opening and closing procedures was introduced along with an adaptation of the schedules generated by several reasons. Some complaints from neighbours and the tiredness after a busy July were some of them, but mainly, the change was triggered by one misunderstanding; a misunderstanding that was followed by a clarification among one of the ‘regulars’ that was in charge of opening and closing during weekdays (Kyle), another ‘regular’ that used to open and close before my fieldwork (Mike), and one ‘member’ of El Campo (Jaime):

‘Jaime approaches Mike and Kyle, who are talking. Kyle is upset and a little bit angry. Kyle (along with Bob) have been in charge of opening and closing for more than three months now, and he thinks the people of the assembly is asking for too much responsibility from them. He thinks the assembly is ‘using’ them, and they do not like it. Kyle is in an aggressive mood and says to Mike with contained rage: ‘Since when you don’t clean the space, eh!? Since when!?’ Mike calmly responds (and clarifies): ‘Since I decided to give back the key. Rules are like that: if you have the key, you can open, but also have to close and clean. That is what they told me’— says pointing to Jaime who seems to be acting here as the spokesperson of the assembly.’

Two things have to be highlighted here. Firstly, both ‘regulars’ (Mike and Kyle) did not really consider challenging rules—‘those who opened and closed should also clean’; rules were decided by the assembly and the assembly was ‘not them’. In this case, it was the
‘regulars’—and not the assembly—who defined the boundary of their own engagement, the scope of their own responsibility and commitment, how far they wanted to get into participating in the project. They took the responsibility to open and close; indeed, having the key was for them an opportunity to open and close the space when they pleased, but they have to follow the rules that emerged from the assembly, a forum alien to them. Even if they were considered inside the assembly as legitimate to participate, they did not want to do so. They did not even consider the possibility of participating in the weekly assembly to change such rules; I think they thought that was not even possible; that task was for others.

Secondly, Kyle and Bob were not acquainted with the protocols established by the assembly. Rules were unclear for them—i.e. ‘blackboxed’, I would say. Not because they were not available, but because they were discussed and enacted inside the assembly during its meetings, but not beyond, and Kyle and Bob thought the assembly was boring. Kyle did not even know there was a rule that linked having the key with cleaning; he though opening, cleaning and closing were three separate responsibilities, and that being asked to clean was not related to the fact that he had the key and could open and close the space.

As a consequence, several days later, Bob and Kyle decided to give back their copies of the key. Their accumulated tiredness and subsequent reaction, however, were motivated not only by day-to-day situations in the space, which they somehow knew how to manage, but also by several previous situations in which they felt unsupported by the assembly and its ‘members’. Those situations were linked to the overlap of programmed activities and their responsibility of opening and closing. Let me explain that.

On several occasions in which either Kyle or Bob had opened the space in the morning or afternoon, programmed activities occurred during the evening. After some hours with the space opened without any programmed activity happening, someone would, for example, develop a cinema screening in the evening, when the sun was already set. When programmed activities occurred it was supposed that those in charge of the activities would clean all the space and close after the event, even if the space had been opened by someone else, and also even if they had used only a specific area of the space. However, on several occasions, either due to the inefficiency of the madrina to communicate the
protocol or the lack of engagement of those developing the specific activity, the space remained dirty and those who opened the space in the first place—the ‘regulars’—ended up accused of not cleaning. Even, on one very specific occasion, they were accused of not closing the space. That the space was neither cleaned nor closed indeed occurred in those situations, but who should be blamed for that? In fact, several nights the space remained opened because there was not a fluent communication between those who opened—the two ‘regulars’—and those who should have closed—the people that organised the activity that day. Probably, the madrina of the event tacitly assumed that the closing was going to be done by ‘regulars’ and vice versa.

In turn, during the last assembly of July, after Kyle and Bob decided to withdraw from their responsibility, new rules for opening and closing were proposed. In that case, a new schedule was proposed: it was decided to close earlier. Also, for closing there were going to be at least three people each day assigned to do it. In every assembly, those who would close would be enlisted. If there was no one for one specific day, that day the space would remain closed. In addition, during the same assembly, Ray—a new ‘regular’—offered himself to open the space every day, but not to close it. Hence, again, there would be the need for coordination to close the space, but a different kind of coordination though.

The consequence of not coordinating between different groups for closing, and not being willing to commit to responsibilities that were seen as too much, or not even knowing those responsibilities, generated new rules, new schedules and new protocols. The material deployment of the new protocol ‘reconfigured’ the way in which things could be done. The padlock was still at stake, yet the access to the key was limited to Ray in the opening process and to those enlisted to close every day.

**Closing from inside**

Early in this chapter, I underlined that the padlock and the chain were to be used ‘from outside’; closing ‘from outside’ tacitly implied that when the place was closed, nobody was supposed to stay inside the place; the place would remain empty. Or put it differently, if El Campo was opened, it was opened for everybody; and, if it was closed, it was also closed for everybody. The welding of the handles to the wall and the door only on the external side of them—the street’s side—was a subtle but bold material statement in regard to accessing practices and the capacity of using the space for one’s own stake. We
will see in what follows that there were alternative material ways to close from inside. Namely, other devices could be used; devices, however, that in their own way were unruly and subversive.

The 2\textsuperscript{nd} of August there was a big concert programmed in El Campo. The band was well known and the people organising the concert were concerned that the number of people attending it would exceed the capacity of the space. The concert was announced via Facebook and a few days before the event the amount of people saying that they were coming was over 2000. Consequently, the organisers—among which there were few ‘members’ of El Campo—decided that the access of people should be controlled. In the assembly before the event, they proposed to limit the capacity admitted into the space in order to reduce possible risks—human avalanches, fire security, emergency situations, and so on. They estimated that 1500 people should be the maximum audience, which in fact was already a lot of people.

![Figure 26. Big event.](image)

Limiting the access of people, even if doing so for the sake of security, was something new for El Campo. One of the basic premises of their way of managing things was that, if El Campo was opened, it was opened to everyone, even if a specific activity was held in the space for a specific public. That meant, among other things that no charge would be made to enter the place, and the door should remain open if there were things happening inside. That was indeed the reason why there was no way to close the space from inside. During the years that El Campo had been organising events, however, they had not confronted such a huge event, as they told me. Hence, they accepted and agreed in the assembly that, in this very specific case, they would make an exception. Such exception entailed devising a way of closing the space from inside in order to control the
door but not necessarily confront the people waiting outside, for they thought possible confrontations might occur, and they wanted to avoid them.

To close from inside there was neither a padlock, a chain nor a key to do so. Inside there was nothing that could hold the door closed. For that reason, before and during the concert, they used a carpenter’s clamp—something not very orthodox. The clamp managed to hold the door with its frame; it was manually attached and also manually removed. There was one person specifically in charge of opening and closing that clamp. In addition, to control the number of people that were inside the space, they used two manual counters. In the first one they counted the people that got in; in the second one, they counted the people that got out. To know how many people were inside, they just had to discount those who got in from those who got out.

![Figure 27. Closing-from-inside devices.](image)

Before the concert, the door was closed and a couple of hours before there were already people outside queuing. When the doors were opened, one hour before the concert, the 1500 number was reached rapidly, something that forced the organisers to close the door very fast. After that moment, and until the concert was over more than three hours later, the door was never completely open, for it would have been uncontrollable to count the people getting in and out, and also impossible to stop them if needed. Outside, people continued to queue. The door during the whole concert was closed, except for the moments during which a person would get out and another in; in those moments the door
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was only opened the width of a person. After the event the door was opened to allow people leaving the space. The concert went as expected and people after the event left calmly and peacefully. During the event, the holding devices of the door did work as intended: they held the boundary, a porous boundary which was managed around a measurement: 1500 people.

Here, two things could be noticed. First, a new socio-material collective emerged allowing for a very short—i.e. temporary—and narrow—i.e. material—process of opening and closing from inside in order to control people. This socio-material collective was unruly and subversive, for it did use materials that were not meant to be used as closing devices, such as the clamp, and also did not follow the general rules of El Campo. And then, to be ‘unruly’ an exception was introduced. Due to a preview of possible conflicts, a mechanism to control was introduced only once. Seemingly, such an exception would not have consequences for later. The opening and closing collectives should be resumed as they were; however, as we will see, that was not the case: a precedent was established.

Closed to clean

It was already mid-August and many people during that time left Madrid for holidays. Most ‘members’ of El Campo were on holidays too, away from Madrid. So, the everyday dynamics of El Campo changed. Besides the assembly every other Monday, the space did not hold any organised activities after the busy July, not even during weekends. Also, August’s weekends were less busy than the ones of the rest of the year.

As not many ‘responsible’ people were available, Ray’s stepping in during the last assembly of July was welcomed. Ray was new and willing to fill the void left by Kyle and Bob. His alibi was his dog. He had to walk her every day at 11am, and he wanted to do so in El Campo. After that, he said he could leave the space open until the evening, when he or the ones assigned by the assembly would close at the agreed time.

Ray opened during August every day at around 11am. He arrived and unleashed his dog. The dog then ran and played in the space. Ray spent most of the day in the space. Nevertheless, some days during lunchtime he was gone. Depending on the people in the place, he would either leave it open, or close the space and then open it again after siesta,
as he told me—something that was neither against nor for the rules, such procedure was not even considered when discussing opening and closing protocols. Day after day, he gained confidence. The boys and girls that were around began to take him into account and—as I felt in my informal chats with him—that fact made him proud.

During August, there was not much to do in the place; during the day it was very quiet and very hot too. There were few of those who I knew around, so I had the chance to have some moments with Ray alone. He was a nice man, in his late twenties. When I arrived at field during August, he was usually there, so I tended to approach him. Then, he would tell me the things that had happened during my absence, as if he would have to report to someone responsible—I think he saw me as a ‘member’ of El Campo. One day I was shocked with what he told me:

‘Ray is quickly getting comfortable. He tells us, first to Sofía and then to me, that he kicked a couple of people out, because they were not cleaning. Last Sunday, he jumped in (rather than opening) and cleaned. He sometimes jumps to clean because it is not possible to close from inside (he has not learnt yet that he could use a carpenter’s clamp). El Campo is quieter this way, he says. He jumped and also told everyone who jumped that they should clean.’

And yet again, some days later:

‘Ray tells me that some of the previous days he has let people in only under the condition that they would clean. Last Sunday, he closed from inside (he has learnt the clamp mechanism). He tried to kick people out by saying that if they did not clean, they had to leave. He manages to make people clean by imposing a sort of fear. He even doubts if he is doing wrong. I tell him he should share these things with the assembly before doing them, I am not sure the assembly will agree with this way of proceeding, yet I do not say it to him; it is better that he learns that from them, not from me.’

During August, Ray learnt how to use the clamp, which somehow legitimised him to close from inside. Nobody told him the opposite. He got the keys of the door, and also the keys of the storage room were brooms were kept, and also the clamp. What Ray did in a way was disassociating the opening and closing with the cleaning, and yet, linking it with the right to access, something against the rules; but he did not know that. That is, to be granted
access when the site was closed and he was inside, he imposed a condition to those getting in; a condition that could not be imposed when the site was opened. Even if counterintuitive, two things that were against the rules—jumping in and using the space closed from inside—mutated into something that was understood as a beneficial practice for the space, at least that was what Ray thought. Those who jumped—who did so as a way of showing their disagreement with the protocols around the opening times of a place—ended up involved in the management of the space too.

Despite such a ‘positive’ outcome of Ray’s management of the closed Campo and his efforts to impose his way, the space got to a point that was difficult to govern during August. One night, after a cinema screening when Ray was not there and no one was assigned to close, the space remained open once more. Whoever was left in charge thought someone else was, and such confusion left the space opened during the night. In addition, nobody had taken the rubbish containers out. And on top of that, some people took advantage of the situation and stayed until very late in the space playing basketball and having fun. Those actions produced noise. It was very hot that August and most neighbours slept with their windows opened; hence, the noise disturbed some neighbours. That same night (almost early morning), one neighbour complained sending a message to one of the ‘members’ of El Campo, something that arrived at the assembly a few days later.

Again, new rules were discussed, new schedules introduced, and new material arrangements made. Among those changes, it was decided that a new wired fence was going to be installed. In the middle of September, after a long and intermittent discussion about its characteristics, conditions and appropriateness, the new part of the fence was built. Despite some disagreement, they finally managed to build it on the 15th of September, after the approval of the assembly. The extra feature consisted of several metallic tubular poles attached to the wall and a metal wire fence. It was installed in order to avoid people jumping in. The idea was to cover the spot that was most likely to be used for those who jumped in and out on a regular basis: the sides of the door.
The material response to a tacit confrontation about entitlement and ‘right’ to access the space—as I understood it—was solved by imposing a bigger barrier, reducing the porosity of the boundary, and augmenting the risks of trespassing it. Such materialisation fostered, in my opinion, a polarisation of the status of El Campo. Now El Campo was even *more* closed, when closed.

As we have seen, the dynamics of El Campo’s opening and closing practices were a never-ending formulation and reformulation of ways of coordinating and reconfiguring the relationships between both practices. New rules, protocols, schedules were discussed in the assembly and enacted by those willing to commit. Also, new material arrangements were introduced every time they were needed; alternative objects, devices and mechanisms that were each time more and more sophisticated, and were built over the multiplicity and complexity of previous practices.

### 3. Concluding remarks

The aim of this chapter was to find out how the seemingly simple action of opening and closing the site in effect shaped the elusive ‘community’ of el Campo and what kind of community that was. In doing so, I found several issues that are worth taking into consideration, most of them related to the material configuration of the boundary and the temporality, performance and articulation of practices. In the first part I described the materials that constituted the boundary and the devices and mechanisms used to open and close it. Then, I argued that both opening and closing needed to coordinate in their day-to-day management, because one was indeed an effect of the other. Coordination, in this context, was understood as the relationship between two different practices that
necessarily interacted, for they were mutually constitutive and generative of each other. I also explored other temporalities beyond the everyday, like the short and narrow openings and closings of one exceptional day or the changes produced in practices during longer periods of time. Such temporalities were affected by exceptions and accumulation. During accumulation processes, some specific elements were hidden and taken for granted, they were black-boxed. Only when certain unexpected events unveiled those hidden elements, I was able to see how practices mutated by means of recomposing either their materiality, their way of being performed or the actors involved. Hence, I delved into two different modes of articulation of practices: ‘coordination’ and ‘reconfiguration’. I would argue that such focus allowed me to consider and reveal other related issues otherwise hidden in practices, especially those that concerned the emergence and formation of relational worlds. Hence, this chapter was about relational worlds and how specific elements and practices provided certain affordances that allowed those relational worlds to emerge and be developed.

In El Campo, there was not such a thing as ‘the community’ in the sense of a cohesive and stable group of people with similar interests and a whole set of values and goals that joined them together—as, for example, some have argued in regard of social movements and its internal cohesion. In El Campo many different people and things related to the space in multiple ways and with diverse interests, and many of them understood themselves as part of a community that was particularly difficult to grasp. Heterogeneous people and groups inhabited the space, and in some cases, they showed and performed their attachment and belonging through the enactment of different practices, many times even antagonist practices. The question was hence, if the groups that participated in El Campo were so diverse and heterogenous, how did they manage to be together? To join and decide how to proceed when conflicts rose? Indeed, what is discussed here is the first research sub-question of the thesis: how was the ‘community’ of El Campo formed and around what common features? It could be argued that all of those multiple groups and individuals that were part of El Campo had something in common: they shared the space, its infrastructures and the resources it offered, and consequently they had to join together to manage them in the margins of practices and in particular ways. Indeed, not only the

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27 see for example discussions on prefiguration (Yates 2015).
materiality and its management ultimately allowed for the formation of a fluid community, but also specific community relationships sought determined the type of materiality developed. So, a possible answer to the first research sub-question could be that the community of El Campo was formed in the very processes of delineating the margins of its practices; it was formed in the very enactment of the practices that had to be coordinated in order for other activities to take place. Importantly, such way of delineating the margins that formed the always mutable and fluid community was particularly distinct of what we are identifying in this work as the ‘set of actors’ that bundle together in the development of ‘eventual publics’ in order to solve an issue they have in common.

A boundary that built community

Thinking about the materiality of the boundary and its related collectives suggests several ideas about how El Campo as a collective whole was shaped and formed. The first idea is somehow counterintuitive: beyond all the things done to open the space and its practices to everybody, what is shocking is that the segregation of the space itself from the surrounding streets indeed fostered certain processes of attachment and belonging that ultimately contributed to the formation of a heterogeneous community in El Campo; a community that engaged not only with openness and transparency—through the open political mechanisms fostered by its assembly, something that will be studied in the following chapter—but also with processes of extrication and separation. Like Marres and Lezaun (2011) already suggested, what interests me here is how the dynamics between engagement and disengagement apply, and how they develop specific forms of community formation. Here, I focussed on the later aspect and studied the opacity of the boundary, for it severed the space and the street triggering, I contend, a specific attraction to the space; users looked for a secluded and intimate space to gather with their peers different than the street or their homes. That attraction generated to those who used the space a distinct sense of belonging and attachment which made them in some situations not even follow the rules. Importantly, both togetherness and separation generated sense of attachment and belonging.

Also, I explored the material devices used to open and close: the keys, the padlock and the chain. Those devices generated specific socio-material collectives that linked together
people pertaining to different and differentiated groups. Among those socio-material collectives, I have discussed the formation of the one around the padlock and showed how they managed a balance between, on the one hand, control, responsibility and security and, on the other hand, flexibility, accessibility and openness. Again, Marres and Lezaun already pointed out to that particular dynamic between ‘effort and control’. Looking at participation—and the formation of participatory collectives—through this lens allows for understanding ‘the normative force of objects of public engagement’ (2011, 502). Here, the specific materiality of the padlock determined the way in which governance of access could be enacted. Hence, the padlock afforded certain community. Choosing one specific padlock was choosing a certain type of accessibility, and hence, a certain politics of inclusion and exclusion within the community. Indeed, when jumping the wall, those ‘excluded’ made visible their exclusion foregrounding their attachment by other means.

And finally, in that process of community building, the material object of the key rendered as the crucial mediator among a multiplicity of diverse groups that were already ‘pre-shaped’. Indeed, around the management of the key, a ‘marginal collective’ emerged that overcame, linked and related together many different groups, binding them together without wiping out their differences. In that sense, the margins—the peripheries and not only the core of practices—were the spaces where relationships beyond and among more or less stable and cohesive groups happened, where people pertaining to ‘other’ groups were acknowledged; hence, margins were where otherness was overcome.

All in all, in studying the materiality of the boundary, what was revealed was that the most ‘convenient’ way of dealing with opening and closing—of building a community—was managing to have an equilibrium between a ‘too opened’ and a ‘too closed’ Campo.

**Coordination and Reconfiguration**

The ‘marginal’ practices of opening and closing were deployed along four moments which related to their material entanglements and their timings: opening, opened, closing and closed. For opening, the management of the key was crucial; for closing, what was more important was being able to manage the cleaning and emptying the site. During the moments when the site was either opened or closed, coordination between opening and closing was enacted mediated by material actors too. When the site was open, the padlock
linked opening to closing practices. Also, rubbish containers linked closing to opening. So, coordination from opening to closing followed different paths than the one enacted from closing to opening. When eventualities happened in each different situation, different socio-material collectives participated, and hence different controversies were ‘issuefied’ (Marres 2005a). Such controversies generated moments of conflict that developed into situations that ended up reconfiguring rules, protocols, materiality and temporality depending on the case.

Coordination happened almost every day, but it was never the same. Even though certain protocols that were established by the assembly should be clear, the everyday management of opening and closing was uncertain. It is true that almost every day El Campo was opened, but each day the schedule was different. That was due to certain flexibility in performing their practices, and some safeguarding mechanisms that allowed for such flexibility—i.e. beyond those who had a key and opened the space regularly, there were others that had extra keys that could be called. Opening was easy but depended on a key to be enacted. Those who took the responsibility of opening had to coordinate with those closing, and all had to deal with a multiplicity of other groups and collectives, especially when closing. Closing was more difficult than opening because it entailed dealing with multiple and diverse collectives—people, rubbish, and so on—and took time—and each time that temporality varied. Hence, improvisation and flexibility were also part of the way things were managed. Indeed, what was sought was the ‘maximum feasible’ flexibility and accessibility—in line with the concept of ‘maximum feasible participation’ discussed by Sandercock (2005). Interestingly, feasibility is at the core of coordination and its ruling—i.e. the aforementioned balanced dynamic between ‘effort and control’ (Marres and Lezaun 2011). Organisation and management of opening and closing necessarily had to find the most convenient and efficient way to be handled, but fostering the most accessible and open Campo, in order to avoid ‘subversive’ uses and practices.

Finally, reconfiguration happened when issues emerged. Controversies many times helped to reveal hidden information; blackboxes were part of practices but remained invisible due to its ‘punctualisation’ (Callon 1986a). Rules—like the legal status of El Campo and the different regulation that applied at different levels to the site—were one of those hidden elements; rules were not known by everyone and that unawareness
generated frictions. When those rules were shared with those who did not know them neither followed them, a necessary reconfiguration occurred. Those reconfigurations materialised in two different way: rearranging materiality or reorganizing performance. Reconfiguring materiality entailed using new or alternative things for specific purposes, and repairing or building new material features in the boundary of the space, such as for instance, the extension of the fence to prevent people from jumping in. Reconfiguring performance referred to the reorganisation of people and time; that is, the incorporation of new people in the collectives to manage opening and/or closing, and reconsidering schedules and protocols; in short, reviewing the rules and if necessary, proposing new ones. Hence, reconfiguration referred to a mode of articulation among practices that entailed different temporalities; changes happened due to interactions beyond the day-to-day. In all cases, that affected routines and the stability of practices; I mean, it also reconfigured the everyday of the space, establishing new points of departure—and hence, a new community. In some cases—or for some people—those changes were positive, in other cases—and for other people—those same changes were not so good. Changes were never fully welcomed. In consequence, each time reconfiguration happened the fluid community of El Campo mutated once again.
Chapter 6 _
Sound: Interference and Attunement

1. Playing noise, making music

Djembe

One day, just before getting into El Campo, I hear something when I am still on the street. It is the sound of a drum: rhythmic, repetitive and grave. The first thing that comes to my mind is concern. Having been in several assemblies already, there is one thing that I have learnt: ‘no bass or percussion should be allowed in the premises’. I know it because it is repeatedly told to whoever wants to use the space for an activity. Both types of instruments generate grave sounds that are difficult to tame, and neighbours are more likely to be disturbed. However, after having this first idea, I wonder why I am concerned. I do not have to be concerned; I am not exactly part of El Campo, I am not responsible—I say to myself—I am just an observer. Yet, by feeling what I feel, I begin to think that—despite my efforts to withdraw myself from the field and to separate the participant from the observant—I am already becoming part of the project and the project part of myself too; that I have some sort of responsibility before the assembly, and thus, I should do something. All these thoughts happen while I walk from the exit of the underground station to the door of the space.

So, I get into the space and I look for the music. I see a man playing the drum, a *djembe*. Now that I am inside the space, I can hear it clearer; he is also singing along what seems to be a sort of African song; rhythmic and repetitive, but also melodic. It is nice—very nice indeed—yet it is a little bit loud in my opinion. Thus, I cannot manage to hold myself from being concerned. I sit next to him, few meters apart—about 10m or so—but I do nothing about it yet; I wait. I do not know how to intervene. After about 15 minutes he stops; I am relieved. He stands up and looks for

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28 Before reading this chapter, I recommend watching a short video I compiled on the topic. It could be found on the following web location: [https://eventualurbanism.wordpress.com/2016/03/14/sound-noise-music/](https://eventualurbanism.wordpress.com/2016/03/14/sound-noise-music/)

29 *A djembe* is a percussion instrument that originally comes from the African continent.
a cigarette. He approaches me and asks me if I have one; I reply ‘sorry, I don’t smoke’. As he has approached me, I decide to take the opportunity to kindly ask him if he could play a little bit quieter ‘…you know, for the neighbours…’—I say looking to the neighbouring buildings. He looks at me and asks me with surprise ‘who are you to tell me this?’—trying to figure out what gives me the legitimacy to say that. As a sort of automatic response, I reply that I am part of the assembly of El Campo, thinking that this comment might bestow me enough legitimacy to be able to exert some sort of authority. Contrarily, he confronts me: ‘So what?! I have my street musician card30! I can play in the street whenever I want31!’—he replies with violence, as if he was attacked. I am shocked and blushed by his reaction. So, with a big smile on my face to tame the gratuitous violence, I reckon him his right to play and tell him he can still keep on playing if he wants; I don’t insist. He goes back to his drum and starts playing again, yet quieter this time. I am glad; I look at him and, when he sees me, I thank him with slight movement of my head.

This vignette introduces several elements that are going to be dealt with in this chapter. First and foremost, it foregrounds sound in relation to the practices that occur in El Campo, an open-air site. It also introduces some of the informal governing mechanisms that were dealt with and learnt in the process of sharing weekly assembly meetings. Then, it suggests the complex issue of defining boundaries and spaces when matter—in this case, sound—is fluid and unruly; that is, it poses the question on how we can deal with matter that does not lend itself to be ruled. And last but not least, it shows how certain mundane practices are shaped by the balance between power and legitimacy.

This chapter is about the fine adjustments that are made in mundane practices in order for the project of El Campo to keep on going. It is about the interferences produced by certain practices over other practices, the resonances those practices generated, and the way in which they were ultimately ‘sounded out’ and temporarily ‘attuned’ in order not only to cooperate, coordinate and collaborate with other practices, but also to tolerate, put up with, endure or bear them. Hence, this chapter is neither about confrontation, nor about

30 The street musician card is a document given by the municipality of Madrid to street musicians that want to play music in the streets of the city.
31 Note that the musician considers El Campo the street.
defining clear cut spaces or territories between practices; rather it is about the shared spaces where negotiation happens.

Many practices generate sounds as a result of the interaction between different social entities. It could be agreed that sound is an important part of social practices. Sound ranges from the almost inaudible hit of my fingers over the keys of the keyboard of my computer while typing this very sentence in the middle of a library to the extremely loud and repetitive electronic music coming out from a loudspeaker in a nightclub at three o’clock in the morning, or the noise that emerges from huge machinery in the middle of a factory. People chatting, audiences clapping, engines rotating, the wind blowing, a car crash, and so on; many practices produce sounds when the actors involved in them are active, when social relationships are enacted. Furthermore, it could be argued that a sound—when it emerges within a practice—is also a social entity in itself; that is, sound is not only the result of an interaction. Sound happens; it is enacted. It triggers and mediates relationships; sound is a relational entity constituted by social relationships among multiple actors.

A sound is, in the first place, a vibration of air particles that propagates by means of the collision among these particles. Hence, it is not only relational, but also material. And it is material in different ways, for air particles hitting each other clash and crash with many other entities that in turn generate specific social relationships. For instance, a sound is generated by the vibration of a source, and that source can be many things: the voice of someone in a conversation, the movement of a ventilator inside an air conditioning machine, the horn of a car, the multiple hitting of two hands of several people after the performance of an event, the music coming from an instrument or a loudspeaker, a bird singing, a siren of a distant police car, and so on.

In what follows, I am going to deal with two types of sounds—music and noise—that will be mixed up and mutate during the description depending on their associations with different actors. On the one hand, there are practices in which their ultimate goal is to produce sounds; namely, practices where sound is not a by-product, but the goal. Among the sounds that are produced for a purpose, there is one specific type: music. There are, on the other hand, practices that produce sounds that result in disturbance to others. Those sounds could be identified as noise.
Importantly, sound is not going to be identified as *either* music *or* noise; rather, it is going to be music or noise depending on the situation it is engaged in and its position in space. In fact, we will see that in several situations sound will even be *both* music *and* noise at the same time. Such multiple nature of sound recalls what Stengers (2005) refers to as the co-existence of multiple ‘social worlds’; that means, in our case, that ‘sound worlds’ will co-exist emerging from the same source. In a similar fashion, we could recall Mol’s understanding of ‘multiplicity’ (2002). Mol explains that multiplicity does not refer to an issue of perceiving one thing from different perspectives, but rather different practices are enacted and hence, one thing could deploy multiple practices around it. So, in that sense, here I will be dealing with sounds and their multiple enactments.

In studying music and noise, I will particularly explore how they relate to each other by understanding its specific materiality. To study that relationship, I will delve into a controversy; a controversy regarding a specific noise complaint that emerged during my fieldwork in El Campo. In that controversy, the same sound source generated different collectives that enacted a series of social relationships among a multiplicity of actors; some around music and others around noise. However, these collectives were neither clearly defined nor static. Indeed, actors went in and out of collectives and practices changed due to the development of processes of negotiation and adjustment. Such mutations became apparent when specific actors attuned their positions with others. Alliances and treasons (Callon 1986a; Law 2006) among different actors with either noise or music collectives were deployed depending on specific circumstantial situations.

Alongside the description of music and noise collectives, the discussion explores two specific modes of articulation among sound practices: interference and attunement. On the one hand, interference occurred when practices overlapped and disturbed each other in space and time. Overlaps happened in two different situations. Firstly, they emerged in the peripheries of sound territories; that is, when one sound territory began to fade, and another become more present. In those situations, the core of the practices was not affected; no conflict emerged in that regard, and hence, nothing had to be done. But then, interference revealed itself when overlaps affected other practices, which usually
happened when ‘power’\textsuperscript{32} was unbalanced. In those instances, an ‘unjust’ distribution of ‘power’ evidenced unbalanced relationships, and the stronger practices ‘resonated’ over the weaker ones. Sometimes, the interference and overlap of sounds generated the emergence of specific controversies that forced processes of attunement to happen—i.e. eventual publics. Thus, when that happened, processes of negotiation were enacted. As a result, attunement was enacted when conflicts had to be dealt with. In those instances, the assembly of El Campo played a significant role, the role of mediating and managing conflict, especially when the emergence of controversy affected spaces and people beyond El Campo. In a very particular way, the assembly deployed what I have called ‘the politics of welcoming’, a specific mode of negotiation that helped to manage the space using specific temporary sensitivity as its main material. The assembly managed to negotiate and coordinate seemingly irreconcilable practices through postponing decisions, redefining statements, and introducing exceptions; in short, by what Stengers (2005) would call the ‘slowing down’ of politics.

The chapter begins describing what could be seen as the fairly obvious materiality of music in El Campo: territories, sound devices, power and social relationships around music. It continues disentangling sound practices and collectives by focussing on events and describing the emergence of a noise complaint in relation to one specific event. In describing that noise complaint, the chapter gets to a point were complexity and conflict are acknowledged and some sort of ruling needs to be put in place. Importantly, to ‘solve’ the issue at stake, legitimacy is bestowed from an institutional actor—the police in this case—to the informal governing mechanisms of El Campo, because they (the police) could not manage it. In consequence, fine adjustments are introduced by the assembly to existing rules in order to manage sound, and a temporary consensus is reached. Finally, I conclude discussing the role of the assembly within the politics of El Campo, and how it manages to ‘sound out’ and ‘attune’ seemingly irreconcilable positions; that is, how the assembly attempts to ‘reassemble’ sound (Latour 2005b) by temporarily inhabiting a controversy. In doing so, I show the implications that understanding sound as a relational practice has in the governance of the space.

\textsuperscript{32} Here the meaning of ‘power’ is twofold: it is used in its literal sense in relation to the volume of sound and with regards to its political implications.
2. **Music as noise; or how does music become noise?**

**Everyday sound territories**

In arriving to El Campo on a typical day, groups of people would be found sitting around; pairs, trios, quartets and bigger groups of people used to sit in makeshift seating arrangements to chat, have a beer and let time pass by. Also, one would find other people playing basketball; or kids playing around, running and chasing each other while their parents looked after them nearby. That would be what one could see inside the space in a typical day. Now, if we listen to the sounds, a murmur of overlapped conversations could be heard on top of a multiplicity of other sounds: the cars passing by in the nearby streets, the hitting of a basketball on the pavement, birds singing, kids laughing, and so on: sounds of the city, or what Rodríguez-Giralt et al. (2010) referred to as the ‘murmur of the urban’. Among the many sounds one could hear, there was one that was more or less constant in various forms: music.

![Figure 29. Group of people playing guitars.](image)

In general, music emerged simultaneously from multiple sources at a time and those sources played as many different musical pieces as sources were available. There were moments when people played musical instruments—e.g. acoustic guitars or drums, as we
have seen in the opening vignette; however, music was mainly played on electronic devices. Loudspeakers were often used to play music; small but powerful wireless loudspeakers connected via Bluetooth to phones or other similar devices that reproduced music stored in their built-in memory or, alternatively, directly found on the internet.

When different groups had their own music playing, musical territories emerged; hence, sort-of private spaces were temporarily generated within the space. Those territories were shaped by two things: the volume of the music and the spatial and material configuration of the gathering space. The volume of the music played an important role in defining territories: it could expand or contract the territory beyond its physical configuration—i.e. territories could mutate (Guggenheim 2010) and also move (Law 1987)—and invited or repelled people that wanted to sit in their vicinity depending on the type of music that was played and the willingness one would have to listen to it. The louder the music was played, the farther the sound territory of the group expanded, and hence, the more capacity the group had to be isolated from the rest of the space, bounded by an invisible ‘sonic threshold’.

But not only the volume of the music played a role in organising those territories; also, the physical configuration of the gathering spaces was important. Territories were organised around the place where a group sat and gathered. It was not the same thing
sitting on a bench, sitting in a tiered structure, under the dome, or on the porch under the storage room. Each place physically demarcated a territory; and that materiality also affected the way sound had to be reproduced to generate a specific territory. For instance, the territory generated by a sound system that was played on the porch under the storage container would bounce against its ceiling and, hence, be heard louder than the same music played at the same volume around a group of chairs in the middle of the basketball court. Hence, the location and the elements that surrounded the group also defined the capacity to hear and be heard beyond the group itself.

When walking besides and among those different groups, one could hear many different musical atmospheres. If one got close to one group, it was possible to distinguish the music that was played. As one left that group’s sonic territory and got closer to the next, one entered into an in-between space of overlaps. If the music of the former was not loud enough, the territory faded before reaching the next one. If the volume was loud enough, territories overlapped. In those in-between spaces, it would not be easy to distinguish the different musical pieces that were being played. Yet again, the closer one would get to the next group, the better the music of that group could be listened to.

Usually, the volume of the music of the different groups was not very loud when they used wireless devices, even if they raised the volume of the device up to its maximum capacity. Unless one was close enough to them—e.g. less than 5 meters apart—the music was not easily distinguishable, not even audible most of the times, and it was mixed and diffused with the rest of the sounds of the space.

However, people sometimes wanted their music louder than what a phone or a wireless speaker would allow. In those cases, they would bring to the space more powerful sound systems; devices—such as, for example, portable guitar amplifiers—that, in general, needed electric ‘power’ supply to function. On several occasions, I found groups of people listening to their electronic music with those amplifiers. When that happened, their sound territory expanded way beyond their physical gathering place; and in some situations, their territory covered most of the space of El Campo. In those instances, those practices not only overlapped with the music and the activities of others, but also interfered with their practices; they would be so loud that other activities were affected by them.
Most of the bigger sound amplifying devices used in El Campo needed to be connected to the electric grid, and that could be done in three electrical cabinets distributed in the eastern wall of the space. Inside them, there were different powerlines and also several plugs that could be openly used. The plugs were used to connect multiple devices and on a daily basis they were mostly used to charge the batteries of individual phones. Sometimes, to avoid those phones being stolen, groups of people gathered around the cabinets while their phones were charging. Also, if they did not have extension cords, groups gathered around the cabinets when they wanted to plug their sound devices to the grid too.
Interference

One day in mid-July, a group of people organised a small activity under the dome of the space. It was a meeting of people interested in the development of the politics of El Campo. The meeting, organised by two activists and academics, was part of a series of events that were going to be organised in the space as a way to learn from the project. Beyond the topic itself—which is not the focus here—the event was materially arranged as a small assembly. It was arranged in a circle and participants sat in chairs and benches close to each other. There was a small table in the middle where a recording device was left in order to register the discussion to be transcribed later. Between 13 and 20 people attended; they were 13 when the event began and around 20 when it concluded. The circle adjusted every time someone arrived. Each time a new chair was added, and little by little the circle grew. Nearby there were other groups of people not attending the meeting and having fun. One of those groups had amplified music. At the beginning of the event, the speeches of the different attendants were more or less audible; however, as soon as the circle started to grow, hearing others became difficult, especially when someone spoke with a weak tone of voice.

Figure 33. First meeting.

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33 The series of meetings were later object of an online publication about El Campo (Fernández-Layos and Fernández-Savater 2015).
After the event, a small group—among whom I was included—went to a bar to have a beer and comment on the event. Some of us were really glad, because the conversation and debate had been very interesting. However, one of the organisers seemed to be upset. He was not worried about the event, or the topic of the conversation, not even about the discussion itself; he was worried because the hearing had been really bad, and he said that it had been very tiring to even follow the conversations. In addition, he was concerned because the following week, the second event of the series was scheduled. During the conversation at the bar, he suggested that an indoor location could be better for our next meeting. Despite the organiser’s reticence, the few people from El Campo that were in the bar insisted that it was important to try to overcome those difficulties by confronting them and not just letting them go.

The following week, the second event of the series took place again in El Campo. In that occasion, however, three ‘measures’ were implemented. First, they arranged the space for the meeting as a closer space than the previous one—yet not as a closed space. That closing of the space included setting up two of the movable tiered seating structures together facing each other, and some benches around them. Second, they borrowed one big loudspeaker with a microphone from El Campo’s storage room, just in case they would need it. And finally, a negotiation with neighbouring groups that had their own loudspeakers playing music was enacted. That negotiation was done by Jaime, who
approached several groups and kindly asked them to be respectful with their volume, which eventually materialised in lowering the volume down until it did not disturb the meeting. These three ‘measures’—the confinement of the space, the possibility of using a loudspeaker and the negotiation—were enough for the event to be developed without sonic interferences.

So, a spatial arrangement, a ‘powered and powerful’ sound equipment, and a specific and bespoke agreement with neighbouring groups were the three measures enacted, and the minimum necessary conditions for the event to be develop without interferences. The first one reduced the interference by confining the space, the second one introduced the possibility of adjusting their own sound against a possible eventuality, and the third one established some rules and terms to reduce conflict. These measures were enough to manage internal conflicts with sound. We will see below what happened when the sound reached beyond the space’s boundaries; and, interestingly, we will also see that managing these same three conditions would entail a wider process of adjustment and negotiation among multiple actors, and a much more complex entanglement than the one presented here.

Thus, interference refers to the relationship between different practices that, by means of overlapping, affect each other. When practices interfere, one practice occupies the sonic territory of the other and disturbs its development. Sound practices interfered through the level/volume of sounds enacted. If two practices wanted to keep on being developed and not interfere each other, there needed to be a balance between volumes—not necessarily ‘equality’ among volumes though.

Balance, however, was not always reached; for example, when one practice, in order to be developed, would need a volume that would be high and higher than the one that would prevent interference with a different practice. In those cases, a reassembling, a mutation needed to take place. At least one of the practices involved would need to be changed in order to adapt to an equilibrium that would suit both of them. Mutations might be multiple. Among others, some examples of such rearrangements could be: (a) delay: a displacement in time in order not to overlap; (b) relocation: a movement to a farther place; (c) rearrangement: one of the practices could change its scope—less audience—its space—smaller spatial arrangement—or its equipment—a more powerful equipment or
more distributed equipment, more loudspeakers that would reach more audience but with less power/volume. Rearrangements had to be dealt with often in el Campo. Those reassemblings were sometimes difficult to develop, but usually the assembly was attentive to those issues beforehand and managed to avoid conflict, or at least, foresee that conflict in order to set up and equip the event accordingly.

**Events with amplified music in El Campo**

Beyond the music that was informally played in El Campo, musical activities—or events that included music in their development—were also organised and calendared in the space. Those activities had to be approved by the weekly assembly. They could be organised by members of El Campo or by any other individual, groups or associations that wanted to develop an activity on the premises. Those who wanted to organise an activity had to attend the weekly assembly and ask for the space on a specific date. If there was no other activity scheduled on that date—or if there was one but it could be coordinated with the new one proposed—the activity was often approved provided the people organising it agreed on following the rules of El Campo.

There were several rules that were usually repeatedly told with variations to every individual that wanted to develop a prospective activity in the space, depending on the specific situation; out of them, four were often explained, as we have already seen in Chapter 4. As a brief reminder of those sets of rules: first, the people organising the activity were responsible for the space while the activity was taking place; second, no entry fee should be asked for—every activity should be free and open to all; three, every activity scheduled in the agenda of the assembly had to have a madrina; and finally—the set of rules I am interested in this chapter—there were several rules about music and sound: (a) No amplified bass or percussion instruments were allowed; (b) there should be no more than three hours of music in one day; and (c) some specific schedules had to be respected—i.e. no music during siesta time or after 22h (with the exception for cinema screening). I will expand on the specific rules about sound later in this chapter, but now this helps us to understand how access could be gained to the space. Rules had to be agreed by the organisers of events. By agreeing they had as sort of ‘informal contract’ that was written in the minutes of the assembly. Having this agreement was the condition to get access to the space.
Most of the activities that had sound amplification used a sound system—for example, cinema screenings, theatre plays and concerts. The sound systems used for organised events were more complex than the ones described above. Depending on the type of event, a different sound system could be set up. In general, for a musical event the sound system consisted of one mixing table with 4 channels, several microphones, two loudspeakers and several cables of different kinds used to connect the different devices. All those elements were usually kept inside the storage room.

The event’s location was decided according to different things, but it was mainly set in relation to three things: weather conditions, the size of the activity and the possible overlap with other events. The madrina usually helped in that decision. If possible, the event’s organisers had to avoid occupying the basketball court, to allow people to use it during the length of the event. During the summer, the basketball court was usually sunny, so avoiding it was even convenient. However, during the winter, it was the best location for the ‘Sunday Morning Concert’. In those situations, the event would occupy the basketball court—or part of it. It could be claimed that such spatial overlapped—similarly to what happened with the sonic intromissions—also generated interference between different practices, for the definitions of territories were at stake, and their dependence on material conditions were indeed obdurate and stubborn—i.e. it would have been quite difficult to move the basketball court somewhere else, and the sun shone where it shone. On several occasions that decision generated complaints shared during the weekly assembly by regular basketball players. Accordingly, such complaint was also incorporated in the issues to be taken into account when developing an activity in the basketball court. Contrarily, if the weather forecast predicted rain, the covered dome in the southern side of El Campo was usually the preferred location.

The organisation of the area of the concert and its location was also decided according to the audience that was expected and possible overlaps with other activities. The quantity of people that attended varied depending, among other things, on the way the event was advertised in social media. In general no more than 200 or 300 people would show up in a regular concert. However, there were specific occasions when the audience was bigger—e.g. the event accounted for in the previous chapter where more than 1500 people attended. In addition, if there was another event happening simultaneously, the organisers of both events had to negotiate the best location for each of them, trying to find balance.
and avoid interference. That would mean, as we have seen, adapt one event or the other. So, when two different events would happen simultaneously, one would normally occupy the basketball court, on the northern side, and the other one would choose the area close to the cinema screen on the southern platform. Those locations were on different platforms and also the ramp to access the space was in the middle of them and could act as a sound barrier. Furthermore, when two events overlapped in time, they would often use two sound systems; and those sound systems should be of similar characteristics in order not to generate a ‘power’ imbalance. Hence, sometimes two sound systems would be used at the same time in the space—on top of all the other small informal sound systems already deployed. If both sound systems were similarly powerful and they were carefully adjusted, the overlap of sounds would not necessarily generate interference.

In general, three different areas were arranged for concerts and events with live music: a scenario, an area for the audience, and a technical space for sound technicians and equipment that was usually mixed with an area for selling ready-made food, drinks and merchandising. The scenario was usually a makeshift scenario made of wooden pallets or low tables put together. Around the scenario, the seats were displayed organised in a sort of semicircle for the audience of the concert, using all kinds of seating arrangements, including the movable tiered structures, benches and chairs. Finally, the technical area was arranged as a sort of informal backstage area; a couple of tables, a couple of benches and a tent to cover from the rain or the sun will make it. The sound equipment would be connected to the electric grid in the electric cabinets. To do so, extension cords were used. That also allowed the choice of the most convenient location for the event. From the mixing table sound cables were distributed to the makeshift scenario and to the loudspeakers.

That is more or less how a concert or an event with live music was materialised.

Now that I have shown how an event with amplified music was organised and how music was deployed in El Campo, we can step forward and see how one specific event developed and how they managed a consequent noise complaint that emerged from it. This specific event is not exactly representative of how things were usually done in El Campo, but I think it is difficult to choose one representative event. Instead, it is better, I claim, to delve into one event and see the multiple networks it deployed. The interest in
3. **The noise complaint**\(^{34}\)

The emergence and the formation of a sonic entanglement

It is Monday 27\(^{\text{th}}\) July, and as every Monday, today is assembly day. It is a little bit before 7:30 pm and there are already some people waiting for the assembly to take place. I am helping in the garden when a woman approaches me and asks if Luis has already arrived. I tell her he is not in yet and invite her to join the assembly—I assume she is coming for the assembly. She declines my offer; she seems to be too shy to join those who are already setting up the chairs and prefers to wait for Luis.

While watering the plants, I realise that the woman might be the neighbour that has complained about noise few days before. Just a couple of hours before, Luis sent a WhatsApp message to El Campo´s group. He wrote that the president of the FRAVM\(^{35}\) called him to say that a neighbour complained few days ago and that they—El Campo´s people—should deal with her. Luis also wrote that he has invited her to today´s assembly. Despite the assembly has dealt with noise controversies in the past, in this occasion the complaint has reached a different level, rising up to the FRAVM. Something has to be done!

When I join to the assembly, they have already begun. Luis has arrived, and he and the neighbour have joined the assembly too. There are ten people, out of which eight are ‘members’ of El Campo; most of them are also people that have regular

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\(^{34}\) It should be noted here that most of the text of this entire section has been already been published as an article entitled ‘Welcoming Sound: the case of a noise complaint in El Campo de Cebada’ (see Martín Sainz de los Terreros 2018). Some adaptations have been made in order to give continuity to the narrative; however, many parts are literally the same. In regard of plagiarism, I am here strictly following the guideline of ’UCL Academic Manual 2019-20. Chapter 5: Research Degrees Framework. Part A: Research Degree Regulations. Point 5.1.2.2’ where it says: ‘(..) Research work already published, or submitted for publication, at the time of submission of a thesis, either by a student alone or jointly with others, may be included in the thesis. The published papers themselves may not be included in the body of a thesis but may be adapted to form an integral part of a thesis and thereby make a relevant contribution to the main theme of a thesis.’

\(^{35}\) Regional Federation of Neighbourhood Associations of Madrid
commitment to the space and belong to groups that regularly make activities there. The only ones that I have not met before are the neighbour and another woman who barely participates in the discussion later.

The neighbour is introduced by Luis to everyone. First thing on the agenda today: the noise complaint. Before the neighbour exposes her position, Jose—the madrina of the event that generated noise and hence the person from El Campo that was in charge—gives his version of happened few days before. Jose begins his explanation:

“It was about 6pm of the Sunday before the last when two policemen got into the space after receiving a call from a neighbour complaining about noise coming from El Campo. There was an event during the day that had begun around 3pm; the event included amplified music. It was organised by a Colombian collective to celebrate the Day of Colombia (..)”

The 19th of July 2015, a group of people organised an event to celebrate the Independence Day of Colombia in El Campo. That date was proposed because it was the Sunday just before the official date of the anniversary—the 20th of July. According to the rules of El Campo, one has to ask for a date in the assembly in advance. So, a few months, the process
of getting access to the space began. Two spokespersons of the organisation attended an assembly in May in order to present their project for the event. They proposed the event to the assembly on behalf of 13 Colombian associations that were going to join together for the party. The proposal was to develop activities during the whole day, with food, drinks and also music to dance. After the presentation, the assembly agreed on a date and calendared the event. Once the date was agreed, the event needed a madrina; Jose offered himself to be the madrina for the event. After that first assembly, the two spokespersons attended the assembly a couple more times before the event happened. Each time they presented questions and doubts about several issues which were dealt with either during the assembly or passed to the madrina.

![Image of the event](image.png)

**Figure 36. ‘The danceable patty’**.

The event was named *La empanada bailable*, which could be translated as ‘The danceable patty’; a name that both referred to the traditional food that was going to be served and to the intention of playing music to be danced along to. The event ran from 2pm to almost 11pm. There were traditional dance performances with people dancing dressed up in traditional costumes. Although music was not meant to be playing during the whole event, because this contravened existing rules about noise, it actually was. Eventually, at around 6pm in the evening, the police got to the space.
Here it is when the complexity of the situation begins to unfold. Up until now, most of the actors involved in the network were actors that somehow were related and aligned to music; that is, they were elements, things, infrastructure, devices and people that formed collectives that acknowledged the sound as music. From now on, new actors will be introduced; actors that will not necessarily align with the idea that the practice that was enacted could be only named music, for they began to question whether that was also noise. Hence, negotiation began.

_Sounds out of the law_

Back to the assembly, the _madrina_ continued with his explanation of the visit of the police:

“(..)When the police arrived, I dealt with them. The two policemen told me that there was a noise complaint from a neighbour. According to the neighbour, the _volume_ of the concert was too loud, and the _duration_ of it too long.” (my own stress)

Before doing anything else, the police asked for the permits to hold the concert on the site. The _madrina_ briefly explained to the police the legal status of El Campo. El Campo de Cebada was developed in a site publicly owned by the Municipality and temporarily leased to the FRAVM. The people that managed the place were constituted in an association which was part of the FRAVM. Within the internal organisation of the FRAVM, El Campo´s Cultural Association had an agreement to be responsible for the management of the leased site. The FRAVM held the legal responsibility and liability of the activities that took place on the site, and it also had a specific insurance policy for

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37 The relationship between El Campo´s Cultural Association and the FRAVM began in 2013, three years after el Campo was born. El Campo´s association was not exactly a neighbourhood association; neighbourhood associations usually refered to specific areas of the city. To be part of the FRAVM, an association needed to comply with certain requirements; among those requirements, there was none which refered to the geographic area or the constituency of the association. In the area of El Campo de Cebada there were three different neighbourhood associations that according to their scope of influence could include El Campo within their territory. In fact, before El Campo´s Association was created, one of those neighbourhood associations of the area—AVECLA—held the responsibility of the management of the site. After three years of being responsible, and due to a political change within the direction of the FRAVM, AVECLA resigned from its mediating role between the people of el Campo and the FRAVM. Accordingly, the FRAVM—in need for an interlocutor and a responsible figure or institution to be responsible of the project—asked the people of el Campo to constitute a new-born association. Thus, they did so following the legal requirements and constituted El Campo’s Cultural Association.
the site. All those legal links were registered in five documents. The madrina showed a copy of those documents to the police to support his explanation. Copies of those documents were usually kept in El Campo just in case they were needed. The madrina having asserted their legal status, the police agreed that the activity was legal.

So, the event was legal; however, that fact did not mean the music was legal too; namely, that the sound emerging from the event complied with the legal requirements of sonic regulations. Music had to comply with certain rules emerging from a different place: Municipal bylaws. Hence, the next step was to measure noise levels in order to assess whether the volume was too loud or not following the complaint of the neighbour, who specifically underlined that issue. To do that, the police followed the ‘protocol to measure noise levels in an open space’, defined by the ‘Bylaw for Protection against Thermal and Acoustic Pollution’ (BOAM 2011a). In parallel, the madrina did his own measurements too. Both—the police and the madrina—measured noise levels with different devices: the police with their ‘approved sound level meter’—which had to comply with several legal requirements (BOAM 2011a)—and the madrina with an App downloaded on his mobile phone. Following the legal protocol, the measurement had to be done 1.5m above ground and ‘1.5m from the limit of the activity’ which the police interpreted 1.5m from the door of the place. They did two measurements, one with music and one without music in order to assess the difference between both. The police and the madrina got similar records with and without music, and not surprisingly, both were quite high and both over the limit.

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38 The five documents were: (1) the lease agreement between the FRAVM and the Municipality; (2) el Campo’s project, a document that explained and developed what the project of el Campo was; (3) the internal agreement between the FRAVM and el Campo’s Cultural Association to transfer the management of the site; (4) the register of el Campo as a federated association with in the FRAVM; and (5) the insurance policy receipt. The links between these documents were explicit; for example, in the lease agreement there was an explicit mention binding it to what was stated in el Campo’s project. In the document of el Campo’s project there were stated the type of the activities that el Campo could hold. Among these typified activities and events, amplified music and concerts were specifically included.

39 Indeed, the way in which things were dealt by the madrina that day were consequence of a previous visit of the police few months before (3rd May 2015). In that occasion, they did not have the documents ready to show and a fine was filed straight away.

40 In the central area of Madrid, multiple sonic regulations apply. Among those we find: the Noise Act [Ley del Ruido] (BOE 2003) that applies to a national level; the ‘Bylaw for Protection against Thermal and Acoustic Pollution’ [Ordenanza de Protección contra la Contaminación Acústica y Térmica] (BOAM 2011a) that applies to a municipal level; and the ZPAE [Zona de Protección Acústica Especial] (BOAM 2019), the Special Acoustic Protection Zone that regulates the specific conditions of noise in the central borough of Madrid.
of 55dB permitted in the area for that period of the day (BOAM 2011b, art. 5 and 15)\(^{41}\). ‘The difference between them—according to Jose—was ‘small’, no more that 5dB’\(^{42}\).

The police, in order to clarify their position used an ‘approved sound level meter’; that is, they introduced into the controversy a measuring device—which had its own material legitimacy. Also, the madrina used his phone which, in the context of the assembly, had legitimacy too. Such devices were not only used to check noise levels but also, as we will see below, to define positions, to test limits and boundaries, to inform—the assembly and others—and to help shaping rules: they were, I suggest, bestowed with legitimacy. Both devices ‘agreed’ that the measurements of the sound—with and without music—were over the limit established by the regulation. Hence, the music of the concert was ‘legally’ part of the ‘noise’ that might disturbed our neighbour.

Importantly, sound without music was over the level permitted in the area too. Sound without music was mainly generated by overlapped sounds coming from El Campo and elsewhere: chats, group conversations, and other sound systems that were being played in parallel to the main event. But not only those sounds contributed to the perception of noise; to those sounds has to be added the sounds of the street—i.e. cars, buses, horns, people passing by, and so on. In short, noise without music was the sound of the city or what has been referred to in the literature as the ‘murmur of the urban’ (Rodríguez-Giralt, López Gómez, and García López 2010). At that point, the relationship between music and noise was a complex sonic entanglement.

Sound could become music or noise, depending on specific associations. Music and noise—as well as noise with music and noise without music—constituted different ‘sonic worlds’, as Stengers (2005) would claim, and not worldviews, for they were incommensurable. Different associations were enacted depending on which actor was situated at the centre of the controversy and how it perceived or received the sound. For instance, a long and loud sound disturbed a neighbour who called the police because for her that sound was noise; also, for those attending the event, the sound that went along

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\(^{41}\) In the bylaw the day was divided into three time periods: day (7am-7pm), evening (7pm-23pm) and night (23pm-7am). In addition, in weekends and festivities the night period comprises up until 8am.

\(^{42}\) Indeed, 5dB could be a lot; note that dBs are measured in a logarithmic scale. In fact, more than 4dB is a serious offence of the law.
their party was music; and for the measuring device, the sound was just an ‘intensity’. However, what if—and that is my claim of how El Campo confronted these issues—that sound was both music, noise and measurement; what if it was at the same time those three things? And what if both music and noise—whatever they were—were at an illegal measured level? How to proceed then?

What is clear at this point is that the decibels of the measured sound were over the legal limit, and it could not be determined what was the main source that caused the exceedance of the permitted level. Measurements established a boundary between the legal and the illegal—regardless of whether the enacted sound was music, or noise, or both. Hence, the police could not do much. So, the police decided not to take any legal action against the concert. The problem for them was that it was difficult to reduce the noise level down to the legal level permitted in any case, and it would have been unjust to fine one specific event for being the source of such noise. To reduce the noise level, the police should have also stopped the cars, the chatting, the music coming from small groups of people; that is, they should have tamed urban life in the area. Even though the sound coming from the concert contributed to the general noise of the area, the police decided to withdraw from the controversy. Still, before leaving, they opened an alternative path for negotiation.

Following the visit to the site, the police went to the neighbour’s flat. They agreed with the madrina that they would help to mediate between the neighbour and El Campo. Note that here, the police acted as a spokesperson of El Campo and the concert before the neighbour. They went to the complaining neighbour’s home and explained the situation. They also did measurements in her place. Measurements were done again following the same legal ‘protocol’: distances, heights, and so on. However, in this case, the protocol also included the requirement that the windows had to remain closed. The results gave something different. The measurements were both below the level permitted, and hence, inside the neighbour’s flat—with the windows closed—all sounds were legal.

After measuring noise levels in the apartment, the two policemen suggested to the neighbour that, rather than (or in addition to) filing a complaint to the police if she wanted, an alternative path for negotiation could be explored. They told her that she could call the FRAVM, which—as they had just learnt—was responsible for the lease of the space. So, the neighbour decided to address the issue through this path and called the FRAVM.
several days later. Then, as we have already seen, the FRAVM contacted Luis who, in turn, invited the neighbour to the following weekly assembly: the one accounted for here.

Before leaving the scene, the police went back to El Campo and explained what happened in the neighbour’s flat to the madrina. They told him all measured noise levels were going to be reported in a file. If El Campo’s people were lucky enough, the file might just disappear among the paperwork of the police department—as a previous file of a similar issue apparently did.

It is precisely at that moment of the account that El Campo and its assembly were recognised as legitimate actors that could deal with the sound controversy. That recognition was possible because the assembly provided, as we will see below, a space for discussion in an open manner and beyond legal regulatory frameworks a controversy that had no legal standing—the overlap of all sounds was legal and illegal at the same time; and hence, the assembly was able to regulate and negotiate situated rules beyond bylaws: rules outside the law. Importantly, that legitimacy was granted by multiple heterogeneous actors—namely, the FRAVM, the police and the neighbour—as what I would call ‘legitimacy-in-place’; that is, legitimacy that did not come by legal mechanisms, but by actual participation in the assembly. So, the assembly, in a way that was absolutely remarkable, was bestowed by official institutions the legitimacy to channel an issue that the legal framework was not able to deal with.

**Ruling sound**

So, back to the assembly, the neighbour explained her situation:

‘(..) She lives nearby in one of the streets perpendicular to the site, not directly facing the space. She lives in an apartment on the third floor. She says that, even when the noise coming from El Campo cannot be heard by someone that is on the street, in her apartment the noise is really loud. There is some sort of echo effect that made the sound bounce and reach her apartment (..)’
Here, the focus shifted to the specific built form of the area. El Campo was located in a very populated and dense area of the city, in the limit between two neighbourhoods, La Latina and Lavapiés, both well known by its popular character and its widespread nightlife offer. Noise was a very controversial issue and neighbourhood associations of the area had it in their agenda when presenting problematic issues in discussions with public institutions.

In addition, El Campo was a site that was sunken from the level of the street and it was mainly surrounded by buildings, as we have already seen the previous chapter. The fence and the wall that separated from the street were opaque and avoided soundwaves to be heard at ground level; however, sound could move freely over those walls and hit neighbouring flats that faced directly to the square above ground level. There was also the building of the market, which acted as a big sound-bouncing surface. Any sound generated in the space could hit the market building and be projected towards the neighbouring buildings and streets. That was why the neighbour, even if her flat was in a side street, heard the sounds of El Campo. Finally, and this is a positive feature of the area, there were several big trees just outside to the south of the space. These trees had a dense foliage and acted as a natural sound barrier; hence, they could diminish the impact of events that were held in the southern area of the space. They also covered the buildings that were on that side.
Not surprisingly, sound neither followed property boundaries nor responded to the protocols for measurement deployed by the police. Sound occupies and fills space; sound expands beyond physical boundaries. In a similar fashion, Rodríguez-Giralt et al. (2010) referred to the ‘fluid’ nature of sound in demonstrations quoting Mol and Law (1994). Sound makes the air vibrate and ‘behaves’ in ‘unruly’ and unexpected ways. The sound of the concert ‘jumped’ the wall. If it would have been measured above street level—that is, not at 1.5m over the ground but at 6 or 7 meters above the ground—different measurements would have been recorded, and maybe, just maybe, the police would have not withdrawn from the controversy, and maybe a different path for resolving this conflict would have been followed. But it did not happen like that, sound was measured at street level—following the legal protocol—and was considered to be outside the law in the streets. Similar to those humans who do not follow rules, sound in this case did not follow what was expected from it.

(…) The neighbour continues with her explanation. She is tired. It has been already several months with a lot of noise. The spring and summer in El Campo are quite busy; many activities with amplified music happen. She wants to rest for a while, even during the day. That is the reason why she called the police. She could not bear the noise any longer; it was 4pm, time to rest, time for siesta, and it is was hot, and she wanted to have her window open to have some air.

The very hot summer of Madrid seemed to be the reason why many people, among which we find our neighbour, tended to have their windows opened that year. But bylaws did not take into account weather conditions. According to the Municipal bylaw, noise levels were to be measured with windows closed, as we have seen above, but the neighbour ‘suffered’ noise with the windows opened… That is why she decided to attend that day’s assembly. The police could not help her, and she wanted to solve the problem or, at least, to step towards a possible solution.

The comments of the neighbour and the way in which measurements were done diverged. On the one hand, measurements, when done in an open place, are to be done ‘1.5m above ground level’, and ‘with the windows closed’ when done inside. On the other hand, the neighbour claims that the noise above the ground level could be higher than the one on the ground floor, and also that her experience of noise depended on her windows to be
open, something needed during the summer due to weather conditions and building standards of the area—i.e. isolation, ventilation, and so on.

The sound rules

In response to the aforementioned debate, the assembly tried to set up new and alternative rules for activities dealing with amplified music; rules that were already set before, yet slightly different. Five things were taken into account in order to avoid music become noise: pitch, direction, duration, schedule and volume of the sound:

1) Pitch

With regard to the pitch of the sound—the frequency (Hz) of sound waves—bass-rich instruments—such as bass or drums—should not be amplified, and if possible be avoided. The reason was that low pitch sound waves are more difficult to tame than high pitch ones. Lower pitches make heavier materials vibrate and also travel longer distances. Indeed, there were specific measuring protocols in the Municipality bylaw for such type of noise. So, that was the first rule: ‘no drums or bass amplified, and if possible, avoided even if played in acoustic’. This rule was already set before in previous assemblies and it was something that had been repeatedly said when people asked for rules. This time it was repeated again in order for the neighbour to know it.

Drums and bass were likely to generate noise according to this first rule and should not be amplified. But, could drums be played without amplification? Apparently, yes… It is important the use of the tense here, ‘if possible, they should be avoided’; so, if drums or bass instruments were not amplified and played moderately, they could be played. So, the rule was shaped as a subjective matter. How to measure moderation? That was left open to interpretation in each specific situation.

2) Direction

Then, for the direction, loudspeakers should be placed in order for them not to project the sound towards the street or any other building or element that could reflect the sound. That was quite difficult to achieve, the space was literally surrounded by buildings; yet it was decided to be attentive to it. Accordingly, they commented that it was better to set up loudspeakers in the lower southern part of the space because activities were more
hidden—sound wise—from the street. In that area, the depth of the ground level and the trees that surrounded it might help reducing possible sound impacts in buildings. Also, loudspeakers should avoid facing vertical walls that might reflect the sound towards sensitive areas—i.e. residential buildings. This specific rule was not discussed in detail in that assembly; it was only suggested. However, as that was a conversation that tended to be repeated; it appeared in following assemblies and discussions. It was, however, also left to be considered in each specific situation.

Vertical surfaces helped noise to be reproduced, whereas trees helped music to be tamed. The depth of the southern part of the space was better for the development of musical activities. Not only because it was deeper, but because it was surrounded by trees. In the summer that was good, for trees also casted shade. A problem might arise during the winter, because the area was not very sunny. Still, it seemed that the issue of noise was more related to summer than to winter—i.e. the windows opened. So, a possible solution to such a problem would be to control the location of events within El Campo. There was a temporary and partial consensus associated with seasonal rhythms. Rules were decided for the present. When winter came, there might be new negotiations.

3) Duration

In relation to the duration of the sound, the neighbour said that it was not only the volume that was tiring, but also the length of the events. In that sense, three rules were proposed; three rules that were already stated in previous assemblies yet establishing different timings. This time they were restated: firstly, ‘no more than 2h of amplified music in a day’ (it was 3h before); secondly, ‘a maximum of 2 amplified events every week’ (it was 3 days before); and finally, ‘no more than one big event each trimester’ (there was no restriction on that matter before).

The size of the events mattered. The type of event that the first and second rules referred to were events where no more than 200 people might attend to. In those cases, the noise generated by the music might be louder than the crowd; and also the crowd was easier to control—with exceptions, of course. On the contrary, during a big event the crowd was the problem, not the music; the ‘murmur’ and the clapping at the end of performances were much louder than the music itself—as another neighbour already reported in a previous assembly. Long exposure to sound changed the perception of what was
disturbing. Our neighbour had already pointed that out: it was not the sound itself that
generated the disturbance, but the long exposure to it; and not only during one single day,
but along the whole summer\textsuperscript{43}. ‘One big event each trimester’ allowed some time between
them for recovery.

4) Schedules

In addition to those three general rules on duration, they included scheduling times; two
more rules were added related to respect neighbours’ resting:

‘No amplified music after 11pm’. Eleven at night was, interestingly, the same hour when
the legal night period began—with its specific (lower) noise levels. Here there was
coordination between El Campo’s rules and Municipal bylaws. There was, however, one
exception to this rule. Cinema screenings in the summer could not begin before 10pm
because the sunset was around 9:30pm, and they needed some darkness to screen films.
That exception on cinema screening was commented on, understood and accepted by the
assembly and the neighbour. Note that in those cases, the event got into the official night
period, and risked not complying [even more!] with municipal regulations, which were
much stricter for that period\textsuperscript{44}.

So, there was some agreement between two different set of rules, Municipal bylaws and
El Campo’s rules; that is, both agreed that beyond 11pm every sound that generated a
vibration over 50dB should be avoided, and also that any sound with those conditions
should be considered noise. However, El Campo’s rules also accepted exceptions,
whereas the bylaws did not accept them.

The second scheduling rule took into account siesta time, especially on weekends. That
would be the ambiguous period of the day after lunch, between more or less 3pm to 5pm.
That period of the day was not regulated by any bylaw; however, in Spain, siesta is a

\textsuperscript{43} Note that the incident happened just before August, after the busiest time of the year. May, June and July
had had around 3 or 4 programmed activities a week, lasting some of them more that 3h each…

\textsuperscript{44} The ‘Bylaw for protection against thermal and acoustic pollution’ (BOAM 2011b) defined the night
period from 11pm to 7 am and the maximum decibels’ limit during that period in 50dB, 5dB less than the
day time.
culturally extended practice and its incorporation in these rules seemed natural for the assembly. And the neighbour specifically complained during that time of the day.

Whereas in the previous scheduling rule an exception was introduced against the law, in this rule the case was the opposite. The assembly ruled against ‘legal music’; the siesta was not incorporated in bylaws but was culturally accepted. The negotiation between different sets of rules was enacted through the introduction of exceptions. The two specific exceptions linked different resting periods to cultural practices on the one hand, and sunlight on the other.

5) Volume

Finally, there was also the issue of the volume; sometimes amplified sounds—music or any other amplified sound of events, which also included theatre, cinema, sports, and so on—might be too loud. If they were too loud, they could generate vibrations and get into neighbouring buildings causing disturbance to neighbours. The possible proposals of the assembly to reduce the volume of activities were three, all of them complementary.

First, El Campo already had some neighbours on whom they called sometimes to check up the volume of an event (especially on ‘big events’). The assembly proposed today’s complaining neighbour to be included on that list if she wanted to. She agreed. Indeed, what they did in those situations was to call a neighbour on the list and check the music with him or her through the phone: they played the music and asked ‘Is that ok?’; and the neighbour on the other side of the phone and from their home would respond positively or negatively. If it would be too loud, the organisers would reduce the volume and try again: ‘and now?’… until the volume would be adjusted satisfactorily.

So, in the specific cases of ‘big events’—that is, in exceptional events—the volume agreed depended on a situated negotiation via a telephone conversation and also on the perception of specific neighbours. It was not anymore about devices, sound meters, dB and the like… Now it was about trust, about perceived disturbance. What they managed to do with that movement was to include the neighbour into their practice and temporarily withdraw her from the antagonist position. That was a clever move!
Second, they proposed to buy a power limiter; that could avoid the nuisance of controlling the volume. However, they did not have money to buy it. As an alternative to the power limiter, some activities already had a specific mark in their mixing table (about half way on the general mixer) in order not to go further than a certain volume; if they would go further, it was more likely that neighbours would complain. That was explained by Alvaro, another member of El Campo and someone who had dealt with numerous noise complaints in the past. To adjust it they only had to go through one of those conversations with a neighbour via phone explained in the previous rule.

It is important to note that most of the things that happened in El Campo were for free, and their work was mostly voluntary. They were a non-profit association and they had very limited access to funding sources. So, the mark in the mixer was the result of negotiations between noise and music, a free analogic mechanism that replaced a seemingly costly digital device.

A third possible way to reduce the volume would be to use more loudspeakers in events, rather than using only one or two. The more speakers they used, the more they could be distributed in the spaces and the lower the volume could be. However, here the problem of funds rose again. Still, the assembly decided that if there were some funds available in the future, they would try to upgrade their sound system. A decision again left open to future developments…

(…) With these rules stated, the discussion with the neighbour in the assembly finishes. The neighbour says she is satisfied with the result. She has contributed to a negotiation. Some rules have been changed according to what she said. Some others have been introduced due to what measurements were reported. Other rules have been negotiated. All these rules are now written in the notebook of the person that will send the minutes afterwards—which is me. The minutes will be sent via email some days later. The assembly continues talking about other things for some time more. The neighbour stays for 10 minutes more, but after that prudential time she excuses herself, thanks everybody and leaves.

*Politics of the eventual*

One member of El Campo, in an conversation said: ‘The only decision respected and true in an assembly […] is that there will be another assembly’. This quote encapsulates the
temporary nature of decision-making and governing processes in El Campo. There is nothing fixed but the possibility of yet another assembly. Consensus could be postponed for the next assembly, and if eventually reached, it could be revisited in the future. Consensual solutions are achieved, like the ones in the case presented, yet they are not static; they are open; they are temporary.

Active participation—and here I could even call it activist participation—is neither necessarily linked to antagonism and confrontation, nor to the achievement of stable consensus—understood from its traditional conception; active participation in this case is related to processual agonistic politics (Mouffe 2005). That participation opens up spaces for a different kind of politics that I identified elsewhere as ‘politics of welcoming’ (Martín Sainz de los Terreros 2018) and in this work I propose to call ‘politics of the eventual’. A different way to understand active participation is to look at it as a processual practice, as participation in the making, in which, what is important is not necessarily the resolution of a problem, but the way in which such resolution is organised, managed, and how the process allows for opening new paths to work together. In the case I have accounted for, rules were defined, redefined and temporarily agreed among a heterogeneous assembly and community; yet those rules were open to reconfiguration—that is why I insist in its temporariness. Ruling in El Campo was the practice of being radically open and welcoming the unexpected.

The way in which El Campo dealt with controversies was defined by its people as ‘inhabiting the conflict’. Rather than avoiding conflicts, they embraced them. As I have suggested, the politics developed in El Campo linked to a way of working together that tended to leave open controversies and build from them. That way of working together opened up spaces for negotiation by recurrently re-defining statements, by repeating rules yet slightly differently, by co-producing exceptions to those rules, by introducing perception and trust as constituent parts of experience, and by postponing certain decisions. It was also a way of working that took into account a multiplicity of heterogeneous actors: sounds, trees, buildings, neighbours, telephones, institutions, documents, measuring devices, perceptions, weather conditions, windows, and so on.

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45 *Habitar el conflicto.*
Furthermore, the ‘politics of welcoming’ worked with yet another actor: time. Timings, rhythms and schedules, hence, shaped El Campo’s politics. ‘Later’ or ‘in the following assembly’ were words that were often present in discussions and debates. Even if what they called ‘inhabiting the conflict’ could be epistemologically linked to ‘politics of confrontation’, I argue, in the light of what have been exposed here, that such inhabitation emerged from a caring attitude towards others and the common goods they had to deal with. By inhabiting the conflict, they tended to avoid over-definition. Rules were stated, yet left to future reinterpretation, reconsideration and redefinition. Such future possibilities were, I contend, one of the political assets of the assembly, for it managed not to get a full and stable consensus but a temporary one. Hence, the management of time was indeed crucial for El Campo’s politics.

4. Concluding remarks

The ethnographic description that guided this chapter engaged with sound; with the different ways in which sound was enacted, and with how those different enactments related to each other in El Campo and beyond. I identified two modes of articulation between sound practices and collectives when they overlapped and generated trouble: interference and attunement. Interference referred to the overlapping of two conflicting collectives that, in one way or another, disturbed each other. That is, interference related to the distribution of ‘power’; power understood not only as a political issue but also as a material entanglement among different sounds and volumes. In some situations, conflicting sonic collectives that interfered with each other engaged in processes of negotiation in order to ‘attune’ their practices to co-exist. Thus, attunement was underlined here as a mode of articulation where negotiation happened. In our case, sound collectives emerged from either different source—e.g. the case of small sound systems that generated musical territories in ‘dispute’—or from the same source—e.g. the case of the noise complaint. In the latter case, two sound collectives emerged from two different enactments of the sound coming from the same source: for one collective, the sound produced was music, and for the other one, the sound transformed into noise. Hence, whereas the source was the same, sounds were multiple, mutated in its deployment and differed.
Chapter 6 _ Sound: Interference and Attunement

The description of the scope of sound in this chapter was explored in an expanding way, similarly to how sound waves would travel. That is, I began with the smallest musical sound collective I was able to describe, and little by little, I introduced new actors that allowed bigger and more complex sound collectives descriptions to be accounted for. In accounting for those collectives, I described sound systems of different kinds and found that sound is constitutive of multiple practices in which heterogeneous entities beyond humans participate: phones, Bluetooth connections and memory sticks; batteries, and alternatively, electricity, and hence, wires and extension cords; spatial arrangements, including chairs and benches and other seating structures; microphones; loudspeakers; electrical cabinets; but also the police, institutions, neighbours, audiences, organisers, the weekly assembly; rules, bylaws and protocols; measuring devices; windows and the built environment; and so on and so forth. In understanding such complex relationships between sound and the urban—part of what constitutes ‘urban sound’—I was able to uncover important issues that might help understanding how other urban practices beyond sound were enacted too. In particular, I found that several of these issues relate to questions posed in the beginning of thesis—e.g. (RQ) how public participation was enacted, (RsQ1) how communities were shaped, (RsQ2) how conflict was dealt with and (RsQ3) how practices of care were performed.

First, we were able to grasp the fluid nature of the public realm in regard to the formation of specific intimate or private territories. Those sonic territories emerged when groups of people gathered to share a specific space and became apparent around the spatial arrangements that were temporarily set up to have few beers and a chat for a period of time. Those spaces were intimate spaces, small private territories deployed in public space. As we have seen, both music and its volume were important constitutive features of those territories. Music gave them specific characteristics that made them distinctive; music, hence, shaped and bounded those territories in an invisible way. Importantly, such boundary was fluid, for it depended on a volume that expanded or compressed: the higher the volume, the wider the scope of the territory. Similarly, it was more or less porous depending on the type of music played; the more specific the type of music, the more specific sense of belonging it would foster—i.e. people seating in the proximity would feel either welcomed or rejected in relation to their specific taste.
In understanding that those private territories generated specific ‘eventual publics’ by means of interfering with other sonic territories, I showed how certain negotiation practices eventually emerged, and how those negotiation practices related to specific material arrangements of collectives in most of the cases. Those material arrangements depended not only on the spatial qualities of such arrangements but also on wider and more complex material relationships beyond the group itself. It depended, for example, on weather conditions and possible exposure to sunlight or rain, and also on the proximity to other groups—and hence, on those other groups’ material arrangements too. Hence, when overlaps occurred, ‘imbalanced’, ‘unjust’ and/or ‘unadjusted’ power relationships emerged. In those instances, two—or more—groups in conflict should measure and adjust their relationship. Then, issues emerge around legitimacy to negotiate.

Crucially, being bestowed with legitimacy to negotiate was at the very core of the noise complaint that I accounted for in the second section of the chapter. The case of noise complaint emerged as a controversy around two seemingly irreconcilable enactments of a sound coming from the same source. One collective formed by the actors that participated in the concert understood one of the enactments of the sound as music—that is, something pleasurable and enjoyable—whereas the neighbour took into consideration a different enactment of the seemingly same sound as noise—that is, something that generated disturbance. Some of the actors participating in the controversy were neutral, or better, moved back and forth in a fluid manner from supporting music to aligning with noise—such as for instance the madrina and the police, that both acted as the spokesperson of music or noise in different moments of the controversy. The case developed in a way that seemed impossible to overcome when trying to solve it through official legal channels, for it had no legal standing. Surprisingly, the weekly assembly was bestowed with legitimacy by the police to help disentangling the controversy; that is, the police delegated their responsibility. Such bestowment and delegation was in fact surprising because the weekly assembly was an informal political body of an informal institution that was not often recognised that legitimacy by public institutions; however, in this specific case, its capacity to deal with a situation that had no legal standing overcame legality, and hence, different and alternative political mechanisms were sounded out, proposed, introduced and put in practice.
Those mechanisms dealt with the noise controversy in a very particular way, something that I have identified as ‘politics of the eventual’, and, I contend, worked from the enactment and embodiment of ‘radical openness’, which managed to include both heterogeneous actors and issues into play. Such way of proceeding—that in El Campo was identified as ‘inhabiting the conflict’, acknowledging the constructive capacity conflict had in moving forward—was importantly linked to the temporality of practices; that is, with practices that managed time and timings in specific ways. The ‘politics of welcoming’ and the enactment of governance from ‘radical openness’, I would claim, related to what Stengers would refer as the ‘slowing down’ of politics (2005). Governance practices in el Campo dealt with issues by temporarily reaching consensus; however, in including temporality in consensual agreements, they also managed to leave open the possibility for revision, for revisiting the decision and changing it if necessary. Hence, ruling in el Campo was not a practice that closed possibilities, it rather entailed opening them. Such opening was done by postponing decisions, by under-defining them, by sounding out and testing procedures, by experimenting, by introducing exceptions to the rules, by reconsidering previous decisions, and so on and so forth. Accordingly, radical openness was the basic political mechanism with which El Campo managed to govern and ruled itself.

So, this chapter dealt with the question of how issues were solved in El Campo, and what were the governance and political mechanisms used to solve them. That is, the chapter discussed the second sub-question of this thesis and one of its possible answers, and it also evidenced how the emergence of ‘eventual publics’ mobilised certain specific and distinct politics. Indeed, issues were usually and temporarily solved by developing what I have identified as ‘politics of the eventual’, a governance attitude and predisposition that included an active and open welcoming of questions, issues, problems and conflicts and several attunement mechanisms, that included, among others, testing, experimenting, sounding out, postponing, under-defining.
Chapter 7
Water and Plants: Reiteration and Concatenation

The plants were watered almost every day in El Campo

It is more or less 7pm and I arrive as every Monday a little bit before the assembly begins. Sofia is watering the plants. While she waters, she also cleans up cans and bottles that have been left from previous users of the space in the planters. Her presence is apparent; it is clear that someone is taking care of the space. After watering and cleaning, she says she feels rewarded. Sofia has arrived when the building of neighbouring market has casted its shade over the space and the sun is already gone, around at 6:30pm, and she has spent more or less 45 minutes watering. In a typical day, if she is not in a hurry, she could even spend more time. She knows the steps that have to be followed, which are not straightforward though. If there is enough water and enough pressure, she follows a sequence that covers all the garden areas. If there is not enough water in the tanks, not enough pressure in the system, or she has not enough time to spend, then, she has to compromise with the plants.

This vignette introduces the seemingly simple action of watering the plants. It presents a usual pattern; something repeated almost every day. It also suggests possible issues that might affect its regularity, that is, its capacity to be repeated. The task of this chapter will be to delve into the practice of watering in El Campo in order to understand it. Thus, this chapter will describe the watering practice in detail: how exactly, where exactly, when exactly, who exactly and what exactly. To explore that, I will develop the different parts of the sentence that entitles this section: ‘The plants were watered almost every day’. In doing so, the ‘repetition’ of the action will be contextualised, and in consequence, subtler and more complex understandings of its implications will be deployed.

In parallel to disentangling the watering practice, I will also propose ways of conceptualising the articulation of ‘repetition’. Hence, I will explore the relationship between similar practices produced within one repertoire of practices—in this case, watering within the repertoire of gardening practices. I will suggest two ways of
conceptualising that articulation. First, ‘reiteration’, that applies to practices that do not depend on each other and can be developed ‘independently’; and second, ‘concatenation’, that refers to practices that depend on limiting conditions emerging either from previous watering practices or other external actors and practices. That is, when the practice of ‘watering now’ is conditioned by how ‘watering before’ was enacted and/or how ‘watering later’ will be enacted.

Watering was not a straightforward action; it was more than just a gardener pouring some water over the soil where some plants were growing. Watering was done in a similar manner every time; however, it was also adapted to the conditions that the space and the different elements and actors that participated in the action provided. Such conditions could be limiting or non-limiting conditions; I mean, they could constrain the practice, or only shape it. I will also show that some of those specific conditions were related to more-than-human affective relationships. Importantly, I will study those conditions and relationships and understand how the way in which watering practices were shaped—or constrained—deployed different modes of articulation between the different enactments of the same practice. Thus, this chapter will study modes of articulation between practices that are seemingly repeated over time. What exactly were those conditions and relationships? How much was watering constrained or shaped by temporality and materiality? How did one practice relate to the previous or the following one? How did affective relationships condition the type of care deployed? These are the type of questions posed in this chapter.

1. ‘The plants…

Let me begin by the substantive of the sentence. The plants in El Campo were mainly located in the garden, which stretched along the western side of the space, next to the neighbouring market. The garden was divided into three different areas, each of them conceived for a different purpose. In addition, there was also a number of big pots scattered all over the site.

In the south west of El Campo, there was an ornamental garden. It consisted of two big, wide and long planters in direct contact with the ground and walls of the space where
different ornamental plants grew. The geometry of the planters adapted to the shape of the external walls of that area and to the levels of the ground. The soil was on top of the ground and laid in a fairly horizontal manner, whereas the ground was sloped. To solve the difference in levels of the ground, low walls had been built. The two planting areas were at different levels because they followed the ramp that connected the higher and lower levels of the platforms of El Campo. The higher planter was bigger, wider and deeper than the lower one.

*The ornamental garden*

In these planters, the size and type of the plants varied; there were smaller and bigger plants, bushes, creeping plants and climbing plants. There were many different types of plants and they were displayed in a wild-landscaping manner. In the back of the higher planter, there was ivy—mixed with other climbing plants—that covered up to 3 meters high of the wall of the market.

That area was often used by dogs to play and ‘relieve’ themselves, especially the biggest planter. In that planter, there was some space between plants, so dogs could run and chase their peers. Dog walkers tended to approach that area when arriving to the space, released their dogs and sat on the edge of the low walls. During the time I spent in the field, I also noticed there were a lot of birds in that area. I assume they either had their nests in the
bushes or went there to eat. Moreover, one very quiet day, I even saw a mouse crossing the planter.

Figure 39. Dogs in the ornamental garden

Figure 40. Peeing in the ornamental garden.

In several—yet very specific—occasions, these planters were also used by people to ‘relieve’ themselves—to urinate, I mean. There was only one urinary in El Campo, a small cylindrical construction, which was enough to cover the ordinary day-to-day urinating needs; but in some events, when the amount of people was over the capacity of
the urinary—i.e. when the queue to pee was long—some people used the planters as toilets too. The size of the plants and the depth of the bigger planter allowed people entering the plantery and hide while urinating.

_The vegetable garden_

![Image of the vegetable garden](image_url)

Figure 41. The vegetable garden. On the right, the bamboo structure covered with plastic.

The second area of the garden was the vegetable garden [*el huerto*]; an area composed of ten planting tables made of wood and elevated from the ground with legs. The soil surface was more or less at 80cm over the ground level so that it was easier to work in them without having to lean forward too much. The soil contained in them was of a better quality than the one in the ornamental planters. It was mixed with compost, which was also produced on the premises. The tables were situated with their short side against the wall of the market; the rest of their perimeter was free to be able to work on them.

In general, each table was used to plant a different vegetable. Sometimes, vegetables and aromatic plants were mixed in the same planter—following the advice of one occasional gardener. One could find a table with lettuce, another one with tomatoes, another one with zucchini, and so on. One could also find aromatic plants such as sage, rosemary or thyme. To identify the different vegetables, small signs were usually stuck to the soil in each area with labels naming the different types of plants. Signs were normally used as
informational displays, and also to point out that something was planted—when it had not grown yet.

*The ‘buffer’ zone*

![Figure 42. The buffer zone.](image)

The ‘buffer’ zone was in front of the vegetable garden. It consisted in four big polygonal planters, with the soil directly over the ground and a thin wooden wall that contained the soil. They were similar to the planters of the ornamental garden, but they also differed from them in some features. For example, in this case, the wall was not suitable for comfortable seating; it was too thin and not meant to be used as a seat. Still, sometimes it was used for that purpose; if only adding a wooden slab supported in a corner one could comfortably sit on its edge.

![Figure 43. Wooden slabs temporarily repurposed as seats.](image)
Here, medium-sized ornamental plants were usually grown, plants that generated some sort of volume and could grow up to one meter high, more or less. Those plants were cohesive; that is, they acted as a big homogeneous ‘body’ of plants. For example, among those plants, sunflowers were planted and grown during my time in the field. Sunflowers were planted in all these planters at the same time and, when they grew, they showed a cohesive presence. As one of my informants told me one day,

‘These planters were made to separate the vegetable garden from the activity zone. Many days the vegetable garden showed up full of shit. The planters were meant to grow as the leafiest part of the garden.’

![Figure 44. The buffer zone before plants had grown up (left) and after (right).](image)

Hence, they were built to provide a sort of separation between the vegetable garden and the rest of El Campo, to prevent people seating too close to the vegetables and ruining them. Before this area was built, more people used to hang around in closer proximity to the vegetable garden, and many mornings the soil of the planting tables was found full of dirt, mainly empty cans and glass bottles of beer.

**Big pots with trees**

Finally, there were several pots distributed in the space. Most of these pots were quite big and had small trees planted on them. They were mainly distributed in the northern area of the space, between the vegetable garden and the basketball court. Some of the bigger pots were made of wood, but there were also others pots that were built from recycled rubbish containers, which were a little bit smaller. These latter pots had a particularity: they had wheels and could be moved. This particularity allowed for some areas to be rearranged for specific purposes.
Each of these big pots had one tree planted on it. Different species of trees were planted; several ginkgoes, a sweet gum, a small palm tree, some fig trees, and so on. Some pots had no tree when I was there; I assume before they had trees which might have died. Out of the trees that were left, some were healthy, but others did not seem to be too well. I was told that the problem with the rubbish containers acting as pots was that they did not drain properly, and in consequence the surplus water could not leave the container, causing the soil to be constantly saturated and the roots of the trees to rot.

All these areas were built by the people of El Campo taking into account one of the points of the lease agreement which said: ‘It is explicitly prohibited to plant trees or make any other intervention that can affect the subsoil’ (Ayuntamiento de Madrid 2014, 2). The moving pots from recycled rubbish containers, the planting tables, and even, the planters situated directly over the concrete ground were built taking that point into consideration. No hole was made in the concrete slab that covered the whole site to allow plants get to the subsoil, and even, barriers were put in place in order to prevent that from happening. For instance, a geotextile sheet was used as a barrier under the planters that were over the

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46It is interesting to note that the reference to soil in previous versions on the lease agreement was different. The lease agreement was renewed every year, and each year was modified a little bit. In the previous versions, the text would only state: ‘It is explicitly prohibited to plant trees on the site.’
ground; that geotextile sheet allowed water drain out of the planter, but prevented roots going through and getting into the sub-soil.

**Plant Bodies and Watering Collectives**

So, ‘the plants…’ of El Campo were of different species, and they were planted in different areas with different conditions—geometric shape, soil depth, and so on. Depending on the area of the garden, different relationships among plants emerged. First, in the ornamental garden, the plants grew in planters attached the ground and were wildly landscaped. Those plants formed a heterogeneous group of individuals working as a whole. Then, the vegetables and aromatic plants of the vegetable garden grew in planting tables, they were organised by species in specific spaces and were labelled with signs; so, they were organised as homogeneous ‘productive’ collectives. Some of those plants strategically planted together, for they were meant to help each other—e.g. aromatic plants prevented some insects eating vegetables. In addition, the plants in the ‘buffer’ zone protected other plants; they were planted to separate two areas and acted as one cohesive body, as a barrier. Finally, in the bigger pots distributed in the space there were trees, and some could be moved. Hence, it could be claimed that the garden as a whole worked as an ecological assemblage developing what Teh (2016) would refer to as co-evolutionary pathways, for the mutation and development of certain plants or groups of plants affected other plants. I could argue here that such relational interdependency among all the different vegetable entities indeed embodied non-human inter-subjectivity; that is, plants related to and with plants and their direct environment, not necessarily including humans in their social relationships.

Furthermore, such belonging to different coherent groups varied with time: a plant could be transplanted. For instance, I participated in the reorganisation of several areas of the garden; some plants were transplanted, others directly pulled out and thrown away. Some areas might even change its purpose. As we will see below, the vegetable garden began a process of mutation into an ornamental garden during the time of my fieldwork which was motivated in effect by the capacity to develop gardening practices. Hence, the place where plants grew affected the watering and managing processes of the garden—and vice versa—and in consequence, it also affected the life of plants themselves.
The question to be posed is: was the watering practice affected by the differences among plants, planters, and soil? Well, I would suggest so. There were some differences between plants that resulted in a sort of watering hierarchy; however, that hierarchy was neither explicit nor easy to foreground. Some plants needed more water than others; some planters organised plants as big bodies, whereas others separated them into individuals; some geometries allowed for reaching the base of the stems of the plants, whereas others forced the sprinkling of the water; some soil kept its humidity and soaked up water better than other soil. The different ways in which plants were grouped also affected and shaped how they were watered—and vice versa.

Plants were enrolled in watering collectives as either distinct individuals or associations of individuals; and for each collective a different intention developed into a different watering practice. The protective body of the ‘buffer’ zone was watered in order for it to grow in a cohesive manner; the groups divided by species responded to specific watering requirements; and the plants in the ornamental garden were watered in relation to an aesthetic value of the whole—i.e. losing one individual will not make much difference. Hence, if the ornamental garden was watered, it was watered as a whole, whereas in the vegetable garden, it had to be decided whether tomatoes or zucchinis should be watered. In consequence, more volume of water and more time would be needed to water the ornamental garden than, for example, one tree or the planting table with tomatoes. In addition, a similar type of plant would be considered an individual or part of a collective if it was planted in one planter or another. But the different way in which plants were watered did not only depend on plants, planters and soil; it was also affected by other factors. To understand that I need to continue describing the elements that participated in the watering practice.

2. ‘… were watered…’

The verb of the sentence introduces two new sets of actants in the practice of watering: the ‘gardeners’, on the one hand, and the watering infrastructure, on the other hand. The passive voice suggests the action has to be done by someone or something. The ‘gardener’ is, hence, an actant—i.e. human or non-human—that mediates the action of watering; a
gardener can be a human individual, an animal, a technology or simply the rain that falls in a certain moment. The participle of the verb implies the action is linked to a flowing substance: water. Water flows from the municipal network to the soil through a watering infrastructure and some devices. In the following section I will introduce the former set of actants, the ‘gardeners’. And then, I will describe the second set of actants: the watering infrastructure of El Campo.

Who/what watered the plants in El Campo?

In El Campo there were several gardeners. There were people that watered the plants, and also did other related jobs in the garden beyond watering. Some people watered the plants regularly and there were also others that occasionally did so. It also rained sometimes, but not often; the spring and summer I spent in El Campo was very hot, and it rained only very few days. During my fieldwork, weather conditions were hard for plants and directly affected the practice of watering, forcing gardeners to be more attentive than usual. In addition, there was another gardener who might have watered the plants, a technology: a dripping watering system. Unfortunately, although it had worked before, that technology was not in use during my fieldwork, so I will skip this gardener from the account. Furthermore, there were other gardeners who helped the garden reproduce itself; here I refer to animals. Especially during the summer and spring, bees, butterflies and other insects generated a symbiotic relationship with plants, and in particular with their flowers. Birds also related to plants, and more specifically, to vegetables and fruits. However, these gardeners were not part of the watering process even if they did participate in other gardening actions. So, in the absence of rain and technology, human gardeners took the responsibility of watering the plants; which means they had to manage water wisely in order to keep the humidity of the soil and help the plants grow. Without the human gardeners’ participation, plants would have probably died.

During the time of my fieldwork, Sofía and Ana were the regular gardeners of El Campo. They were two of the many people that had been involved in the garden since its inception, but during my fieldwork, they were the two more active individuals that worked there. Sofía began her involvement in the garden coinciding with my presence in the space. She was a very energetic woman; at a time when the garden was nearly abandoned, she decided to take the lead. Ana joined the garden group before Sofía—at a
time when there was a cohesive group (I will come back to this point below)—but not in a leading role. Sofía and Ana not only watered the plants, they also did other related activities in the garden, such as cleaning the planters, and occasionally planting, aerating the soil, transplanting cuttings, pruning and trimming plants, and so forth. However, these activities were not done on a regular basis, due to—in their own words—the lack of participation and involvement of other people. Those activities were time consuming, and they were only two individuals. They did not have enough time to do all the things that were meant to be done.

There were other people that helped in the garden too, but not so often, and on most occasions, they did it in relation to specific events organised to take care of El Campo, for example, a ‘cleaning day’ or a ‘working day’. Those days were previously programmed as activities and called via social networks. In those ‘events’—I participated in three of them—other works beyond gardening were also done—i.e. cleaning the whole space, repairing furniture, etc. Individuals like Luis, Jaime and Juan were very active members in those occasions; however, they rarely participated in the day-to-day watering process, unless they were specifically asked for it—e.g. to cover one of the regular gardeners if she could not make it. I also become one of those occasional helpers. In addition to those gardeners, there were also some other people that in very specific situations watered the garden too, as we will see below.

Sofía and Ana coordinated between themselves. If one could not go to water the plants, she would ask the other to cover her during that time. For example, when Sofía went on holidays for a fortnight, she asked Ana to take care of the garden while she was away. At some point, I was also included in that communication, and in a couple of occasions, I was also asked to take care of the watering process. In August I watered the plants for a couple of days in a row. In the chats I had with them, they both agreed that taking care of the garden was tiring and difficult, and implied a commitment that was sometimes overwhelming and unacknowledged; however, they also underlined the great reward they got back when plants ‘replied’ to their effort by being shiny and healthy. In those conversations, they also told me about the previous years.

Before my time in the field, there was a gardening group, a wider group of around 6 or 7 people that took care of the garden. That group not only regularly watered the plants, but
also had *regular* days in the week when they met to manage the garden, usually one evening a week. Managing the garden entailed arranging planting days, cleaning the gardening areas from rubbish, digging, aerating and changing the soil, planting new plants, collecting the already grown vegetables—if there were any—pruning and trimming, composting wasted materials, and so on and so forth. That same group was the one that built the planting tables and put in place the watering system of El Campo in the beginning, and they were also the ones that repaired the water pipes when needed, installed the dripping watering system, and so on. They were a quite cohesive group; they had their own email list and their own WhatsApp group to communicate. They organised their own events—e.g. popular meals—and also participated regularly in the weekly assembly of El Campo as a group. Even more, the gardening group was part of a wider network of urban gardens and gardeners in Madrid\(^47\), which provided El Campo a robust link to wider citizen initiatives networks related to urban gardening. They were called ‘El Campo de Cebada’s vegetable garden collective’\(^48\); they were indeed an important asset for El Campo.

However, few months before I arrived, the group managed to access another site from the municipality; a site for a new vegetable garden that, in their own words, fitted better their purpose: growing plants and vegetables. The move of the group to that new place that left El Campo ‘orphaned’ without gardeners was mainly motivated for two reasons—as one of the persons that moved out shared with me.

First of all, there were some individuals that were tired and annoyed with the ‘interferences’ with other groups who used the space. Those interferences were not related to other formal groups of the space, neither had they anything to do with disagreements or conflicts regarding management or organisational practices. As they commented, it was more related to the environment that some users of the space generated: the music they listened to, their general attitude towards the space and their ‘lack of engagement and empathy’—as they put it—with the urban garden activity. When doing their ordinary day-to-day gardening activities, the group was somehow intimidated by those users;

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\(^47\) Red de Huertos Urbanos de Madrid. (https://redhuertosurbanosmadrid.wordpress.com/)

\(^48\) [Colectivo del Huerto de El Campo de Cebada]
sometimes explicitly. As an example, the following situation extracted from my fieldnotes describes it well:

(…) Andrea waters some spots, but not all. She avoids certain areas where young people are seating close by; she feels intimidated. She does not understand why the boys do not allow her watering. ‘It is only five minutes that they have to stand up and leave us some space to water’ she says. And she adds ‘they are bad boys. They hit you, they insult you, and they laugh at you’. I ask her why she says that, and she replies that they have no respect and tells me about a situation sometime before when she almost got beaten.

She was watering near a group of boys when one of the boys confronted her saying that she had wet him on purpose. She said she didn’t, but he replied the opposite. That response got to her nerves and then wet him on purpose that second time. The boy grabbed the hose from her and replied wetting her too. In response, she threw him a key; fortunately, she did not hit him.

Even if these situations rarely happened, the people from the vegetable garden were tired and intimidated. As a consequence, they thought that having their own space would be more comforting. That was indeed one of the reasons why the ‘buffer’ garden area was built before they left.

The second reason to move out was that they wanted a ‘standardised’ site to grow plants. Indeed, the space for the garden in El Campo could be considered counterintuitive. Despite its very name⁴⁹, El Campo was a ‘concrete hole’—as they called it. The ground was a concrete slab and the space was sunk from the level of the street, which meant the amount of direct sunlight it got was low. When the people of the gardening group arrived at the space five years before, there was no soil, and the contract for the lease explicitly prohibited interventions that could affect the subsoil, as we have already seen. They made a great effort to equip the space. Still, the space did not provide a proper context for gardening—at least, that was what I understood from their comments.

On the contrary, the site for the new vegetable garden was located in a park. It was sunnier than El Campo and had views over the city—which made it an appealing location too—

⁴⁹ ‘El Campo de Cebada’ means ‘The Barley Field’.
and more importantly, it had direct access to the subsoil and had no water restrictions — the entire contrary of what El Campo provided. Plants could be planted on the ground and watered without problems, and the soil could be dug. So, once they managed to get the lease from the council, the gardening group moved to the new site. That moving changed the dynamics of the garden in El Campo. As a consequence, the garden was almost abandoned for a while until Sofía and Ana decided to take care of it.

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So, to recapitulate until here, there were several actors in play: plants (different types), soil (different depths and consistencies), planters (with different shapes, geometries and locations), changing weather conditions (but mainly dry conditions during my fieldwork), and two regular human gardeners (who were occasionally helped by some other individuals). Regarding the gardeners, the two individuals involved tried to maintain the garden, and particularly water the plants almost every day, coordinating amongst themselves. If they could, they also did other related works; if they could, they also invited, involved and welcomed other people to engage with the garden. However, their main activity in the garden was watering the plants.

Regular and occasional gardening. Not enough time

Before continuing it is important to underline the fact that being only two individuals who engaged in the gardening practices had implications for the garden itself, especially for the weaker plants that needed more attention and care. Except for watering, most of the gardening jobs needed to keep the garden in good shape were not done on a regular basis, and particularly so in the vegetable garden. In turn, some vegetables were not collected on time: tomatoes over-ripened, some planting tables were empty, lettuce overgrew, and weeds encroached on planters. The inability to take care of the vegetable garden generated a ‘feeling of abandonment’ and frustration, and the individuals that took care of it felt little support from other people from El Campo. In certain moments, during the summer, when even more regular water supply was needed and could not be provided, many plants were very dry, nearly dead. As a result, Sofía proposed to the assembly to change the vegetable garden into an ornamental garden; the reason being an ornamental garden would require less work and attention. Due to the moving out of gardening group and the
lack of participation from other people, only watering was not enough to support some parts of the garden. Such change, however, did not happen during my fieldwork.

Here the regularity of certain activities had direct implications for the development of the space, and that regularity depended, among other things, on workforce—either number of individuals involved, or hours dedicated. The more people implicated and/or the more hours dedicated, the better the garden would be taken care of. On the contrary, if less people could commit or less hours could be spent, some practices would not be delivered, others would be delivered poorly, and the configuration of the garden would be likely to change. The displacement of a number of active experienced participants to a different location reduced the workforce resulting in a modification of gardening practices in El Campo. The only regular gardening practice during the time of my fieldwork was watering, and that watering practice was enacted differently, due to the changes of configuration of the space. Hence, new collectives emerged.

The ‘abandonment’ of the vegetable garden, however, was not necessarily a negative thing in itself; it also had some ‘positive’ implications. For instance, it attracted birds to the space, due to the proliferation of over-ripened vegetables that could be eaten. Birds—mainly sparrows—were drawn to the space, and during the quiet hours of the day, stayed in the garden area not only eating but doing other things such as flying around, chasing each other, mating and so on.
Still, regularity in watering affected in a very situated manner certain parts of the garden, the ones that managed to engage in an ‘affective’ relationship with gardeners. The process of engaging with the sunflowers is an interesting example of that relationship. While the vegetable garden was almost abandoned during the summer, in the buffer zone the sunflowers flourished. They grew at a good pace, and day after day, their evolution was apparent. They gave a colourful note to the garden during the times when the rest of the garden was too ‘sad’. In the conversations I had with Sofía and Ana, both underlined that sunflowers gave the space a sign of healthiness. One former member of El Campo, in one meeting after having been away for some time, said that the sunflowers were very much related to the spirit of the place:

‘The common place in ‘la Cebada’, at least in its beginnings, was the garden (..) Now the sunflowers are beautiful. They show this is a space for respect. Those flowers are important.’

For her, as I understood, El Campo was the garden; that is, the garden represented El Campo. That was something very important; for her, at a moment in which the garden was struggling, the sunflowers gave the feeling that not only the garden was alive, but also El Campo was alive.

Interestingly, here is when other gardeners beyond the ones described above participated. Some individuals helped water the plants on very specific occasions. Such instances were rare; however, a short example illustrates that engagement. The situation was accounted for by Sofía in my fieldwork conversation with her:

‘(..) The sunflowers were meant to be there only for a period of time, because it is sunny in El Campo. But I know, because I was told, that when they began to grow, all the kids from down there, the regulars, were amazed! Delighted! And once Ana came and there was a kid with a watering can watering the sunflowers. ‘I was afraid that nobody came to water them and they would dry’—he told her. That is, a kid that comes here to drink beer and smoke joints, who does not give a damn about the [rest of the] plants, but sees the sunflower is nice and sits there… and sees the beautiful plant and realises it is dried… Then he got up and took a watering can and wanted to water it. That is a change in attitude.’
Even if this is a very situated example, it somehow contradicts the account of the people of the gardening group that moved out and portrays a counter attitude. The boy was one of the ‘regulars’ that apparently was not engaged with the space; he was part of the groups that provided the gardening group with a reason to leave. But in fact, he engaged with the space, in his own terms, of course; when gardeners were not there, he ‘covered’ for them. Sofía refers to engagement when she underlines the change in attitude towards the space. This is interesting. There were not only material relationships among all the different elements—plants, soil, gardeners, and water—but also attitudes and feelings deployed towards certain specific elements, caring and uncaring attitudes, motivations to care. Indeed, it is difficult to take care without previously not having cared about something. Taking care is a consequence of affectivity. Thus, attitudes also shaped the way in which watering was done.

So, only watering resulted sometimes in concentrating on some parts of the garden and some specific plants more than others. Having less workforce for gardening entailed either a very superficial attention to the entire garden, or a much more attentive—and affective—care of some of its parts—or a combination of both—because the amount of time to be spent was limited. It also implied that some spaces were populated by other non-human inhabitants that generated specific collectives; some were attracted by human caring attitudes—i.e. insects attracted to the cared-for sunflowers—whereas others were attracted by the human uncaring ones—i.e. birds attracted by the uncared-for tomatoes.

* Up until now we have seen that different plants triggered the enactment of certain watering practices and bundle different collectives around them: some plants needed more water, others needed less water; some plants needed water regularly, others not so. We have also seen that the engagement of less workforce only allowed for regular watering practices, but not other regular gardening practices; other gardening practices only happened occasionally. The reduction of workforce—the number of gardeners/hours dedicated—related to the possibility of change the configuration of certain parts of the garden and, as a result, watering practices would be affected by those changes. Also, the growing processes of plants influenced the attitudes of regular and not-so-regular—human and non-human—gardeners. Such attitudes—i.e. engagement or
disengagement—could produce positive and/or negative effects on plants, which in turn also affected the growing processes themselves. A plant which grew and was ‘beautiful’ triggered the emergence of more watering practices, which allowed its own reproduction, by means of being appealing and ‘inviting’ to be watered again. On the contrary, a plant that did not manage to grow and dried out, reduced its possibilities to be watered, for it did not ‘invite’ to be watered; it did not manage to enroll any human gardener in the watering process. However, that same plant might ‘invite’ other non-human gardeners to participate in its reproduction, by means of, for example, inviting birds to eat its seeds and planting them somewhere else.

Now that we have seen who/what watered the plants and how they were related to other gardening activities, I will narrow the scope of my account only to watering practices. In the next section I will describe the watering infrastructure before delving into the watering practice itself.

**How did water flow in El Campo?**

Let me begin this section by accounting for the first time I watered the plants with Sofía:

It is Sunday morning. Sofía and I are in the vegetable garden. She explains to me that we have to use approximately four watering cans for each planting table. There are lettuces, tomatoes, broad beans, etc. Most lettuces have overgrown, but they have been left there in order for them to produce new seeds. We begin watering, but halfway through the lower water tank empties. There are two white water tanks. The upper one provides water to the dripping system which is not in use; the lower one—which is the one we were using—is connected to several taps. We decide to fill it, but we don’t know how to do it. Sofía sends a WhatsApp message to the group:

‘There is no water in El Campo. How can we fill the water tanks?’…; few moments later someone replies—‘The elbow pipe is in the container\(^{50}\), in the vegetable garden section, grey backpack… Be aware that the lower tank has a pair of cuts at around two thirds of its height.’

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\(^{50}\) i.e. the shipping container used as a storage room in the middle of the space.
With these instructions we go to the container and find the elbow pipe to connect El Campo with a valve box in the street and the key to open it. We fill the tank and keep on watering. One watering can after the other…’

To water the plants, it was necessary to have access to water and that could not be done easily. The watering infrastructure of El Campo was composed of two different elements: a watering system that linked the connection to the Municipal infrastructure with the taps, and several watering devices that connected the taps and the planters. The watering system was composed of the entry point of the system, a valve box located outside in the street, and then pipes, water tanks, and several taps. To transport the water from those taps to the different areas of the garden there were two different types of devices that could be used: two hoses and several watering cans. In what follows I will first describe the watering devices and then the watering system.

*Enough pressure and/or enough water*

The first hose—green and longer—was normally used when there was *enough pressure* in the system. The green hose was the most convenient one because it could be connected directly to the external watering system which provided the pressure. If water flowed with enough pressure, all the plants of El Campo could be reached and watered; hence, there would be no need to decide what plants would be privileged. If, on the contrary, pressure was *not enough*, then, some plants might not get watered; for example, the plants that
were farther, or the ones that were higher in level. Alternatively, if the green hose could not be used—for whatever reason—there was a yellow one, but it is was shorter. The yellow hose could be attached in parallel to any of the taps of the space and worked easily with less water pressure; hence, it could be used connected to one of the water tanks. In that case, enough water should be stored. The yellow hose, however, did not reach all the planters: it was too short.

Finally, there were also watering cans available, which were used when none of the hoses could be used. The watering cans allowed watering with less pressure the entire garden, because one could reach all the planters with them and they could be filled from the water tank with very little pressure; however, they had to be filled each time they were empty—that is, very often—covering a very small surface each time they were poured into the planters. Hence, watering with them was more time consuming. When watering with cans, it implied that the gardener had enough time—something that we have already acknowledged as an issue. Hence, if there was not enough pressure, not enough water nor enough time, the garden could be watered, yet with restrictions: certain areas of the garden were likely to be privileged over others. But, how could enough pressure or enough water be obtained? To answer this question, I have to continue describing the watering infrastructure.

For watering to be enacted, at least one of the following conditions should be met: (1) either the entry point of the watering system should be connected to the municipality’s one and the flow of water opened, or (2) enough water should be stored in the water tanks. The former condition would provide enough and constant pressure to the watering

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51 As a reminder, El Campo did not have a flat ground. Hence, levels affected the water pressure, for it depended on gravitational potential energy.
system—even too much pressure sometimes; hence, the green hose could be used. The later condition would provide also enough pressure but only for some time—i.e. not constant pressure—for it depended on the amount of water stored in the tank; as the water tank emptied, pressure at the end of the hose would be reduced. In that second case, the gardener could use the yellow hose for watering some of the plants and/or the watering cans for others. Following I will begin describing how to obtain the former condition—how to connect and open the entry point of El Campo’s watering system—and continue with the later condition—how to fill the water tanks.

**How to connect and open the entry point**

El Campo did not have a legal water connection with the Municipal watering infrastructure; El Campo was sort-of ‘unplugged’ from the system. The lease agreement did not explicitly include an arrangement to set up a legal water connection, neither a way to provide water for the space. However, when neighbours began to use El Campo, there was a tacit agreement that they could use a water valve that was in the street. In
consequence, the water used for El Campo’s activities was not payed for by anyone; they ‘illegally’ connected directly to the public infrastructure when needed.

During the time I was in the field, this agreement was followed, even though it was not clear to me how it worked. It was illegal but somehow accepted. In any case, I was told that, ‘just in case’, the less time they were directly connected the better. Hence, taking into account such circumstances, they built a watering infrastructure that could work either connected or ‘unplugged’. In either case, El Campo’s watering system depended on one entry point: a valve box that was in the street.

![Figure 50. The valve box in the street and the connection through the ‘fake’ electric cabinet.](image)

The entry point was a tap inside a small irrigation valve box situated in the street used by municipal services to clean the nearby public space and to water the green areas of the surroundings. The municipal services used that tap directly connected to a hose—which they usually carried with them. The connection between the Municipal infrastructure and El Campo’s one worked if several steps were followed. Every time the connection was needed, all steps needed to be followed.

A plumb-pipe-connection-shaped-as-an-elbow (hereafter the ‘elbow’) joined the water tab inside the valve box and a hose connected to El Campo’s watering system. The hose was usually hidden, rolled up inside a small ‘fake’—former—electric cabinet on the wall. Once the elbow was screwed, a second element, a T-shape spanner, allowed the valve to be turned to open the flow of water.

The valve box was located in the street, inside a flower bed. The valve box was accessible and reachable for whoever wanted to get to it. It did not have any lock; it only had a small
door that could be lifted freely. To open the flow of water, the T-shape spanner was needed. For the elbow to be attached, the small door had to remain lifted all the time, so it could be seen by anyone passing by the street. The elbow—I was told—was a valuable plumbing item, expensive and difficult to get in the market. Due to its value, it had been robbed several times in the past.

One day that I followed the process of connecting and opening the water, Sofía asked me to remain vigilant around the connection while she was inside the space watering, for it could be robbed. After around ten minutes—that served to fill the tank inside—she texted me that I could close the tap, disconnect the elbow and take it inside. However, that was not usually the case. Often, the elbow was left connected during the whole watering practice. In general, it was left for one hour without any problem reported; the reason being that when the water flow was opened, robbing the elbow would be quite difficult: the thief would have ended up completely wet and the action would have been too visible. The only problem came when the flow of water was cut; then, it could be easily robbed. Hence, the connection could not remain always in place. It had to be connected and disconnected each and every time *enough and constant pressure* was needed.

When the elbow was not connected, both the elbow and the T-shape spanner were usually kept in a grey backpack in the ‘shipping container’—a closed storage space with its own key. So, in order to connect the elbow, the key of the container needed to be accessed beforehand. The key of the container was not easily accessible to all the people in El Campo. If someone wanted it, he/she had to ask for it in advance, and in general, one had to have a reason to ask for it. One reason could be that they wanted to water the garden. There were no more than three or four copies of that key of the container; so, in many occasions, specific arrangements to get the key were needed—e.g. sending a WhatsApp message asking for someone with the key. An extra copy could be made; however, that entailed the approval of the weekly assembly. That approval was not difficult, but the process was slow—similar to what happened with the key of the space.

Hence, the process of connecting and opening the water flow was an easy process, but the person that participated in such process needed to learn it. The day Sofía learnt the process I was also present, as shown in the opening vignette of this section. We were taught how to do it via a short message in WhatsApp.
Summing up this first condition: for the water to spring with *enough and constant pressure*, one needed to have access to the key of the container, get the bag with the tools, go to the street, connect the tools and the hose to the valve box, open the flow of water, get back inside the space, and open the tap with the green hose attached; then, and only then, could one begin watering the plants with enough and constant pressure; without forgetting that after watering, one also had to follow the reverse process in order not to have any problem. This process—I insist—was *time consuming*.

The connection with the municipal water infrastructure was used for two things. It could be used to directly water the plants, and also, it could be used to fill the water tanks in order to keep water stored, and hence, avoid following the aforementioned process. If both things were done at the same time, that would mean saving time for future gardeners. Let me now continue with the second condition needed to have *enough pressure* to water the plants, or at least *enough water*.

*How to fill the water tanks*

Inside El Campo there were two water tanks in use. They were inside a steel frame structure supported over two pillars and anchored to the wall. The tanks were one on top of the other and situated in a ‘high position’—i.e. 2.5 meters above the ground—in order to generate enough pressure for the system if the connection with the municipal infrastructure was not working at that moment. The lower tank had a cut at two thirds of its high, so it could not be filled completely, which generated some difficulties. Each tank was connected with an entry pipe and an exit pipe; each pipe had a manual valve that allowed for opening the flow of water so they could be filled and emptied separately. The exit manual valves also allowed control of which tank could be in use. Each tank was connected to a different tap in the garden. The lower tank was connected to one of the taps next to where the green hose was usually attached; the upper one was connected to four different taps located in different places along the garden. The yellow hose could be attached to any of those four taps. That is also another reason why the yellow hose could get a little bit more pressure from the tanks than the green hose; it could be attached to a higher water tank.
When El Campo was connected to the external watering infrastructure, the tanks were usually filled at the same time in order to get some autonomy for the future. Autonomy meant in this case that anyone who wanted to use water would not need to connect the system with the external connection and could use the water stored in the tanks. If the tanks were filled, water could be used by more people in El Campo—i.e. not only the ones that had the key of the storage room.

However, saying that the tanks had water stored does not necessarily mean there was *enough water*. The amount of water those tanks could store was limited. If the tanks were full, it was possible to water most of the garden, but not all, especially in those drier days in which the garden required more water. Note that there was not a direct correlation between the amount of water used to water the plants and the size of the garden. Other conditions had to be taken into account. For instance, in addition to this issue, the fact that there was water stored does not mean water was always a positive thing for the plants. The water that was stored in tanks was exposed to the sun; in very hot and sunny days, the water was heated, and hence, sometimes it was *too hot* when watering—usually in the evening, just before the sun went down. According to one of my informants, when the water was hotter the plants dried faster. So, watering from the tanks was not necessarily always positive for the garden.
To sum up this section, there was a valve box in the street that could be temporarily attached to the watering system of El Campo by a plumb elbow pipe connection and a hose. That temporary connection allowed: (1) directly using the water through a system of pipes connected to a tap that was attached to the green hose, or (2) filling the water tanks located inside the space to use the water stored in them later through a system of pipes connected to other taps. When the water was used directly connected to the municipality’s system, the flow of water could be continuous and water pressure constant; and also, pressure was enough. When the water was used from the tanks, the water might be finished, the pressure varied, and water could be too hot some days. The pressure could be enough—when the tanks were filled—or not so—when the tanks were almost empty. Also, there could be enough water, even if pressure was not enough. In those cases, rather than using certain devices—i.e. the green hose—other devices could be used—i.e. the yellow hose or the watering cans. On top of all that, the amount of water required—by plants and soil—varied depending on daily weather conditions.

### 3. ... almost every day’

I have already accounted for the subject, the verb and the ‘passive’ actors that mediated the practice I am analysing. Now I will delve into the adverb of time. *Almost every day* refers to a practice that was repeatedly enacted in a regular manner, but not always in the same way nor every day; it was re-enacted with variations. Watering was done ‘almost’ every day; that is, some days watering did not happen. Furthermore, watering ‘today’ was not always the same as watering ‘tomorrow’ or ‘yesterday’; the ‘current’ watering practice depended on the conditions that emerged from a previous practice and the events and situations that happened in-between. For example, if yesterday rained, it was likely that today El Campo was not watered. If the day before all planters were watered, it would not be necessary to water all of them in the current day. However, if today was a very hot day, it was likely that someone would try to go to El Campo to water as much as she could. Additionally, if yesterday there was a basketball match and players have used water to refresh themselves, it would be likely that the tanks had less water. Moreover, if on top
of that today there was not enough pressure, water or time to go through all the planters and water all the plants as they required to, the gardener would need to decide how to distribute water among the plants; that is, she would need to negotiate with the plants; or better, the plants, the infrastructure, the water and the gardener would need to compromise.

When compromising among the different elements that constituted those diverse watering collectives, a public emerged; and it did so shaped and/or constrained by certain conditions related to the practices that already happened and the ones about to happen. In turn, the question posed in what follows is how watering ‘today’ related to watering ‘yesterday’ or ‘tomorrow’. To answer that question, I will first explain how one full watering process was done with non-limiting conditions. I will call ‘reiteration’ the resulting mode of articulation between practices that respond to such non-limiting conditions. Then, I will show the changes that limiting conditions introduced. I will refer to the mode of articulation between practices that respond to limiting conditions as ‘concatenation’. In closing this section, I will contend that the mode of articulation among watering practices cannot be clearly divided between either reiteration or concatenation. Rather, we will see that both reiteration and concatenation happened to some extent in relationships among similar practices. Hence, the issue at stake is what the implications of the deployment of those modes of articulation were.

**Reiteration**

If a gardener had access to the keys of the space and the container, she could develop the watering practice as she pleased. She could prepare what she needed and then water the garden. Once all the preparation process was done, the gardener would decide a watering strategy depending on the specific conditions of the day. Usually, if the conditions were non-limiting, the watering process would last around 45 minutes, sometimes more, sometimes less. Let me guide you through one example:

Sofía is in the garden. She has already checked the humidity of the soil by touching it with her hands. It has been a hot day, and the soil is really dry. The water tank is half-empty, so she goes outside, and connects the entry point to the system in order to water directly from the municipality’s system. After that, Sofía gets in and begins her round by taking the green hose and connecting it to a tap. The hose is rolled up,
so she unrolls it, opens the tap bending the hose end and, pulls it with her to reach the farthest point of the garden. Then, she begins watering. The bending mechanism blocks the water flow and is done to avoid wasting water or wetting people; and it is also used to control the water pressure and reduce the flow. Another way to control the pressure is to open the tap half way; however, sometimes she forgets to do so in the beginning of the round (because the tanks may be being filling at the same time), and going back in the middle of the watering process implies more effort than just controlling the flow by bending the end of the hose (..)

Let me raise here the issue of *too much pressure* before following with the vignette. If pressure was too high, it could generate two problems. Firstly, the water could wet other people that would be gathering or seating in the vicinity of planters. When watering, I saw Sofía in several occasions asking people to be aware of her watering process in order for them to make way for her; sometimes she needed to go through a group of people or pass by very close to them. In addition, when water hit the soil, it could also splash out not only water but also some soil, which could stain people’s clothes. Secondly, water with too much pressure could remove the top layer of the soil, letting the superficial roots of some plants to emerge into the air, something that could generate problems for the plants. Hence, watering with too much pressure was avoided if possible.

(..) Once pressure is controlled, the path followed by Sofía usually begins in the ornamental garden. From there, Sofía follows a sequence: first, the ornamental garden, after that the trees in the segregated pots, then the buffer zone, and finally the vegetable garden. The sequence, however, is not strict; still, she usually tries to cover all of it.

In the ornamental garden, Sofía usually sprinkles the water over the plants. She does so by applying her finger to the end of the hose, generating a bigger splash of water. She stays for a while in each spot, making sure both the leaves and the soil get wet. However, she does not water each and every plant in that zone; she waters ‘in general’. In the big pots with trees, she approaches the hose to the base of the stem. Sometimes she leaves the hose inside the pot while doing other things—like cleaning a planter nearby. In the buffer zone, she combines sprinkling with watering the soil, similarly to what she does in the ornamental garden. In the vegetable garden, she applies the hose close to the root of the plants, taking care of not damaging the stems;
here she is especially attentive to pressure. In the soil of the table planters, there are little circular grooves that allow the water to be kept around the base of the stem.

Figure 52. Roots outside the soil.

That is how Sofía would usually proceed if she had time. For her the only limiting condition was time, for she had the key of the container and the key of the space, so she could access them if she wanted to. Hence, by having access, she could decide whether to connect the system or use the water tanks, also whether she would fill the water tanks while watering the plants or not. That means that she was also in a position to provide or constrain access to water for others and, hence, their capacity of water. She had power.

**Enough time**

So, watering was *time consuming*, and sometimes Sofía had just little time to spend. For instance, she was usually the person watering before the weekly assembly, which took place every Monday around 7:30pm. She was a regular participant of assemblies and the Monday watering practice was somehow linked to the assembly. She preferred to make the most of her visit to El Campo; thus, she would go to El Campo to water along with going to the assembly. If Sofía was watering, the assembly usually waited until she finished watering. If she had arrived a little bit late to water, she would either water faster—which is the same as saying either water less in general or skip some areas of the garden—in order for the assembly to begin before. But sometimes, the people that came
to the assembly were late too or were not in a hurry. Then, she would have some more time to spend in the garden while waiting for a quorum for the assembly. On those occasions, she would take her time. She would also try to do so when the weather conditions had been hard during the current day, or the previous days, even if it would imply more effort from her part—for example, expending more time than usual, or getting a little bit early to the space. In those days, she would try to soak the soil with enough water in order for its humidity to last longer—that is, providing better conditions for the following practice. However, sometimes the soil was so dry that it refused to get soaked. In those instances, other gardening practices were required, such as digging the soil in order to for it to have as much surface in contact with water as possible. That was important especially in the planting tables, where the soil was usually very dry. Hence, sometimes only watering was not enough. Still, digging the soil was not done as often as it should, for reasons I have already account for—lack of labour force. Meaning that, even if there was enough pressure, water and time, sometimes only watering was not enough.

The only limiting condition for Sofía’s watering practice was time. And access to enough time was linked to the materiality of the conditions encountered. Hence, she had to use time strategically. The watering process, as we have seen, could last for about 45 minutes, but that quantification could not be known or decided a priori; it was something that depended on the specific situation encountered. Watering could last longer or shorter. Even if Sofía would have time to spend, how much time was enough to water the plants? Well, that depended on the departure conditions. Each action was time consuming. Watering with enough pressure would consume less time than watering with not enough pressure; however, opening the entry point would consume time, and closing it too. Watering using more water would take more time than watering with less water in equal pressure conditions. Watering with the green hose with enough pressure would take less time than watering with the watering cans. However, would watering with the green hose and opening the entry point consume more or less time than, for example, watering with the yellow hose from the tanks if they were filled? That is what I mean by strategy. Sofía would need to decide how to water each and every time, even if her only limiting condition was time, because the time spent depended on the material conditions that the specific and situated practice of watering that day would require and hence deploy. Thus, time was materially constrained.
Time was materially constrained. Time is indeed materially constrained. Time is shaped by materiality, and also, matter is necessarily constrained by temporality. ‘If there was enough time’, then watering could be done. Plants could grow because there was enough time. Hence, time and matter were mutually constrained by each other and constitutive of each other.

**Concatenation**

When Ana watered the garden, she started from different conditions than Sofía. Contrarily to Sofía, Ana did not have any key, neither for the space nor for the container. She did not have them because she did not ask for them, not because she was not allowed to have them. Indeed, she was offered the keys in several occasions, but she refused to keep them. It was too much responsibility—she told me. It was only for a short period of time that she accepted having the key of the space and the container: the period coinciding with Sofía’s holidays. But, usually, when she went to the space to water the plants, she depended on the conditions she would find and/or the availability of other people to lend her the keys. If there was someone in the space who had the keys, she could replicate Sofía’s practice. If she only had access to the space—but not to the shipping container—and the water tanks had been filled before, she could also water most of the garden, but possibly not all, or not as much as she wanted to. She had to water with the resources available; and she would probably spend more time than expected. If there was little water in the tank, the pressure would not be enough, but she could still use the watering cans; hence, she had to decide what plants needed to be watered and what other plants would wait for later, for even if she had time to spend, there would not be enough water to cover all the garden. Finally, if the space would be closed at the time she decided to water the plants, she had to either call someone to open the space for her, or water another day. The following quote exemplifies one of those situations:

> Ana arrives and approaches me. She says she is going to water the plants, but she does not have the key of the container, so she is going to use the water stored in the upper water tank. She connects the yellow hose and only waters the vegetable garden and the sunflowers, which, by the way, are very nice now!!!

So, in that occasion, Ana benefited the vegetable garden and the sunflowers over other areas. The question is, why? There was not enough water for the entire garden and
possibly not enough pressure neither. The upper water tank would provide more pressure; that seemed the reason why she chose it and attached the yellow hose. It seems a technical decision. The strategy of watering had to be organised to water the plants that ‘needed’ more water, or the ones privileged by other reasons. But, was it only a technical decision? For instance, the sunflowers were watered every time someone watered in El Campo. Did they really ‘need’ to be watered? Sunflowers were usually healthy, and were growing at a normal pace, while other plants were almost dying. So, the decision of what to water was not only based on technical reasons, it was also motivated by personal and subjective biases, by what Knox would identify as ‘affective engagement with infrastructure’ (2017)—or in our case with plants. Why were the sunflowers watered more than other plants? It seems that sunflowers were more appealing and aesthetically rewarding for the people of El Campo, and also for some animals too. Here some extracts from different fieldwork days:

‘We see that the sunflowers have begun to sprout. How thrilling!’

‘The sunflowers keep on growing, but no trace of the flowers. I am willing to see them.’

‘The sunflowers are blooming. What a thrill! And they have wasps around them, something that did not happen days before. They are nice.’

‘The sunflowers are splendorous, and they also have managed to agglutinate a significant number of bugs around them. Butterflies, wasps, bees, bumblebees, etc. Those of us that participate in the garden, even if little, are proud.’

Figure 53. Cheerful sunflowers.
Also, when sunflowers were in a bad shape, the opposite feeling emerged. Still, that feeling did not prevent us from watering them. I can transcribe two notes where I underlined that:

‘The sunflowers are sad. So much so that I have forgotten to photograph them. They are dry. It seems that their life is getting to an end. The vegetable garden is empty, without much life on it. Some planting tables are half dead; others half dry. The tomatoes have grown, and birds have eaten them.’

‘The sunflowers are now sad, sadder each day. Crestfallen. We keep on watering them in any case. El Campo is currently watered every two days.’

Sunflowers were ‘clever’. They ‘knew’ they were nice and ‘played’ with that in order to convince us, humans, to keep on watering them. They also convinced others—animals—to keep on helping with their living. They all formed a ‘coalition’ (Butler 2014). People and animals, together with water and soil, joined together in order to help plants grow. All of them—all of us, for I could include myself in that relationships—were affected, but in a way that expands the meaning of affection referred to by Marres when talking about ‘communities of affection’ (Marres 2012a). We were joined around affectedness, affectivity and appeal. We were interrelated acknowledging the importance ‘affective engagement’ (Knox 2017) has in practices of care. And in doing so, other plants suffered; they were forgotten.

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So, the plants were watered almost every day. Some plants—the privileged ones—were watered more than others. The repetition of the watering process entailed difference, which depended on many factors. Some factors were related to the gardener herself. For
instance, it depended on the capacity of the gardener to access the space and/or the shipping container; on her ability to find the elbow and the T-shape spanner and her knowledge on how to use them; on her experience on how to organise the watering process and deciding what plants should/could/would be privileged over others, and so forth. And it depended on her attachment to certain plants too. Yet it also depended on other conditions not directly related to the human gardener. For example, it depended on weather conditions; on all the communication devices that allowed connecting with other members of the space; on the reaction of plants and soil to previous watering practices; on the capacity of some planters to retain some humidity due to their depth; on shading conditions, which were linked not only to weather but also to the physicality of the space and the built obstacles that allowed or restrained the sun exposure of the garden; on the evaporation rate of the water, and so on and so forth.

As we have seen, watering ‘today’ was different than watering ‘tomorrow’ or watering ‘yesterday’. Watering depended on the conditions found in the space. Some conditions were limiting, others not so. How watering today was developed depended, among other things, on how the garden was watered before. Watering today could also provide (or constrain) conditions for future watering practices. Watering practices that were constrained by limiting conditions could be understood as ‘concatenated’ practices. The current practice was necessarily linked to the previous one and the external conditions that happened in between.

Here, I am specifically interested in what is the difference between the micro-governance decisions taken when conditions were limiting—which hence constrained the practice—and non-limiting—which only shaped the practice. The former, I argue, related to a mode of articulation I have called ‘reiteration’, and its main characteristic was that the practice could be enacted independently; that is no restriction was imposed. There could be enough water, pressure or time. ‘Concatenation’—unlike reiteration—was the mode of articulation between practices that depended on each other, that happened one after the other. Decisions and organisational strategies were developed taking into account previous practices. Micro-governance decisions were then taken in-place and in the present, they had to be specifically catered and shaped for and by the situation, they had to be ‘improvised’ to respond to the ‘current’ situation. Thus, watering practices did not repeat themselves; they were constituted and responded to specific and situated material
Chapter 7 _ Water and Plants: Reiteration and Concatenation

and temporary conditions. Similarly, other practices in El Campo that seem similar at first sight also worked in the same manner. For example, opening almost every day, and closing afterwards, cleaning, assembling every week, and so on and so forth.

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So, final, now it is possible to understand how ‘the plants are watered almost every day’ in El Campo. It was a practice that depended on conditions and also provided them. Some of those conditions limited the practice and range of actions that could be done, for some conditions constrained the emergence of certain collectives whereas others allowed that emergence to happen. Conditions allowed or constrained the emergence of watering collectives, and hence the enactment of specific watering practices. In El Campo, some plants—or groups of plants—were watered more than others; plants were watered in specific ways. For some weeks, sunflowers were watered every day, whereas the following weeks they were watered every two days; trees were watered less, than sunflowers; sunflowers were watered because they were beautiful and they meant something for regular and not-so-regular gardeners; the ornamental garden was usually watered as a whole, sprinkling water over the plants, and, if there was enough time, waiting until the soil got wet, whereas the trees were watered individually and only in the base of their stem; the tomatoes were watered taking into account not to damage the base of their stem when water had too much pressure, reducing it by bending a little bit the end of the hose with which they were watered; and so on and so forth. Watering was a multiple and heterogeneous practice, as multiple and heterogeneous as the number of collectives it enacted every day it emerged and around every plant it related to.

4. Concluding remarks

Despite the seemingly simple practice of watering the plants could be considered as one that pertains to the realm of irrelevance—i.e., a practice that does not involve politics—the discussion presented in this chapter allows me to argue otherwise. I claim that watering plants is a political practice; and it is political because it consists in multiple and complex social relationships among heterogeneous entities that, in being enacted, generate publics, and thus, entails deploying micro-governance practices to deal with
multiple and uneven relationships that emerge from such entanglements. In this context, being political does not mean to engage with deliberate forms of politics, nor to explicitly act upon taming conflicts. Rather, what it entails is what has been identified elsewhere (Marres and Lezaun 2011) as the invisible and mundane part of participation-in-the-making.

Revealing such invisible side of participation has certainly given us some clues to give a possible answer to the third sub-question of the thesis—i.e. how were the everyday caring practices of El Campo politically relevant? In doing so, I underlined one crucial aspect of material participation: the non-problematic side of issues. In fact, one of the central findings of this chapter, I contend, is that it manages to foreground that issues can be also non-problematic, and that is particularly relevant for the development of eventual publics and their temporary resolution. I will, however, come back to this topic later in the concluding chapter, where I will discuss it in depth, taking into account a cross-cutting analysis of the thesis as whole; let me now close the chapter with a summing up its most relevant ideas.

So, in closing this chapter, I will highlight three different points that I found in regard to the political substance of watering the plants and briefly consider the possible implications they have for other practices beyond: (1) watering was different every time it was enacted; (2) micro-governance decision-making processes were shaped by affectivity and appeal which resulted in situated care practices that benefited some and disadvantaged others; (3) time and materiality were mutually constitutive and constrained.

The practice of watering the plants was never enacted in the same way, for it depended on the specific and situated conditions actants would encounter every time it happened. I identified that those conditions could be limiting and non-limiting conditions, and each of those conditions deployed a different mode of articulation between previous, current and future practices. Of those possible modes of articulation, I identified two: reiteration and concatenation. Both reiteration and concatenation referred to similar practices that happened one after the other; that is, practices that did not overlap nor interfere between them while being enacted. Whereas in reiteration no dependence on the previous practice was enacted, in concatenation the current practice was constrained by the previous one,
for certain material and temporary conditions restrained the ability for it to be enacted, and that in turn shaped the practice itself. Hence, when reiteration happened, the current practice was more autonomous; contrarily, when concatenation happened, the current practice was more dependent on specific actants, collectives and situations, and the practice could be developed, yet under certain constraining conditions. Importantly, such constrained situation helped me to identify specific unbalanced and unjust power relationships between humans and non-humans.

One of my first ideas for this chapter was to explore how the agentic capacities of non-humans and the practices they were involved in affected the way in which different collectives emerged, developed and formed specific and situated publics. The way in which those publics ultimately emerged depended upon certain conditions, mostly the temporary and material conditions that mediated the relationship between plants, on one hand, and water, on the other hand. In describing the collectives that were formed, multiple uneven relationships were deployed between the different actants involved—plants, soil, planters, water, infrastructure and gardeners. Those uneven relationships became apparent in particular when certain conditions were limiting—i.e. when there was not enough water, pressure or time. Such uneven relationships—e.g. sunflowers were watered more than other plants even if they might not need it in some moments—were the effect of certain distribution of power that was made explicit in relation to motivations of care and management. In those instances, ‘intersubjectivity’ and ‘interdependency’ (Butler 2014) were at stake; in other words, the relationships amongst the different actors involved were shaped by the specific and situated relationships each of them had with each other, the particular pairs of relationships, that is, the ‘politics of coalition’ they managed to engage in (Butler 2014). In effect, all plants eventually depended on others’ actions to be watered and gardened, but some plants were more ‘powerful’ than others, for they somehow managed to ‘convince’ gardeners to take care of them before taking care of other plants. So, the first finding of this chapter relates to the deployment of caring practices, and in particular, the motivations for exercising those caring practices and the implications they might have for governance practices and interdependency.

In the garden of El Campo, the different collectives that were formed around plants’ groupings engaged in social relations that attracted, appealed to and affected multiple actants. For example, colourful plants, such as the sunflowers, attracted both pollinators
and humans—likewise, overripened tomatoes attracted birds, and wild-landscaped planters attracted dogs or incontinent humans. Sunflowers appealed to both pollinators and humans, but the engagement they managed to raise was of a different kind, because pollinators and humans were interested in sunflowers by different reasons; pollinators were interested in ‘eating’ their nectar, whereas humans bond with sunflowers through their aesthetic and symbolic appeal and presence. Also, pollinators and humans helped sunflowers in different ways; whereas pollinators helped them to be reproduced, humans help them to grow.

Importantly, intersubjective social relationships that went beyond humans were deployed in gardening practices, and those relationships emerged from specific situations and practices that related more to attractiveness and affectivity than to affectedness generated by the sunflowers towards their counterparts. Hence, I am suggesting here that affection not only relates to affectedness but also to attraction, affectivity and appeal. Such wider understanding of affection, I contend, might help us opening up the scope of what public affection might ultimately mean. I am specifically referring here to Marres’ discussion around ‘communities of affection’ (2012a) in relation to Dewey’s understanding of the ‘public’. What was revealed in the account of this chapter was that affection is not only related to conflictual issues, but also to relatively invisible and un-conflictual collectives. In that sense, collectives are also part of publics when affectivity, attraction and appeal emerge in relation to an issue.

Furthermore, it is important to highlight in this regard that care practices cannot be considered either positive or negative in relation to humanly biased understandings of care itself, and that has important implications. What I have found in gardening practices is that the idea of positivity or negativity does not necessarily need to be centred and understood from a human perspective and could also be looked from the non-humans that are involved in such practice. For instance, even though certain watering practices were supposedly positive in some moments, they were not so in other situations. Whereas deploying (or avoiding) certain gardening practices beyond watering was considered something negative by human gardeners, in fact both plants and other non-human gardeners profited from those ‘neglecting’ caring attitudes—such as, for example, the ripening of tomatoes that were ultimately eaten by birds. In those specific situations, the logic of efficiency guided the supposedly ‘proper’ attitude towards the garden by human
gardeners and somehow oversaw non-humans’ benefits. That is why, I contend, it is important to acknowledge the cyborg nature of the urban, not so much to underline technology as something entangled with the ‘natural’, but also to incorporate the rhythms and processes of more-than-humans into the equation; I mean, to acknowledge that the governance of the urban should take into account the ‘benefits’ and ‘disadvantages’ of care from the perspectives of those that are taken care of, irrespective of what is the subject of that caring practice. In that sense, here I could recall Haraways’s understanding of cyborg and interspecies relationships (1991; 2008) and how care should not only be considered a human issue.

Finally, the third important question this chapter dealt with was the relationship between materiality and time, something that runs through the whole thesis but here in particular came to the fore. In exploring the intricacies around the reasons why certain relationships happened rather than others, why certain collectives emerged against others, I ended up entangled in the enough question; a discussion that revealed the intrinsic relationship that time and materiality have. What surprised me the most is that, under certain particular circumstances, time and materiality were not only related, but mutually constrained and co-constitutive of each other. Indeed, it was impossible to measure time—the question of ‘is there enough time?’—without considering and understanding the materiality of the practice it would be involved in. Similarly, it would be impossible to relate to a material practice without understanding that such practice was time consuming—for not acknowledging that fact would in fact flatten the notion of practice into a static image.

Social theory has discussed materiality and time, yet it has done so separately. Materiality and time relate to each other; however, their analysis has very rarely combined them together. Adam (1998) is one of the few that suggested one way to understand the social aspect of time in relation to materiality by developing the concept of ‘timescapes’. By focussing on ‘timespaces’, she argued that we could, first, ‘recognise that the spheres of nature and culture are not as neatly separable as common language sues would lead us to suspect’ and then, she added, that ‘timescapes’ helped understanding ‘the centrality of earthly rhythms’ (Adam 1998, 12–13). In doing so, she foregrounded natural rhythms—understanding them as something constitutive of all social relationships—and, thus, avoided the reproduction of dualities—e.g. nature-culture, and so on. Interestingly, she contends that ‘activities are not only organised and planned but also timed and
synchronised at varying speeds and intensity, orchestrated to intricate scores of beginnings and ends, sequences, durations and pauses’ (Adam 1998, 13). This idea neatly relates to the discussion around enough, for the question then is not so if there is enough time to develop certain practice, but how that time spent is related to other timings, and how those timings shape and constrain the emergence, development or disappearance of collectives and publics.

Regular and occasional participants and practices shaped the materiality of the garden. The more regularly participants committed to the space and certain gardening practices were enacted, the more the garden was taken care of, and thus, a certain specific type of garden could be built. On the contrary, the more occasionally participants engaged and gardening practices happened, a different kind of garden was enacted. Those two—or even multiple and different—types of gardens were not better or worse. They were different, yet that different materiality was directly related to time, timings, schedules and sequences, which were, in reverse, defined by materiality.
At the end of 2017, El Campo de Cebada was closed after six and a half years of activity. The reason for the closure was that (finally!) a new sports centre was going to be built on the site replacing the one that was demolished in 2009. To begin the construction works, El Campo had to be dismantled and closed. That happened more than two and a half years ago and currently, at the time of writing, there are already construction cranes on the site.

This chapter closes this research too. The aim is to review what has been discussed trying to make an analysis that crosscuts the whole work and to sum up the main findings and their implications for further urban research and practice. To do such a review, the chapter is organised in five sections. The first one responds to the research questions of the thesis and presents the main findings that have emerged throughout the empirical chapters. The second one further theorises around what I consider to be two of the key discussions proposed in the research: the formation of communities through thick and fluid margins and the unproblematic dimension of issues. The third section analyses some of the
implications that ‘eventual politics’ have for urban governance and democracy. The fourth section briefly discusses methodological learnings and their implications for further research. And finally, I conclude with a note on how this research might make a meaningful contribution for the wider field of urban studies.

1. Research questions and findings

To conclude this work, now is time to go back to the beginning of the thesis and see what research questions were posed. In so doing, I aim to consider the extent to which those questions have been answered and how the knowledge gained from those answers could be useful in broader empirical, theoretical and methodological contexts. There were four research questions, an overarching one and three sub-questions.

MRQ: How was public participation enacted in El Campo?

The main research question asked how public engagement and participation were enacted in temporarily used urban sites, and in particular in El Campo. The idea behind it was to explore what does it mean to participate in the development of temporary projects that were accounted for as prototypes of alternative urban models, and specifically, to study how the intrinsic material and temporary nature of that type of projects affected the public spaces they temporarily occupied. In researching those temporary projects—I hypothesised—there was an opportunity to explore the political relevance of temporality and its multiple associations with socio-material participation. In addition, it also offered a chance to shift the focus towards everyday practices and foreground previously taken for granted relationships—i.e. the ‘what-happens-when-nothing-happens’ with which I began the thesis.

To answer that question, I first explored how temporarily used urban sites were framed in the literature in chapter 2, and then, in chapter 3, I defined what I meant by public participation. That framing eventually took me to consider the idea of ‘eventual publics’ to study participatory practices, a conceptualisation that drew on an STS sensitivity. In that sense, eventual was defined as both provisional and actual, and publics, following Marres (2012a), were understood as sets of actors affected by issues that bundled together
in order to solve them. So, the main question, after going through the literature review could also be reformulated into something in the line of ‘how did ‘eventual publics’ emerge, and how were they eventually developed, managed and governed?’

Building from that framework, three sub-questions were considered in order to concentrate on three specific aspects of public participation in its development in temporary urban projects. The first one regarded group formation (Latour 2005b). That is, it considered how the multiple and fluid ‘community’ that participated in the project was formed; or better, how relational worlds were built and shaped, and especially how their margins and peripheries developed, mutated and changed. In short, it questioned what was included or excluded. The second sub-question investigated the nature of those relationships—i.e. the practices that linked the different actors—and especially those relationships that emerged when eventualities were rendered visible; namely, it considered the consensual, conflictual or agonistic relationships developed in the light of issue-formation publics. In that regard, that second question related to the governance of the space: the negotiation and testing of its rules, the micro-governance of the practices deployed in the everyday of the space, the internal relationships among heterogeneous socio-material collectives and the multiple external relationships that were also deployed with ‘others’. And finally, the third sub-question wondered about the hidden practices of care and their political relevance in the development of public practices and relationships. Even if these three questions were tested linked to the specific, situated, mundane, infra-ordinary practices I have studied—i.e. opening and closing the site, dealing with a noise complaint and watering the plants—it should be clear now that they somehow referred to broader and more abstract issues in the realm of political theory that interrogate, among other things, how public space is governed, how public issues are addressed and managed in public forums, or how those issues are shaped and affected by the practices and communities that eventually constitute by them.

Answers and related findings, as we have seen throughout the thesis, could not be given straightforwardly or without a thorough investigation. To formulate the questions a specific socio-material framework has informed the theoretical and methodological approaches. That framing has been particularly relevant for methodology, because it entailed an effort in being attentive to mundane objects and ordinary things—i.e. everyday materiality—otherwise taken for granted. Importantly, that decision shaped
how the answers could be given too. Questioning specifically about the margins of relational worlds, the resolution of everyday frictions, and the hidden practices of care put the focus of the research in what Perec (2008) would call the ‘infra-ordinary’; situations, events and happenings that occur when apparently ‘nothing happens’ (Perec 2010). Along with an STS approach, this specific sensitivity towards the ordinary has also shaped my enquiry. To develop it, I have delved into a thick description of practices, and that focus, then, directed the empirical part of the research towards the study of (only) one case: El Campo de Cebada. That decision, as we have seen, allowed me to get deeper into the very specific practices of the project.

Modes of articulation

To elucidate the outcome of the ‘enquiry on socio-material participation’ that entitles this work, I should now go back to the different modes of articulation of practices that were investigated in the empirical chapters. My idea is that the six different modes of articulation of practices accounted for in those chapters are precisely the main findings of this thesis. Those six modes of articulation, that first emerged—following Mol (2002)—as analytical tools to present and organise the different empirical accounts, have indeed mutated into concepts that have helped me to describe and explain how participatory practices were in effect enacted in El Campo. That is, ‘coordination’ and ‘reconfiguration’, ‘interference’ and ‘attunement’, and ‘reiteration’ and ‘concatenation’ could be considered the concepts that answer the main question of this thesis.

Studying those different modes of articulation of practices meant trying to understand the different kinds of relationships established between practices: similar practices that day after day were repeated—like watering or cleaning—different practices that necessarily had to be related to each other because one was the effect of the other and vice versa—like opening and closing—and practices that by being overlapped in time and/or space had to get to some sort of agreement with each other in order to keep on happening—like sounding practices. I have studied six of those possible relationships; however, I do not claim that public participation in El Campo de Cebada was enacted only through the deployment of those specific six modes of articulation. On the contrary, what I argue is that those were some of the ways in which participation was enacted. Indeed, I consider
that there is an opportunity and certainly a scope to keep on investigating other different modes of articulation of practices using this analytical frame as a base.

So, to the question of ‘how exactly was public participation enacted in temporarily used spaces, and particularly in El Campo de Cebada?’, the answer will be ‘through the deployment of several and specific modes of articulation of practices, which in the particular case I have studied were at least six: coordination and reconfiguration, interference and attunement, and reiteration and concatenation’. Indeed, each one of these modes of articulation helped me to elaborate the answers to the three sub-questions of the thesis, and in consequence, to understand how ‘exactly’ public participation was enacted. Let me then formulate again the three sub-questions I posed in the introduction and answer them in what follows.

**RSQ1: How was the ‘community’ of El Campo formed and around what common features?**

The ‘community’ of El Campo was neither constituted by a homogeneous group of people nor were the people that formed it always the same. During the six years that El Campo was active, many different individuals and groups participated in multiple and diverse ways in its making and development; even, during the five months I did my fieldwork, many people got in and out generating a constant mutation of the community. Also, many of those different people that participated in El Campo’s everyday life did not know each other and some did not even meet during the time they shared the space. They inhabited el Campo, but they did not join *all together* in an explicit manner nor did they live similar experiences. El Campo was then a ‘multiple’ place (Mol, 2002). In fact, here I could recall the first vignette of the thesis, where three different groups of users of El Campo shared a rope, used it in their own way and managed it, but they did not even talk to each other when they related mediated by it. Hence, El Campo’s community was not formed by a stable, homogeneous or specific group of people. Rather, I would argue, El Campo’s community was a performative socio-material collective that did things in a particular way; that is, what formed the community of El Campo was the enactment of the practices that were developed in the premises and the way they were handled and managed.
Like people, practices related to each other in El Campo and also changed and mutated along time. In order to manage and govern those practices and their relationships, specific mechanisms were used. Certain rules and protocols were developed to do things in specific ways following an open attitude towards the unexpected. How, by whom and when the doors should be opened; how long sounds should be played, and so on. In that regard, the assembly played an important role in that development. There, as we have seen, rules were discussed and implemented with an open approach, which, if necessary, would allow to reconsider them and eventually change them. But how were practices related to each other, and more importantly, how did those relationships shape El Campo’s community?

In this account, I explored the ways of articulation that certain specific practices developed with ‘other’ related practices. I studied three cases: first, two different practices that occurred one after the other—like opening and closing; then, two (or more) practices that overlapped in time—e.g. closing and cleaning, or the different enactments of sounds that emerged simultaneously from multiple devices; and finally, one practice that related to itself when it was repeated day after day—i.e. watering the plants. Let me now expand the first case—different practices that occurred along time—and leave the other two cases to be handled in the following subsections.

When one practice ‘coordinated’ with another practice, the former practice defined its limits; it outlined itself in relation to the later practice, and hence, delineated its socio-material participation. In so doing, it required, as Marres and Lezaun (2011) argued, a combination of ‘engagement’ and ‘separation’ that shaped the boundaries of practices. Thus, to understand how practices coordinated, I analysed what happened in the margins of those practices. The example I used for exploring that idea was the relationship between opening and closing. Even if both practices seemed to gather similar actors around them, I showed that only very few actors participated in both practices—e.g. the padlock and the door. There were many other actors that were necessary in either one practice or the other—e.g. the key in opening (but not necessarily in closing) or the rubbish containers in closing (but not necessarily in opening); hence, multiple and heterogeneous relationships emerged between practices depending on the role played by actors. I called ‘marginal entities’ all those actors and socio-material collectives that were involved in coordination and formed the boundaries of practices.
In my view, all those ‘marginal entities’ were in effect ‘actor-networks’ and each bundled around them multiple actors and collectives. The example I accounted for was how the different people that managed the key—people that belonged to multiple ‘labelled’ and ‘more homogeneous’ human groups—were linked by the practice of opening and constituted a heterogeneous group around the key: a relationship that otherwise would not take place. The ‘key collective’ was a marginal entity that belonged to multiple groups and eventually bond them together—note that here eventually means both actually and temporarily. Interestingly, such ‘marginal’ characteristic of relationships—which concerns their capacity to pertain to multiple social ‘worlds’ (Park 1928; Star and Griesemer 1989)—fostered the formation of an eventual and ever-changing community through material means.

It is in this sense that here a possible answer to the question posed could be find. The community of El Campo was formed in the very processes of delineating the margins of its practices, and the common features that were shared were the margins themselves. So, the community was not formed by the people that went to the assembly, or the group of people that joint together to play basketball, or those who walk their dogs; not even all those groups of people together. Rather, the community was formed in the very enactment of the practices that had to be coordinated in order for all those other activities to take place, and it was always changing; that is, it was formed in the processes of managing the different mechanisms that allowed for such overlapped multiplicity of practices to occur.

**RSQ2: How were issues dealt with and what governance mechanisms were used to ‘solve’ them?**

‘Reconfiguration’ was the mode of articulation that emerged as a result of a process of ‘solving’ an issue. ‘Reconfiguration’ happened when certain practices had to be changed due to an eventuality: when frictions, problems or conflicts occurred, and practices were destabilised. Therefore, reconfiguration began with the emergence of an ‘eventual public’. On some occasions, that emergence indeed sparked when hidden situations came to the fore. For example—as accounted for in chapter 5—when the two individuals that had been managing the process of closing for several months realised that on top of closing—or as part of the process of closing—they had to clean the space too. The rules that emanated from the assembly had not been delivered to them and when that ‘blackbox’
was opened—namely, when the existing yet hidden rules were revealed—the two individuals were confronted with them. In that case, the way of solving the issue was to restructure the closing process, either materially or performatively; that is, either reconfiguring its materiality—e.g. by changing the lock—or reorganising its practice—e.g. by asking someone else to take the responsibility of closing, or by changing the time of closure.

In other situations, ‘reconfiguration’ was triggered by processes of ‘interference’ between practices. In those instances, unbalanced power relationships were the ones that generated the frictions. Such relationships were not only related with ‘abstract’ political issues but also with material entanglements—e.g. the volume of sound systems. Hence, their resolution—the eventual ‘balance’ or equilibrium between practices—could not only be solved with political discussions or negotiations. In many cases, specific material arrangements had to be implemented to redistribute power in such ways that interferences were reduced to simple overlaps. In those cases, the core of practices could still be developed as planned. That was, for example, the case accounted for in chapter 6 where the reorganisation of a meeting was made by rearranging the spatial distribution of seating, equipping the meeting with a powerful sound system and negotiating with neighbouring groups, which ultimately resulted in reducing conflict to a minimum.

In that sense, in the cases that it was clear that some sort of rearrangement was needed, often a process of negotiation began as part of the ‘reconfiguration’ process. It was in those processes that a specific mode of articulation played its role: ‘attunement’. Attunement entailed the deployment of certain political mechanisms—most of them related to practices of postponement and delay—to arrive to a certain level of equilibrium between actors or practices. For example, in the case of the noise complaint, there was an issue generated by a sound that was music in and around the location of the concert, and noise for a neighbour in her flat. Two practices overlapped and disturbed each other—one was disturbed by the sonic intromission of the concert in a flat and the other by the interruption of the concert by the police triggered by the neighbour. Such multiple disturbance was acknowledged by the assembly and a process of negotiation to find new ways of ruling sound was discussed: El Campo and the neighbour ‘attuned’ themselves in order to get to an eventual—again, actual and provisional—consensus that might solve the actual friction for the time being. Hence, new rules and protocols were agreed upon
and consequently the reconfiguration of practices was implemented. Such process of friction, interference, attunement and reconfiguration was recurrent in El Campo, and followed specific political mechanisms. Below, I will expand on those mechanisms and their theoretical implications.

**RSQ3: How were the everyday caring practices of El Campo politically relevant?**

In my analysis, I have shown that participation was made of ordinary routines and everyday happenings: watering the plants, cleaning the bins, using a key to open the door, closing a padlock when leaving the site, and so on. Everyday mundane practices were repeated over time with some sort of regularity; some of them daily—like opening and closing—or almost daily—like watering the plants; some weekly—like the gathering of the assembly; and others with other rhythms—monthly, yearly, and so on. Such repetitions generated routines and fostered the formation of heterogeneous collectives.

I have also claimed, though, that those repetitions were never the same. Each enactment of any of the practices studied was always different; each enactment was an *event* of a practice, a ‘temporary material entanglement’ that even if named the same—e.g. watering—was never the same as the preceding or the following one. Similar practices were often *intended* to be repeated over time, because the more alike they were the easier they were replicated, learnt or managed; but they were never repeated, they were, I contend, either ‘reiterated’ or ‘concatenated’. The example I used to explain such difference was the watering process, but it could also have argued analogously if I would have looked at how opening, closing or cleaning were done every day, or how the assembly was set up every week, or how concerts were organised every now and then. Each and every time a practice was enacted certain things were done in a similar way, and others were done anew, improvised and managed as they emerged. That is, each time a practice was developed, it partly had to deal with *eventualities*—i.e. it had to be subtly ‘reconfigured’.

The difference between ‘reiteration’ and ‘concatenation’ was that the former was less likely to be limited by the conditions encountered, whereas the latter was indeed limited and constrained by them. Such ‘limiting conditions’, as I identified them, could be related
to the previous event of the practice—e.g. the previous watering process or opening process—or to other practices and/or situations —e.g. other gardening practices or weather conditions in the case of watering, or the closing process that might have occurred between the previous enactment of opening and the current one. In the case when a practice was reiterated, the specific event of the practice was more autonomous and was specifically not constrained by the preceding same practice. On the contrary, when a practice had to be concatenated, that meant certain things done in the previous event of the same practice shaped the possibilities of the current one. Those ‘conditions’ reduced the autonomy of the specific event of the practice in question in relation to its previous or future enactment.

But what were those ‘limiting conditions’ that shaped the events of practices? And how they affected the practices? In the case of watering I identified those conditions as enough pressure, water and time. Importantly, practices were eventual—i.e. material and temporary. That is—and here I am getting to a finding that emerged in the process of accounting for the watering process— they were shaped by the deployment of certain materiality which also depended on the duration of their very process of materialisation. In the watering case, I argued that enough time was particularly needed to water the plants in order to water them well; however, that enough was not easy to grasp or measure. It was not possible to set certain amount of time to water the plants. And it could also be claimed similarly in the other accounts; I have showed how the music of a concert could became noise after certain period of time, or how closing, for instance, took time and not always the same amount of time. In that sense, time and materiality were intrinsically related and intertwined. Namely, making things in certain ways took time and taking such time in making such things materialised them in distinct and specific ways. For example, watering a sunflower for 5 minutes a day might help it grow and that might ‘invite’ gardeners to water it again the following day. Thus, my argument is that time and materiality were mutually constrained and, hence, co-constitutive of each other. And this, I contend, is crucial for the study and understanding of public participation.

Furthermore, among the conditions that limited practices, objective and measurable conditions are rarely found. Rather, what I managed to account for were mostly conditions that generated interdependency and were shaped by intersubjective relationships—e.g. how much is enough in regard to watering, or when is too long in relation to noise? That
is, the possibilities and opportunities to develop certain practice were very much associated to the affective relationships that emerged from them, and those were directly entangled with materiality. Two examples were accounted for in that sense. The first one considered the site’s secluded atmosphere in chapter 5. Certain individuals developed intimate relationships with space which in some cases materialised in transgressing the rules—e.g. by jumping into the site when it was closed, or not leaving when it was about to be closed. That behaviour related to the conditions offered by the space to those who neither wanted to be at home nor in a public open space in view of all. The second example described the affective relationship between gardeners and sunflowers, when the latter ‘managed’ to be watered due to their aesthetic appeal. In both cases, what defined the way in which actors participated was directly related to emotions and feelings, rather than with rationality and objectivity, and that determined subsequent situations.

Intersubjective affective relationships towards matter were crucial for the emergence and development of practices of care, and here is where the political relevance of such practices emerges. Affective intersubjectivity was established among multiple and heterogeneous actors and their relationships of care benefited some actors over others. The ‘active and explicit’ care for certain things put aside the care for other ‘matters’—which is not the same as saying that they put them at risk, for things found other ways to evolve establishing alternative intersubjective relationships. For instance, when some plants were ‘sad’ or ‘happy’—i.e. sunflowers—they ‘invited’ (human) gardeners to engage with them in multiple collective associations. As a consequence, and due to the lack of time, other plants did not manage to engage those (human) gardeners; however, those plants find other ways to engage alternative (non-humans) gardeners—it could be recalled, for instance, how the ripening tomatoes were appealing for birds as food, which in exchange helped the flowers reproduce by eating their seeds. In that sense, it is in the development of caring practices fostered by intersubjectivity that certain specific, distinct and ‘explicit’ unbalanced power relationships emerged. Hence, what I found is that the deployment of caring practices was not equally distributed and that concerned subjective motivations for exercising such care. And those motivations had specific implications for the governance of the space. That is in effect how caring practices became politically relevant: in their materialisation of intersubjectivity.
2. Theoretical considerations

In the edited collection of *Urban Cosmopolitics*, Blok and Farías delineated a quite ambitious research agenda based on the ‘urban cosmopolitical’ project which in their own words engaged in ‘the search for new urban common worlds of human and nonhuman cohabitation’ (2016b, 228–29). In this sense, one of the crucial features of that ‘urban cosmopolitical’ proposal was precisely how materiality played an active role in the development of practices, and how specific practices had to be put in place in order to deal with a material infrastructure in a constant state of reconfiguration. As we have seen, material participation (Marres 2012a) was central for the development of El Campo’s active—and it could be even claimed, activist—politics, for material engagement was not only enacted through deliberation but also through the performance of everyday life. In places like El Campo, there were underlying ‘sub-politics’—non-discursive practices—that tacitly happened in the making of the project, but also, as suggested by Marres and Lezaun (2011), there was also explicit material participation. The performative approach to participation used in this research entailed understanding participation as something present in the whole spectrum of urban practices that build the city, not only in decision-making processes.

In addition to such performative approach, I have also argued along with Marres that ‘public’ participation revolved around ‘issues that spark publics into being’ (2005a) building from the early pragmatists’ approach. What Marres nicely added to that pragmatist approach was that the inclusion of non-humans in publics resulted in what she called a ‘project of extension of democracy’ (2012a); that is, non-humans became more than just mere context. For Marres, I understand, publics emerged when ‘problematic’ situations were raised to a level of public scrutiny. Importantly, taking into account actors beyond humans has allowed me to include more—and more heterogeneous—actors, and has also helped to account for previously hidden sites. In that respect, much of her work focused on the mechanisms, objects and devices associated to ecological and environmental practices within the domestic and ‘private’ realm; a realm that, she denounced, was systematically excluded from public scrutiny and debates around ‘publicness’.
Interestingly, enquiring into the case of El Campo has shifted the focus from those previously hidden spaces—the domestic, intimate, ‘private’ sites—and has taken us to consider a different type of space. Indeed, what I have done is to look to the hidden—and possibly many times also intimate and private—practices, spaces and collectives developed in public space. Thus, the case of El Campo has offered us the opportunity to discuss what a ‘public’—in a pragmatist sense—was in public space, trying to make a case different from, on the one hand, so-called private spaces—the home or the office—and, on the other hand, the abstract public sphere discussed in political theory (e.g. Habermas 1989; Hillier 2003). I have argued that the fact that we dealt with ‘publics’ that were deployed and developed through active and activist politics within an urban public space entailed dealing with a level of complexity that needed to introduce specific political mechanisms to be managed, and that is precisely what I would like to discuss in this section. Such level of complexity, I contend, should expand the scope of practices and collectives considered in what ‘publics in public space’ are or mean.

In light of this discussion, in what follows, I will consider two concepts extracted from the empirical work that I have just presented which allow to think further the theoretical implications of publics in public space. First, I will go back to the question of community expanding on the concept of ‘margins’ to understand how relationships were shaped and enacted in and among collectives. In so doing, I will show how the fluid and thick nature of the margins of practices helped El Campo coping with internal heterogeneity and also to relate to ‘others’ beyond. And then, I will propose a reconsideration of the ‘project of extension of democracy’ delineated by Marres (2012a) linking it to Puig de la Bellacasa’s concept of ‘matters of care’ (2011; 2017). In so doing, I will discuss how ‘non-problematic’ material participation should be accounted for in its political relevance and be included in publics.

**Thick and Fluid margins**

In trying to understand how socio-material participation was enacted in public space, I have discussed the temporary and material nature of the practices of inclusion and exclusion: that is, the fluid and porous mechanisms through which an ‘us’ and a ‘them’ were performed, and how ‘eventual publics’ emerged and were defined and bounded. In doing so, when studying coordination, I focussed on how margins were defined in order
to grasp how otherness was enacted. In that sense, the analysis focussed on margins conceptualising them as material and temporary. As a result, I found that margins were more than an immaterial line or surface that just separated two different and differentiated states. Margins were ‘thick thresholds’ which included actors, collectives and practices that mutated through time. Following Park (1928), I used the concept of ‘margins’ understanding that they constituted and were constituted by the relationships between different social worlds. Hence, margins were enacted.

Two different features characterised margins. The first one has been already suggested in the previous section: ‘marginal entities’ had the capacity to bond and connect heterogeneous and sometimes antagonist collectives in ‘agonistic’ relationships (Mouffe 2005). That feature helped to cope with internal heterogeneity; for instance, how the key, as a marginal actor, managed to bring together the community. The second feature, and related to the previous one, concerns the capacity of margins to pertain at the same time to multiple social worlds and be legitimate in all of them. This feature in effect concerns the mechanisms used to bond different social worlds. Marginal entities—being them objects, individuals or collectives—had the capacity to be at the same time ‘outsiders and insiders’ (Singleton and Michael 1993); they were fluid, and they could migrate and mutate. This fluid capacity of being here and there, in and out, or for and against at the same time was a remarkable feature of those entanglements. When practices ‘coordinated’, marginal entities constituted collectives and associations that moved among more stable groups and managed to bond them. Such associations, however, were not always consensual, positive or beneficial for the parts involved. As Singleton and Michael (1993) already argued for, there are certain actors and collectives that have the ambivalent capacity to inhabit dual positions. They can be, at the same time, the ‘most outspoken critics and the most ardent stalwarts, [they] are simultaneously outsiders and insiders’ (1993, 232). That is, depending on the forum they were participating in, they could be the spokespersons of certain collectives or their agonistic counterparts.

An example of this remarkable issue was, for instance, the role played by both the police and the madrina in the account of the noise complaint. In both cases, they were marginal actors, for their participation transformed and mutated depending on who they were addressing. The police, when facing the people of El Campo, aligned with the neighbour, but also backed up El Campo’s project when addressing the neighbour. Similarly, the
madrina supported the concert organisers before the police, but also confronted the organisers when asking them to lower their volume or rearrange their equipment. In all those back and forward movements, as we have seen, practices coordinated and, in some cases, when the intervention of those marginal roles did not work, they had to be eventually reconfigured.

The non-problematic dimension of material participation

In most of the situations I have described in this thesis, the essence of the political participation that was at stake emerged from non-problematic relationships. That was partly because in many cases those participatory practices were previously hidden, and hence, publics had not emerged yet or had already been eventually solved—yet not necessarily closed—or even, would never emerge. In that sense, such non-problematic dimension of material participation was marginal and peripheral both in material and temporary terms. I mean, it developed ‘far away’ from the core of issues—either the material core or the ‘current’ conflictual situation. However, as we have seen, once a non-problematic practice was accounted for, its political valence rendered it crucial to understand the development of ‘eventual publics’. And that has been especially clear when I discussed the ‘seemingly irrelevant’ watering practice: an un-problematic yet politically relevant practice. Such political relevance of watering was shown, for example, when certain unbalanced power relationships were established with some plants—e.g. sunflowers—and not with others—e.g. tomatoes. Those relationships, I claim, were politically relevant because they fostered certain ecologies and collectives over others, and consequently defined the future of the garden.

Hence, whereas I could agree with Marres (2005a) that in some of the examples I accounted for ‘publics’ were sparked around issues—I mean the core of the material entanglement was a controversy, like the noise complaint—I would like to challenge the underlining idea that all ‘publics’ are always necessarily developed in direct relation with, around and temporarily overlapped with an issue at stake. In other words, I argue that what counts as ‘publics’ could be related and yet at a distance to such issues; I mean, in their peripheries. That understanding emerges from two different ideas. The first one concerns collectives that sometimes are non-problematic; that is, it relates to collectives linked with issues that did not always need to be ‘solved’. And then, the other idea relates
to cases where problems emerged and collectives expanded—both spatially and temporarily—way beyond the direct issue that was at stake; and hence, the networks of affection were not constrained to the inclusion or exclusion of a certain set of actors, because *multiple* relationships were enacted and *multiple* collectives emerged in consequence. Thus, the ‘eventual publics’ that eventually emerged—the *eventual* collectives—expanded rapidly and related to many heterogeneous entities that not necessarily were affected by the initial issue, or that not necessarily were problematic. In addition, ‘private’—and intimate—territories overlapped with publics, and the fact of letting them remain private did not necessarily challenge the formation of publics and their involvement in the public state of affairs.

In an environment such as El Campo, things got more complicated and complex than in a constrained, confined or limited space. In El Campo, ‘eventual publics’ often remained opened. My point is that this understanding of ‘publics’ expands Marres’ definition, for she argues—as far as I understand—that a public disappears or dissolves as soon as the issue at stake is solved. In contrast, I contend that there could be ‘publics’ that are not necessarily problematic and, hence, may not need to be ‘solved’, or better, may not need to be closed: they might remain latent in the peripheries. In addition, issues could be *eventually* solved, yet left open; and hence, remain public. Such publics might be hidden, but still be part of public affairs—such as, for example, watering the plants which seems to be an unproblematic practice that should be still considered a public issue.

In that sense, what I am claiming here is precisely for the political relevance of ‘matters of care’ (Puig de la Bellacasa 2011; 2017): namely, the political relevance of the ‘seemingly irrelevant’ caring practices of the everyday, which I directly relate with the un-problematic nature of material participation. And this does not mean I am arguing that everything is political; on the contrary, my point is that *some* non-problematic matters are *sometimes* politically relevant. That is, I agree with Puig de la Bellacasa when she claims that the concept of ‘matters of care’ provide a wider and more complex framework than the one of ‘matters of concern’ proposed by Marres (2012a) and Latour (2007). In most cases, care is supposedly un-problematic, yet relevant. Hence, my proposal is that care should be considered a materially engaged practice, and in doing so, Marres’ project of expansion of democracy (2012a) could be expanded even more by including the un-problematic practices of care.
The implications of this conceptualisation are crucial for seeking a different kind of public participation. First, because care is acknowledged and legitimised as a political relevant practice. And then, because it is also characterised as a materiality engaged practice. Both features of care have been systematically forgotten in urban literature and hence, here I am opening another path for further research, where care is indeed considered an urban practice in its own right.

3. Implications for urban governance:

   The politics of the eventual

In El Campo, consensus was not necessarily a stable ‘solution’; I mean, publics—in its Deweyian sense—were not necessarily always ‘solved’. When consensus was reached, it did not mean that the issue at stake was closed; rather, it often remained open. There was no need for closure, as Mol (2002) would say. Indeed, remaining open was usually a way of getting into an intermediate position, shared by discussants, yet not completely embraced by them. There was always room for improvement, and that was usually made explicit; openness left room for possible different solutions—in plural—that could be reached moving in different—and even opposing—directions. For example, some would prefer more hours of music, others would prefer less hours of noise; or even if some plants would need more water than they received, there were other more attractive plants that got the extra can of water.

Such non-closure status in El Campo’s day-to-day politics was achieved, I contend, when political practices and collectives embodied and integrated what a member of El Campo told me once: ‘The only thing true in the assembly is that there is going to be another assembly next week’. That understanding of politics, which applied not only to the assembly but to other socio-material associations in El Campo, allowed for an attitude that required both ‘radical openness’ and ‘slowness’; something that resonates with Stengers’ cosmopolitical proposal (2005). There was no rush to close anything, yet there was eventually the need to tame, shape, manage, negotiate, discuss, translate and/or displace possible conflicts.
Conflict, however, was not avoided in el Campo. Its people and its assembly were not afraid of confrontation; in fact, they welcomed and even embraced conflict; they were open to, as they said, ‘inhabit the conflict’. If an issue had to be discussed, the assembly was open for that. Still, sometimes being open and slow was ‘weary’, as Estalella and Corsín Jiménez (2016) already suggested; the uninterruptedly reproduction of open and slow politics came together with tiredness and exhaustion. In that sense, I have accounted for three cases where weariness emerged: the two regulars that did not want to open the space anymore, the neighbour that was disturbed by the sounds of El Campo specially after having been exposed to them most of the summer, and the group of the vegetable garden that decided to move to a different plot due to their differences with other inhabitants of the space. Still, even if that tiredness was often acknowledged by members of El Campo as an issue, the project managed to survive and be maintained for more than six years under such a precarious equilibrium.

To enable an ‘always-open’ and slow state of affairs, El Campo and in particular its weekly assembly were in a constant state of ‘suspension’. Estalella and Corsín Jiménez clearly put it: ‘the assembly strives for maintaining the worlds in suspension and the politics that put it at stake’ (2016, 160 my own stress). That state of suspension was possible thanks to certain political mechanisms. Those mechanisms allowed issues to remain open for some time more or, if eventually closed, to be re-opened again. Thus, suspension was about the temporary political mechanisms of dealing with consensus and dissent, and the specific arrangements used to keep consensus in a temporary unstable and uncertain status.

Importantly, the assembly—and here is the key—was limited in time; it lasted for about two hours every week. The assembly, as any other socio-material relationship, was materially and temporarily constrained, as we have seen. Sometimes there was not enough time to discuss an issue or to eventually close a debate already started; sometimes there was not enough people or not exactly the people that should be discussing the issue at stake, or sometimes something was missing—e.g. an information, a document or the agenda. Hence, debates were often postponed, or a partial temporary consensus agreed, leaving the closure of the matter for a next meeting—something that most of the times did not happen. Many times, from one week to the following one, conflicts might have already mutated into simple problems, or even to irrelevant matters. Those conflicts
would then remain open yet hidden and ‘irrelevant’—i.e. un-problematic, as we have already seen—until they were brought to the fore again in a following assembly—not necessarily the following one. Meanwhile, other issues might have risen.

Suspension encompasses a political attitude built around four predispositions that allowed the governance of ‘eventual publics’. The four predispositions, I contend, were possible ways of proceeding in light of the emergence of an issue; those four ways of performing eventual politics were: welcoming, attunement, experimentation and postponement. The first one was a radical and symmetrical political attitude. El Campo had the capacity to remain ‘radically open’ welcoming everyone and everything: a willingness to include every new issues that emerged in their debates, and also an openness to incorporate new actors—being them human or non-human—that affected and were affected by them, regardless of what kind of issues or actors were at stake. In El Campo, they practiced ‘radical openness’ as the enactment of a possible ever-changing state of affairs.

Once issues were incorporated in practices and collectives—that is, welcomed—the other three predispositions could be performed: attunement, when an issue among two parties emerged and needed negotiation and settlement; experimentation, once rules were set and certain testing and innovation had to be put in practice; and/or postponement and delay, when no possible closure could be reached. Those possible ways of proceeding were neither exclusionary nor necessarily performed in a linear fashion; that is, sometimes there was only postponement, or experimentation, and sometimes postponement happened before negotiation, and sometimes the three of them were developed but not necessarily in that same order. Attunement entailed great capacity of dealing with uncertainty and improvisation, but also empathy, intersubjectivity and in many cases the reduction of initial expectations. Experimentation (Lezaun, Marres, and Tironi 2017) required versatility, imagination and innovation to prototype, test and sound out procedures and protocols not previously tested, what Corsín Jiménez (2013) has already accounted for as an ‘in beta’ situation. Indeed, El Campo itself could be regarded as an experiment around how to build, care, deal with, manage and engage with a public space. And finally, postponement entailed understanding and incorporating temporality, and dealing with delay and elongation, which resulted in the ‘slowing down’ of politics.
At this point, it is inevitable to think of Stengers’ work (2005; 2010b; 2011) and recall the two figures she proposed to think about the ‘slowing down’ of politics: the idiot and the diplomat. The former one, the idiot, which she borrowed from Deleuze and Dostoevsky, was

‘the one who always slows the others down, who resists the consensual way in which the situation is presented and in which emergencies mobilize thought or action. This is not because the presentation would be false or because emergencies are believed to be lies, but because "there is something more important". Don’t ask him why; the idiot will neither reply nor discuss the issue. [...] the idiot demands that [...] we don’t consider ourselves authorised to believe we possess the meaning of what we know.’ (2005, 994–95)

In other words, the idiot introduces instability. Indeed, as Farías and Blok argued, the idiot ‘does not master the language of the polis. [...] The presence of the idiot in the collective produces a slowing down of thinking and decision making, an opening up for the unexpected, the abnormal, the ambiguous’ (2016, 15). The idiot is able to force the reconsideration of things by taking to the fore again something that was already decided, allowing new actors to take part and new publics to emerge. The idiot hence welcomes new issues and actors, participates in negotiations and makes them difficult, promotes experimentation and forces the postponement of decisions.

The diplomat, on its hand, inhabits what I have identified as margins. It is the double agent that moves back and forth; and it is in that moving back and forth, in that translating but also betraying (Law 2006) that she in effect delays politics. Ideas around postponement and duality could be linked with what Stengers called a ‘culture of hesitation, that enhances the distinction between obligations and rules or norms, or between [what she argues Latour (2004b) would call] essence and habits’ (2010a, 27 original emphasis). Here, what I am interested in is in the figure that plays that hesitant practice—the aforementioned marginal actor. In Stengers’ terms, the diplomat is someone who enacts the culture of hesitation by understanding it as

‘[...] the capacity for the protagonists not to confuse belonging and identity, that is, not to take as a betrayal or a manifestation of weakness the acceptance of a
proposition that implies a modification of their habitual formulation of who they are.’ (Stengers 2010a, 30)

Meaning that the diplomat—the mediation figure—can embody ‘divided loyalties’ (Stengers 2010a). So, Stengers’ diplomat played what Singleton and Michael identified as ‘outsiders and insiders’ (1993) and I have called the marginal actor. Importantly, Law (2004), expanding Singleton and Michael’s argument, explained that it was exactly that hesitation what hold networks together, what gave them stability. So, in El Campo, both instability and hesitation allowed for the reproduction and reconfiguration of participatory practices, and its constant state of suspension, even if weary, provided the ‘radically open’ attitude that ultimately constituted what the politics of the eventual was; an open democratic attitude to include, to negotiate, to experiment and even, if necessary, to postpone, and in consequence, to slow down politics.

4. Ethnography as an eventual practice

My involvement in El Campo was an immersive and intersubjective research experience which demanded a deeply emotional and personal commitment. Building from such experience, I consider the methodological contribution of this work mostly concerns its performative and subjective side. Ethnographic knowledge could be argued to emerge from an intense, deep and sustained involvement with the field which shapes and is shaped by the relationships that the researcher manages to build with the people, places, practices and collectives that she studies. Ethnographic encounters, thus, inevitably generate strong linkages with informants and their circumstances. Actually, what ethnography does in that process of bonding, I would claim, is to incorporate the actions and practices of the research into the very ecology of practices that are investigated. In that sense, in my case, the ethnographic practice I developed became part of El Campo’s ecology of practices during the time I dwelled in it, and that in turn shaped the very things I investigated.

Some would argue that such interconnection might ‘contaminate’ the field with my actions; and that would be true. The response to such critique would be that the problem was not the contamination itself but the lack of acknowledgement of that contamination.
In understanding that intrinsic relationship, I practised and experienced ethnography not only observing and registering people, practices, things and situations, but also ‘coordinating’ with them. Ethnographic research is not a detached and ‘objective’ method with which one can cleanly relate to its object of study, but a methodology that builds from experience. In that sense, both the practices of the field and the research were in effect deeply interconnected.

Thinking further that interconnection, I think my ethnographic practice was also—like the practices I studied—an eventual practice; partly because it was directly entangled with them, partly because it was in effect actual and provisional. It ‘coordinated’ with other practices, it was either ‘reiterated’ or ‘concatenated’ day after day in a similar (but not the same) manner, and sometimes, when there were ‘interferences’, it had to be ‘attuned’ and ultimately ‘reconfigured’, like watering or cleaning or opening and closing.

When I planned my fieldwork, I tried to foreknow the possible situations that I might encounter in the field, trying to anticipate the possible difficulties that might rise and think how I would face them imagining different ways to overcome them. Most of what I expected proved (the least) very different from what I foresaw—if not directly wrong. Some things were easier than I thought, and some more difficult. The immersive ethnographic fieldwork experience often surprised me with situations, people, conversations, answers and even new questions, and also with difficulties that were far from been predictable, which usually put me in challenging positions. In those instances, I contend, the more equipped the researcher is with the capacity to improvise and build from eventualities, the better. So, an advice for those who would embark on ethnographic fieldwork: even though there is a need for preparation, be prepared to improvise and reshape your research in the making, allowing the field to give you the clues and even the questions that need to be answered.

In my experience, such eventualities forced me in several occasions to reshape my ethnographic practice; that is, they made me ‘reconfigure’ my everyday routines and the way I sought for new things. For instance, in the beginning, I focussed on events—concerts, meetings, cinema screenings, and so on; however, after a month in the space, I began shifting my sight towards peripheries and margins, finding there a much more attractive object of study. Such reconfiguration of my practice occurred gradually.
Ethnography is learnt very slowly, especially if it is the first experience—as it was in my case—and it is learnt inevitably in the making. Accordingly, the researcher is usually confronted with a concatenation of trials and errors that little by little converge into the specific ethnography one seeks to pursue.

Consequently, ethnography is made of experimentation and one has to choose between paths in multiple situations. That is, for example, what happened when I tried to use a blog as a place for collaborative experimentation. Even though the blog helped me to organise my work and forced me to be systematic in my way of accounting what I encountered, one of its original purposes, which was to be a place to receive feedback from the field, to establish conversations, and even to register a repository of ‘other experiences’, proved so difficult to achieve that I had to cut it loose. Also, the contribution that I imagined I was going to give back to El Campo once this work was complete, it is now impossible do, for El Campo is now closed, and its people—or the people from El Campo I related to, that were in fact a very small part of them—have moved elsewhere.

Finally, the last aspect that can be learnt from my experience on the field relates to how to research everyday life. My reference for such endeavour was Perec’s attempt at exhausting a place in Paris (2010). In his account he painstakingly goes over and over certain things and situations that happen again and again. After several repetitions, he arrived at a point which seemed that little bit more could be said, yet the impression that gives you is that still, if you wait five more minutes, there may be something else. I consider that an ethnographic project that deals with the everyday—and this is a warning to whoever thinks in embarking in such enterprise—is far from being a thrilling experience. I am not saying it is not exciting, yes of course, it is a very exiting experience; but it is also boring in many moments, and one has to be patient and forbear from being ‘active’. In fact, what I found most beneficial and interesting from that boredom and that observant and open attitude was that the most striking discoveries were made once I thought my saturation point had been exceeded. That is why, as a motto, I would suggest that the ethnographer should always try to wait just for a little bit more.
5. Closing remarks

El Campo de Cebada officially closed its doors the 15th of December of 2017. After several meetings with the Municipality, it was decided that the lease agreement would end on that same day, when a ‘committee’ from El Campo would symbolically hand the key of the space to a civil servant representing the Council. If we look at the picture of the handover of the key, there was one thing that seemed to be out of place: the ‘key’ itself. The ‘key’ was neither the actual key that opened the lock of door of the space nor even a proper ‘key’. Indeed, it was an ‘adjustable spanner’, which—funnily enough—in Spanish is literally called ‘English key’ [llave inglesa]. I assume the people of El Campo wanted to make a joke that in addition could also be read as their last political message. The handover of the ‘key’ was a symbolic gesture that underlined the importance of material participation and management practices; and by management, I do not only refer to the organisation of opening and closing of a door to let people in and out, but also to all those other practices that dealt with the building, maintaining and caring of an urban infrastructure—i.e. most of what we have seen above. In giving back a tool rather than a proper key, they underlined the importance of materiality, and symbolically invited the municipal authorities to keep on taking care of spaces like El Campo and all the relationships that might emerge during the time they will be open, repairing and maintaining them when needed, and fostering, building and providing new spaces for
citizens where those type of relationships and practices could be enacted and re-enacted again.

Looking backwards, I strongly believe this work is pertinent and relevant, not only for the academic knowledge drawn from the results that I have just presented—which I think might help opening new paths for further urban research—but also because it might help to analyse, understand and even imagine, foster and propose alternatives for the development of both existing urban initiatives and new urban projects. In the realm of the urban, multiple formal and informal socio-material ‘communities’ participate in its development: for example, local neighbourhood associations, NGOs, activist projects, public institutions, foundations, charities, investment groups, planning offices, and so on; but also groups of friends, traffic jams, or even flocks of birds. All of them organise in their own terms around certain rules, norms and protocols that allow or constrain the construction of relationships between multiple heterogenous entities. Such governance relationships, that relate to both internal and external connections and associations with themselves and others, could indeed benefit from the lessons learnt in this work.

In that regard, I could assert that the very specific accounts from El Campo that I have presented here are not just an interesting and situated local story, they also constitute a significant contribution to wider urban knowledge. This contribution concerns governance mechanisms, procedures and knowledge and its relationships with public participation in at least four ways. First, I have underlined the importance of acknowledging internal heterogeneity and complexity; communities are never homogeneous entities and hence, they need certain protocols to cope with complexity and difference. Then, I have foregrounded the relevant role that margins play in the deployment of participation, not only in the definition of their limits, but also in establishing bonds with other socio-material collectives beyond the ‘community’ itself. Again, distinct ways of proceeding are needed to ‘inhabit conflicts’. In that sense, both internal and external relationships relate to what Mouffe (2005) identified as ‘agonistic’ relationships: relationships that acknowledge the difference with others but find ways to build common places from there. The third relevant feature I have discussed was the processual nature projects and how its temporary and provisional rhythms and materiality in effect are at the core of participation. In that sense, most interestingly, I found that time and materiality are mutually constrained and co-constitute each other. And finally, I think
for me the most important issue I have dealt with is how the seemingly irrelevant practices of everyday life are indeed politically relevant. In being attentive to how socio-material collectives emerge and develop, I managed to take to the fore many practices that happen ‘when-nothing-happens’ and to demonstrate their relevance.

So, to conclude, understanding participation as a performative phenomenon has help me to show the relevance of materiality and its relationship with time. Also, thinking of publics as socio-material collectives ‘bundled together in order to solve an issue’ has taken us to challenge the democratic dichotomy between freedom and equality, finding particularly eventual ways that have blurred such clear cut distinction managing to slow down politics and expand even more the ‘project of extension of democracy’ proposed by Marres (2012a). Thus, this account of El Campo de Cebada has proved that, even if weary and eventual, projects that place at its core the building of common cosmopolitical worlds are still possible.

Word count: 93897 words
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