Urban Insecurity as a Language of Political Contention in Madrid (Spain)

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Public policies for urban planning developed since the 1980s in Spanish city centres have been marked by the idea of "refurbishing" areas that are "in crisis." The discourse of citizens' insecurity has become the framework of shared meaning for diagnosing problems, as well as for legitimizing policies. Using an ethnographic analysis carried out in a central Madrid neighbourhood, I will analyze how the experience of insecurity of one sector of the residents, which is shaped in the framework of the general discourse of citizen insecurity, is, however, rooted in a specific life trajectory that indicates socio-cultural and economic keys that have little to do with the causes of insecurity that the hegemonic discourse continually indicates. More generally, I hope to show, with this case study, how anthropological analyses can contribute to the evaluation of public urban policies.

1. Introduction: Urban Centres in Crisis and Rehabilitation Policies in Spain

The tradition of anthropological studies and the qualitative approaches to public policies underline the nature of public policies as forms of socio-cultural activity linked to the production of symbolic-material frameworks of social meaning (Fischer, 2003; Yanow, 2000). It is interesting to see that these are frameworks of meaning that are, simultaneously, shared and disputed. In the major Spanish cities (Madrid, Barcelona, Bilbao, and Valencia), urban refurbishment of city centres has been a constant that has been carried out continuously, although with different planning models, ever since the democratic regime was consolidated. These models and their transformations demonstrate and update organizational principles of society, at the same time as they provide different groups with narratives and plans for action. Thus, they confer coherence and order as well as define arenas for discrepancy and political confrontation, creating alliance zones and mechanisms for defining symbolic frontiers, categories of subjectivity, and new kinds of political subjects (Shore, 2010).[2]

Starting in the mid-80s, different modulations of the so-called Integrated Refurbishment Areas (ARIs, Áreas de Rehabilitación Integrada) have played the leading role in public intervention in urban planning affairs in Spain. Based on a holistic vision that sees the urban area as an environment where the physical, social, and moral worlds come together, the ARIs involve setting the boundaries of different zones of the city characterized as units of a historical and/or functional nature that share a homogeneous set of problems. This justifies the need for public intervention, generally involving strong injections of capital devoted to improving urban infrastructures, public services, and equipment, as well as subsidies for owners to refurbish their homes. In addition, different measures related to social programs, to economic incentives, or to models of police intervention have complemented these kinds of policies (for example, and referring to this last issue, by introducing the principles of *Crime Prevention through Environmental Design* in urban planning, based on the idea of "defensible spaces" [Newman, 1972] and the preventative approach to urban safety).

The ARIs developed in the city centres and, particularly, in some neighbourhoods, have been marked by what could be considered a very potent discourse of "urban crisis," pregnant with symbolism. From this discursive universe, residents, civil associations, administrative technicians, and local politicians have defined the state of the city centre by using the figures of degradation, deterioration, collapse, and crisis,

figures shaped by an amalgam of problems that go from aging housing to the lack of social services, the degradation of public spaces, the presence of drugs and delinquency, unemployment, poverty, and exclusion. This universe of problems has varied over the last three decades, in which both demographic and sociocultural dynamics and housing market dynamics, as well as the effects of the refurbishment policies themsleves, have had a transforming effect. These changes, however, –and it is necessary to specify that they are not unidirectional- have not undermined the presence of this solid *discourse of urban crisis*, which has remained in force, gliding over the city centre, and has functioned as a shared interpretative framework for both different sectors of citizens and state institutions. These institutions have repeatedly used this discourse in their attempts to legitimize the public urban planning policies that have been implemented over the last three decades.

The main nucleus of meaning of this discourse about the crisis of the urban centre is the omnipresent issues of "citizen insecurity," a discursive nucleus that works as an umbrella and an interpretational filter, as a cultural grammar, for a whole series of urban phenomena and for the causes and meanings that citizens and institutions attribute to them. Thus, different and heterogeneous experiences and life trajectories in the city that different groups of citizens possess and verbalize acquire meaning and form –they become inteligible both for those who express them and for those who listen to them- in the mold of a kind of global narrative of urban insecurity that is quite familiar to public opinion in the major Spanish cities.[3] "Urbanistic deterioration," "dirtiness," "poverty," "illegality," "delinquency," "immigration," and moral evaluations that go from "lack of community spirit" to "immorality" are the interrelated domininant nodes of this discourse. This discourse itself works as a general narrative matrix that inspires definitions and evaluations of the state of the urban centres and also causes "narratives of risk" (Mairal, 2008) to proliferate, everyday stories in which the speaker (the resident) tries to give meaning to an experience of "liquid fear" (Bauman, 2006) that seems to constitute the contemporary urbanite. These kinds of expressions, simultaneously specific and generalized (because they share a "family air") in the framework of the discourse on citizen insecurity, are the basis of the ARI designs, as we shall see in the case of Madrid. What is interesting about this discursive framework that has crystalized around "insecurity" is its fascinating and paradoxical operativity for providing a basis for dissent and conflict about the social-moral affairs of urban life, while it serves *at the same time* as a vehicle for a hegemonic consensus. This hegemonic consensus reinforces the values and social relations that dominate in the city (regarding, for example, private property, the radical attribution of otherness to immigrants, and a certain sense of social order that marginalizes and excludes certain life practices in the city, such as the "homeless" people who live there, the design of the famous "hard squares," and the intensive persecution of actions such as urinating or drinking alcohol on the street, all following the famous New York police line of "zero tolerance" [Vitale, 2008]).

What I will analyze in this article is how the experience of a specific group of residents in a central Madrid neighbourhood, a neighbourhood that has been defined as an ARI for almost fifteen years, is articulated using this hegemonic grammar of "citizen insecurity." What I will emphasize, however, is not only the description of this process, but the way the city planning policies implemented in the area, which right from the start have taken up and made an effort to satisfy this demand for "security," have not managed, in all these years, to reverse the alarmist discourse of fear as an experience of living in the neighbourhood that this sector of residents maintains. In order to understand some of the reasons behind this relative failure of the ambitious public policy of this Madrid ARI, it is necessary to observe attentively the process through which the social experience of this particular group of residents is articulated in the global narrative of "insecurity," in order to perceive how this interpretational framework is permanently threatened by a flooding, an incapability to hold more meanings than the numerous and diverse meanings that it already has, making "insecurity" a floating signifier, an evanescent and multidimensional object that public policies do not manage to confront. I do *not* mean to state that the *discourse of insecurity*, as these residents appropriate it, is a screen that hides the true meanings and causes of their experiences of fear and meaninglessness. What I do hold is that there are important and defining elements of their experiences that these residents express clearly, but they are mostly inaudible (and unarticulated even for the very residents who express them), because they do not fit the general discursive framework of "citizen insecurity," the framework that defines the political arena in which the definition of the "problems" and the evaluation of the "solutions" that affect shared life in the neighbourhood and the city are put into play. In this context, I believe that an ethnographic type of approach can be invaluable for evaluating and reformulating public

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[3] In a similar direction, from the 80s onward, a general growth in the feeling of insecurity in large European cities and their conurbations can be observed (Zauberman, 2008).

policies, by reconstructing the horizons of meaning against which the different groups' experiences of insecurity are defined. My intention is to go beyond the typical surveys that, at a certain level, can do no more than ratify, again and again, that "citizen insecurity" in the centre of Madrid is the eternal problem of citizens and politicians. I do not think it is necessary to insist on the fact that an ethnographic approach requires spending time on a specific case, in order to capture it in all its illuminating complexity, and not just using it as an example or illustration of a general thesis.

2. "Insecurity" as a language of contention for the "old residents" of Lavapiés

Before I describe the space and the actors, along with the methodology I used, and the following discussion of the ethnography that illustrates the case set forth, I will offer a few brief notes that will deepen our understanding of a key theoretical concept in this study. I am going to consider the discursive paradigm of urban insecurity to be what Roseberry calls a language of political contention (Roseberry, 1996). Doing this means acknowledging, first of all, that language and discourse are activities of a practical nature and that, secondly, they are linked to the way hegemonies are shaped in the terrain of political praxis. However, more than coherent, vertically-imposed ideologies, it is more fitting to charactize hegemony as an unfinished process that is permanently being reformulated and that refers to the construction of symbolic-material frameworks that, in a way, *contain* the heterogeneity and the conflict that characterize the political process. These frameworks can be seen as what process theory in political anthropology calls "arenas" (Swartz, Turner and Tuden, 1966; Bailey, 1969) or what Roseberry himself, following Gramsci, defines as force fields that integrate a complex unit of coercion, consent, and dissent. Both the actors involved in the political alliance/confrontation dynamics and the lines along which these dynamics develop are defined in these frameworks. Even the ways of resisting –as Roseberry shows- must take on the correct frameworks and languages, directed to the appropriate organisms (íbid.). So in the debates on refurbishing city centres – something which goes far beyond the state of the streets and buildings and involves moral values and ways of building identity and otherness in the city- "citizen insecurity" is a language of contention today. As such, it is capable of articulating alliances and situating conflicts, of serving as an umbrella that gives meaning to different positionings and life trajectories, as well as legitimizing public policies. But it also leaves some experiences, reasons, and collective emotions out of the political space; because these cannot be articulated in the hegemonic framework, they remain a kind of "threat to meaning," and appear in diffuse but intense feelings of urban discomfort. I hold that this can be one of the keys of the (relative) failure of public policies for urban refurbishment, as they have been thought out and carried out in Spanish cities over recent decades.

The space where this study was carried out is a neighbourhood in the central district of Madrid, popularly known as Lavapiés. Over the last decade, its population has oscillated between forty and fifty thousand residents (Pérez Quintana, 2010), with a predominance of the middle-lower class (since 2008, the rate of unemployment has been around seven points above the average for the city, while only 57% of the housing –including housing with mortgages- is owned by the residents, a percentage that is far below the average of 83% in Madrid).[4] Lavapiés has a long trajectory in the history of the city as a "rough neighbourhood," thus the headquarters for the greatest urban horrors; although –even though it seems paradoxical, it is not infrequent- it is also one of the neighbourhoods that is characterized in the popular *imaginaire* as the most typical and "authentic Madrid neighbourhood". A general diagnosis that is shared by residents, associations, and politicians identified it, in the early 90s, as one of the most deteriorated areas in the centre of Madrid. Since 1999, it has been declared an "Area of Integral Refurbishment" (ARI-Lavapiés), a figure of urban planning that has involved the expenditure of several million euros by the public administrations, an expenditure that has basically been oriented toward "refurbishing" the neighbourhood and putting an end to its condition as an "insecure" space.[5]

After 12 years of this public policy (with successive extensions for its completion), 39% of the residents declared the neighbourhood to be worse than before. The main problem mentioned, where the worsening of the neighbourhood is most noticeable, is also the problem that motivated the original implantation of the ARI-Lavapiés: citizen insecurity. As if this were not enough, one of the most generally repeated complaints

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[4] Many of the statistics I present (unless I indicate otherwise) are taken from the survey carried out by the sociologist Vicente Pérez Quintana and his team, the results of which were made public in 2010.

[5] The design of the ARI-Lavapiés follows the general lines for this kind of figure of urban planning. In the final section, some of the specific interventions carried out in Lavapiés in the framework of this public policy can be seen in greater detail. For more concrete details regarding the objectives and the lines of action of the ARI-Lavapiés, see EGL, 2000.

is formulated as "the administration's passiveness" with respect to the lack of safety in the neighbourhood. However, the data about the number and location of their interventions that the municipal police made public in 2006 locate the total number of interventions in Lavapiés for this year at the same level as the rest of the central district neighbourhoods.[6] So this neighbourhood does not appear to be a space with levels of delinquency that are significantly higher than those in surrounding areas (Atlas de la Seguridad de Madrid, 2007). In addition, Lavapiés has turned into an important space for young people's leisure activities in the city, as well as a space where commerce and the restaurant business have been revitalized around the new immigration. All of this has kept Lavapiés far from the isolation and marginalization that might have characterized it in other periods. To complicate this panorama even more, the neighbourhood residents who hold the most intense negative perception about it have a quite well-defined profile: they are people of a certain age (over 45), residents in Lavapiés for more years than the average, and to a great extent inactive (retired). The youngest people and those who have lived in the neighbourhood for fewer years tend to maintain a general view of the neighbourhood that is more positive, acknowledging certain improvements and pointing out certain problems –some similar to those that the more pessimistic residents point out, such as "dirtiness," but without including them in a general catastrophistic discourse, in this general narrative of "citizen insecurity." It makes sense, as we shall see, to make a sociological distinction between "old"[7] and "new" residents, marked not only by age but by their trajectory of residence in the neighbourhood and their life trajectory in general, which produces different moral and value horizons in general, with the generational distinction being a key factor.

These people with the profile of "old residents" are also the ones who, as a majority, point to immigration as the third most important problem in the neighbourhood, after dirtiness. In order to situate the issue of immigration in Lavapiés properly, it is necessary to summarize, even if only superficially, the neighbourhood's population dynamics in its most recent history. Lavapiés has characteristically been a residential neighbourhood where the different waves of immigrants arrive, immigrants who, throughout the history of Madrid and parallel to its industrialization, came from the rural areas of the country. The economic crisis of the 70s, which coincided with the orientation of the real estate market toward urbanizing the periphery, provoked both the end of the arrival of new population and the exodus of the youngest residents toward the new housing on the outskirts. This resulted in depopulation and in the aging of both the population and the housing, as well as a whole series of socio-demographic dynamics that set the scene, in the 80s, for characterizing Lavapiés as a highly degraded space, a characterization that persists today. In the 90s, however, immigrants from foreign countries began to arrive in the neighbourhood (and in the country),[8] as well as groups of young people attracted by the physical centralness of Lavapiés and the (relatively) low housing prices. Along with these people, squatters (okupas) also arrived, and social and cultural associations began to proliferate, as well as bars and leisure spaces related to the most bohemian fraction of the universe of young people in the city. For now, these dynamics have not really followed the line of gentrification of the neighbourhood, perhaps, among other reasons, because the neighbourhood's physical conditions (with a tortuous and very dense design and an extremely aged, low-quality set of housing) do not make it an attractive place for the more well-to-do classes to live. What Lavapiés does present is an important sociocultural complexity and heterogeneity visible in one detail, for example: the way citizens' discourses (popular, media, and political) present it, alternatively and in a terribly

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[6] The centre of the city has considerable value in urban planning and in the Spanish way of life. It is, without doubt, the space that the majority of the population prefers for leisure time, shopping, and, to a very great degree, for residence. Although the subjective perception of insecurity is greater in the centre of Madrid than in the periphery (except for marginal areas, and particularly in relation to hold-ups, robberies, and hooliganism), the main problems that citizens link to the centre generally have more to do with traffic jams, a lack of park areas, and, of course, the cost of housing, which is higher than the average for the city.

[7] In this profile, I will consider the people over 65 years of age (the legal age of retirement in Spain), who have a high rate of long residence trajectories in the neighborhood, over two decades.

[8] The numbers can give us an idea of the important impact of foreign immigration on the neighborhood and on the city over the last two decades. In 1999, Madrid had a population with foreign origins of around 3%, rising to 10.52% in 2002, to 15.89% in 2005, and to 16,79% in 2008. With reference to the Lavapiés neighborhood, the data are: 8.4% in 1999 and 34.58 in 2005. This last figure is very similar to the figure for 2008, the year in which the number of immigrants decreases noticeably, both in the neighborhood and in the city, mainly due to the effects of the economic crisis. So we can see that the increase in foreign immigration happened intensively in just a few years (a trend that is similar throughout the country, which has, historically, gone from being a country of emigration to being a country of immigration). Lavapiés has been one of the Madrid neighborhoods – perhaps the main one- in which this process has been most intensely experienced. Today around 33% of the residents are of foreign origin, and this percentage rises to over 50% in the age-range from 20-29 years. The majority of the people in this total come from six different countries: Bangladesh, Ecuador, Morocco, China, Senegal, and Bolivia (Source: Padrón municipal (Instituto Nacional de Estadística) and Pérez Quintana, 2010).

contradictory fashion, either as the new Arcadia of happy multiculturality or as the dangerous, horrendous rough neighbourhood.

Why does one sector of residents, the "old residents," insist so radically on the worsening of the neighbourhood's living conditions, on their sensation of fear, and on the failure of the ARI public policies? How and why do they narrate their experience in this narrative matrix of "citizen insecurity"? Why do they situate the foreign immigrant as the key person in their discourse so often, as the main character who has, in a way, "stolen" the neighbourhood from those who have lived there longer? This discourse legitimizes actions along the line of what Neil Smith has called the "revanchist city" (Smith, 2005), or in relation to what Bauman characterizes using the term "mixophobia" (Bauman, 2006). Some of the younger residents, some of the ARI technicians, and even some of the people who study the neighbourhood's sociocultural reality have used explanations that are really moral judgments: the older residents find it hard to understand the changes, they are necessarily "conservative" and "immobilistic" in nature, they have low cultural levels and low incomes, all of which turn them into easy targets and conveyor belts for transmitting a racist discourse... I believe that we need a more rigorous, deeper approach to the experiences of this sector of residents, in order to unravel the social logic on which they are based; if we do not know this logic, it will be hard for the public policies that seek to reduce insecurity and facilitate coexistence in the neighbourhood to achieve their objectives. So what does "concern about insecurity" mean in these residents' universe and life trajectory? What particular –and distinctive- experience of the world and of life in the city, inextricably cognitive, emotional, and moral, is taking form in this *prêt-à-porter* discourse of "citizen insecurity"? Following this particular and localized path with my ethnographic glasses on, I intend to illustrate how "insecurity," far from having a single meaning, is a complex object; at the same time "more than one and fewer than many" (Mol, 2002). I also intend to show that the ways it is articulated are of key importance today, in each urban location, in order to evaluate the incidence, the legitimacy, and the effects of the city's public policies. I will return to this last point in the conclusions.

In order to obtain the data that I will analyze in the following section, I based my work on a fundamentally anthropological methodology, carrying out fieldwork in the Lavapiés neighbourhood. With regard to the subject dealt with in this article, the fieldwork included participant observation over six months in the leisure centre for the elderly and in the neighbourhood health clinic, as well as in several plazas and meeting places of "old residents," and in the homes of some of them, based on my activity as a volunteer for the social worker in the health clinic. In parallel, I carried out documentary research on the socio-economic and population dynamics of the neighbourhood, as well as four discussion groups and twenty two in-depth interviews with this sector of residents. All of the quotes I use in the analysis are taken from these materials.

3. "Lavapiés is a neighbourhood to be afraid of"

Street hawkers: "The Plaza de Embajadores is where they all go... to buy and sell stuff... it's unbelievable... old gear, so old it's all broken... and the sellers are like the stuff they're hawking... old, toothless, stinking of booze... young ones like junkies or worse... I daren't go near there. It's a disgrace and a shame to see what's become of the neighbourhood... if they were only selling decent stuff, even if it is on the street, but the stuff they sell... My God! Broken old shoes and worthless bits of scrap. You wouldn't find such trash even in the rubbish bins. And they say it's all stolen or got from the rubbish... and worse. They steal from the dead, people who die and they strip them and take everything they've got to sell... people who live alone. I don't know. Those people scare me, I don't know what could happen to me... The way the neighbourhood is... I don't go there anyway."

The risk of going out: "It's not like it used to be. There used to be lots of shops, and we all knew each other, "good morning," "good afternoon"... you can't even go out of your house nowadays. The other day a friend of mine was mugged at the door of the bank and she lost all her pension... just like that! You see, I live on the fourth floor and I have to carry the shopping up by myself... you can't let anybody help you because they just run off with your shopping bags, I swear to you. The other day I was at the greengrocer's and a lad came running past and grabbed a bunch of asparagus, just like that..."

Young people have no respect: "I try not to go near the Plaza de Lavapiés so as not to see the filth and the empty bottles, and the piss stains... I can hardly bear to see that lovely square. They sit with their boots up on the benches and they wreck everything. Anything that looks new, litter bins... nothing lasts the blink of an eye when they get going."

The homeless on the streets: "The Plaza de Tirso de Molina is really bad, they're all down-and-outs there. It's very difficult to get rid of them... they piss everywhere, and the other too... sex... We've been trying to get them out for years but there's no way... (...). The stories I could tell you about the incredible things that go on in that square."

These tales are just a small sample of the numerous stories collected in fieldwork in Lavapiés from the old people of the neighbourhood. Pensioners over the age of 65 make up around 11,000 of the inhabitants. They account for 22.7% of the district's total population. Women represent 70.7% of senior citizens (Pérez Quintana, 2010). This purely demographic description can be fleshed out with other relevant socio-historical data to sketch a profile of these residents. Born between 1911 and 1945, their lives were marked by the trauma of the Spanish Civil War, food scarcities in the post-war years and the Franco dictatorship. Against this background, the life stories of many of these residents start with the experience of immigration from the countryside to the city of Madrid in their youth. This is a shared experience for the "old residents" of the neighbourhood, and it differs radically from the younger generation who have taken up residence in Lavapiés, who were either born in the city or have followed other migratory patterns.

The stories told by the "old residents" are remarkable for several reasons. In the first place, they display a clear common narrative pattern, inviting investigation of the keys to the construction of meaning in these tales. Secondly, they express the cognitive disorder of Lavapiés' neighbours with regard to life in the district ("The neighbourhood is a nightmare"), which translates into the experience of a situation of risk, a feeling that "we are at risk" both physically and morally, among this group, which it narrates to itself in stories that are intensely felt emotionally and expressed in apprehensive behaviour on the streets (e.g. fear of using certain streets at certain times of day). Strikingly, however, these "stories of risk" (Mairal, 2008) are far from being shared by all residents, but are characteristic of a specific group of neighbours. The group of "new residents" does not see Lavapiés as particularly unsafe, or even an urban area where risk and danger are more present that elsewhere in the city. It is true, the newcomers will admit, that there is some dirt and noise in the nightlife areas, and in the streets that have been taken over by wholesale traders (whose continual loading and unloading clogs up the traffic). It is also true that the image of the rag-and-bone market, or the groups of drunken tramps lounging in the squares, is not very pretty, and of course there are some muggings and drug dealing on the street corners, but these matters do not merge to become a whole encapsulating "insecurity" or translate into stories of risk. At the most, they are perceived as aspects of the discomforts of urban life, the lack of neighbourliness and the disinterest of the authorities. Yet they are secondary to the life of the neighbourhood, which is in general positive in the eyes of the new residents (the multicultural make-up of Lavapiés' people, its cultural dynamism and the conservation of "neighbourhood life"). The obvious question, then, is what the stories that circulate among the older residents say about them? What is the experience of urban life that works as a source for these stories and lends them meaning?

4. "The old days were better in this neighbourhood": the old residents of Lavapiés and spatialization of disorder in daily life

In the stories that continually go around in Lavapiés, the underlying narrative pattern reflects a temporal process of decline. The "degeneration" of the neighbourhood is narrated in terms of a clear delimitation between a vague "before," which nonetheless coincides with the youth of the older residents," and a "now" in the life of Lavapiés. Despite recognition of "economic progress" in the present, "life was actually much better before." In all these narratives, "now" is a time of physical and moral disorder in the neighbourhood, portrayed in the scenes and characters of the gas scam, muggings at the door of the bank, shop-lifting and street hawkers selling off the goods of the deceased. This "degradation of the neighbourhood" takes shape expressly in narratives of risk in which the storytellers share a feeling of menace and the potential target (i.e. the object at risk) is the speaker's own physical integrity, on the one hand, and the value system and outlook of the generations that grew up in the scarcity of the Civil War and the post-war years, who did not experience the "welfare state" (which only arrived in Spain in the late 1970s) until they had already entered middle age.

The defining feature of the neighbourhood's past, acquired in a discourse of almost mythical proportions, is the quality of neighbourly relations, the existence of one "big family" in the district structured in daily life around warm, close relations with the neighbours. These intense, and intensely remembered, neighbourhood networks emerged from the common origin of this sector of the population in the Spanish

countryside, which meant they shared a lifestyle and cultural background that was expressed through *fiestas*, food, and a common respect for hard work and thrift as the way to social advancement. This "big family" is now remembered as having offered security and psychological and emotional support in the new, unknown environment of the big city, mapping the district as an area of confidence where you could "trust" the neighbours. A whole series of common values and shared beliefs determined a "feeling of belonging," framing the ability to recognize and identify the situations of daily life in the same way. This was a moral feeling, then, but at the same time a cognitive distinction. The neighbours were often relations or came from the same villages, fostering closely woven relationships and mutual support networks. The "big family" was also structured around community leisure –evening conversation and excursions around the city, or the decoration of the streets and courtyards to celebrate summer festivals. This longing for the "big family" is thus basically the expression of a specific social order underpinning feelings of physical and psychological security. Moreover, the neighbourhood order identified with the Lavapiés of the past in current discourses is of a physical and spatial order, which is expressed in an urban aesthetic dominated by the idea of hygiene. "Cleanliness" describes the ideal state of streets and houses, but it is also a moral category that projects the dignity of neighbours who were "poor, but clean and honest."

We cannot hope to understand the meaning of this longed-for physical, social and moral order, which is imagined as a lost past of mythical status, if we consider only the descriptions offered by the old residents. The Lavapiés of the past is unintelligible without some reference to the Lavapiés of today, and this demand for meaning serves to drive the reconstruction of the past. Memory is, of course, always a selective process and is conditioned by the present. Unhappiness with the Lavapiés of today thus underlies the mythical past, which is defined in opposition to current conditions. This is the reference point for the construction of a discourse of unhappiness with the "degeneration" or "decadence" of the neighbourhood. It is significant that any conversation with the old residents, whether it be a long in-depth interview with an individual or a casual chat with a group in the park, ends with some allusion to the decline of the neighbourhood today laced with comparisons to the "ideal" past. In contrast to the "big family" of their youth, the old residents see Lavapiés today as a place inhabited by strangers, "who you can't trust." Gas scam hustlers, apparently helpful young neighbours who only make off with shopping bags, street hawkers who steal from the dead and infirm… Their narratives are full of figures who act out the drama of the "big family's" demise, a rupture that operates in these narratives as an anchor for the experience of encroaching disorder on the triple levels of the social, the moral, and the physical. As many of the old residents disappear, their flats fall empty and are closed up or, increasingly, are occupied by new residents, who fail to re-establish the old patterns of neighbourliness. Social transformation is followed by moral disorder, and the old respect and politeness, key values of a shared existence, are supplanted by what is seen as general bad manners and rudeness, on the part of the new residents and, particularly, the young.

One of the characteristics of the Lavapiés of the past refers to a matrix of shared urban experience, which may even be related to the time before these old residents ever came to the neighbourhood, the moment at which they decided to leave their villages and emigrate to Madrid. These migrants came to the city in pursuit of a better future and living conditions that could not be had in the countryside but were promised by the wages of the industrial worker. The starting point was scarcity and, therefore, the moment of social betterment was never imminent but was located always in the future, in middle or old age, or even in their children's generation, the *locus* of promise for the rural migrant. Social betterment is thus a gradual process of advancement that comes to fruition in the social situation of the next generation, the children, who will work "in an office" and own their own apartments. However, the future promise of material gain and upward social movement can only be pursued through the disciplined adoption of a particular lifestyle, based on hard work, thrift and sacrifice (limitation of present enjoyment) to obtain the future good of its maximum beneficiaries. The country people came to Madrid to take "any job" and to live "anywhere," a situation that was always coded in hope for "tomorrow." But this meant "struggle," "hardiness," and "determination," a highly characteristic vocabulary, in the face of present difficulties, trusting in the fruits of labour and self-discipline as the lever that would propel the family upwards in the social scale. In comparison to the plenty of today, when people can choose "a better life than mine," the discourses underline the scarcity of life in the past and the pity and gratitude that their parents' pains evoke among the speakers. Hard work was part and parcel of a lifestyle dictated by thrift. The money earned was not spent on futile diversions, but was saved or invested to raise the family's standard of living. This is expressed above all in improvements to housing conditions and the investment made to educate offspring (and to offer the long-suffering parents a decent old age). Thus, the moral order of the old neighbourhoods is at odds with the idleness of the cricket and carefree consumerism, and with moaning and the invocation of "rights" as the

way to raise living standards in the present.[9] This rejection often takes the form of moral pride. The right way to social advancement is, unquestionably, hard work. Progress is reflected today above all in home ownership, and most especially in the social status of children (also measured mainly in terms of the quality and location of their homes, but also their jobs and qualifications).

 However, this epic story of achievement ends on an ambivalent, problematic note, at least if we are attentive to the spirit, rather than the letter, of the old residents' discourse. This is because the general social "progress" these people have made over a lifetime of hard work has gone hand in hand with a series of changes that have altered the meaning of their goals. Thus, a given model of the family is always at the heart of their life stories. Women left their jobs to get married and have children, and their role also included looking after their own parents in old age. However, the rise in the social status of their children has brought with it a growing physical distance between the generations (among other reasons because of trends and preferences in housing), which has combined with other changes in lifestyle and the mass induction of women into the labour force to break down the patterns of family care for the elderly. As the family has dwindled, or at least moved farther away, these people have come to need ever more care as they grow old in their apartments in the neighbourhood, which despite improvements are usually uncomfortable and unsuitable for the elderly, even where living conditions are not downright bad. The minimum widow's pension (€631 in 2010) is often their only regular income, and it is not enough for them to afford professional care and assistance. Thus, their only solution is to carry on as best they can.

The general recognition of this situation is rarely directed against their own children, but it is accepted as an undeniable reality, even a personal reality. "Because if my children take their own children to a nursery every day, how are they going to look after me? ... They can't stop working, I'm well aware of that". This basic change is seen as a sign of the times that affects the behaviour of the younger generation, and the resulting comparison made by the elderly between the parents' generation (their own) and that of their offspring thus implies a certain criticism of their lifestyle. The gradual disappearance of children who "don't have time to come" is related with a change in lifestyles that cannot but hurt in the moral order of the old neighbourhoods. Where people once sought to restrain their enjoyment of the present to improve the family's lot by thrift, the standard of behaviour now seems to be an endless desire for goods and services in a kind of hyperinflation of consumption and spending. In a conversation between two elderly neighbours:

- I'll tell you what, we got on with our lives with what we had, and when I look at my children today with their jobs and their children…
- Of course, they want more.
- They haven't even finished paying for their apartment…
- And they go and move to another.
- That's what I mean. They have a car… so they've bought a house out of town. So they work all the time, they haven't brought up their children, they haven't enjoyed their children…

 The time horizon of these new consumerist aspirations is very short, practically immediate, and they are determined by the availability of cash (and access to credit) earned from the salaried work of both spouses, which neither can give up precisely because the debts have to be paid. This is an obligation that has of course always existed for the husband, but it now reaches the wife too, and her lifestyle means she cannot spend all of her time on childcare ("She doesn't bring them up properly"), let alone on her parents. Meanwhile, it is seen as imposed by the conditions of life, the target of all criticisms, while the behaviour of children is excused as one of the "evils" of modern times.

However, the daily life of these elderly women is both difficult and precarious, and they form one of the most unprotected social groups. Let us now consider the analysis of one of the neighbourhood's social workers, who is closely involved with the old neighbours as a major source of demand for social services.

One of the things I commonly find is solitude, in all of its facets. It is often mixed up with other problems, and I find a lack of communication all the time. Very often people come to you with financial problems, but

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[9] This needs to be understood in the context of the dictatorship, which repressed any kind of working class associationism or protest (though this does not mean that such things did not exist), and a paternalistic economic model based on the idea of the "big family," which rejected industrial unrest and stressed the mutual dependence of employers and workers, and stressed the social value of harmony.

when you begin to look into the matter it is the cause of the worry, but it's much more than that… They're worried about a whole range of things that are disguised, as I put it. You find issues like… the family isn't around, the traditional family… grandparents, or more likely grandmothers need care for their health… they need support. They need somebody to give the house a clean, or to do the shopping, or they may be bedridden and need washing… or they're at the end of the line and they need to go to a home. People in Lavapiés are very old, eighty something… (…) And you find dreadful housing conditions. Some places don't even have a bathroom, only a stair toilet where it's freezing cold. You don't find that in other districts.

Those who are affected the worst by these precarious living conditions are those on low incomes, those who lack family support, and those who are not home owners and rent their accommodation. It is clear on all levels that home ownership is key to social insertion and provides a cushion against the process of downward social mobility. The experience of the family's absence or detachment is a bitter one for the neighbourhood's older residents after the taste of success and social advancement to which they have dedicated their lives. This bitterness translates into the eulogization of the past, and in this light modernity appears more as a process of degradation than progress. It is nothing if not paradoxical how a generation which felt that control over a wage and thrift offered the promise of social advancement (especially in financial terms), should now believe the past was a better time, despite the undeniable economic progress achieved. The feelings of this sector of the population may be summed up in a phrase that appears over and over again, almost in the same words, in many interviews. "Financially I'm better off now, but as for life… we lived better before." This suggests that the future improvement in living conditions through the sacrifices of the present was not in conflict with the satisfaction gained from the experience of "life," because this satisfaction was holistic, founded on the gradual (but certain) perception of the achievement of imagined goals. Youth and enthusiasm combined with pleasure at the swelling balance in the savings book and, at the same time with the positive moral sanction of living a "proper" life.

The present, however, is radically different from this heyday. The stories that are continually told by this group of the population express the cognitive and moral disorder these elderly women feel in the face of a change in the "meaning of life" that has been too great and too fast. As we have seen, the feelings these narratives translate are local, contextual and private. However, the characters, scenes and plots of these stories also circulate in a wider sphere within the discursive matrix of "insecurity," which has become a powerful driver of the meaning of urban life almost worldwide, and, this group of neighbours draws on these elements to express and organize their personal experience. The narratives of the old residents are thus embedded in other narratives of urban risk. The figures and scenes described in their tales are typical of the "insecurity" matrix, translating a variety of feelings and become condensed signifiers of multiple meanings. This matrix represents the dominant consensus of urban meaning, because it integrates and gives a consistent, unitary form to the multiple needs and experiences of diverse sectors of the population. How, then, do the processes of translation that define the narrative production of meaning work in Lavapiés, and how do they contribute to the production and circulation of stories of urban risk?

5. Giving meaning to urban distress: foreign immigrants as a symptom and cause of neighbourhood degradation

Madrid only began to receive major flows of foreign immigrants in the 1990s, but Lavapiés is one of the areas where migrant residents are most visible. In itself, this is nothing new, as Lavapiés has always been a favourite area for settlement by new immigrants to Madrid. However, the break in the social condition of the new immigrants (compared to the earlier pattern of Spanish migrants from the countryside to the city) has meant that the new residents have acquired visibility as a population group that is "different," and they have also become for many the sign of transition from "yesterday" to "today" in the life of the neighbourhood. The figure of the foreign immigrant crops up everywhere in discourses about the city, and especially in the "insecurity" matrix. Meanwhile, the media have amplified and disseminated discourses that link immigration with insecurity especially in stories about "illegal" workers, which have made such migrants into imaginary figures of urban disorder. In our discussion of the meanings updated in the stories of risk told by the old residents of Lavapiés, we have referred to changes in the sphere of work, family reproduction, and cultural values. This suggests that the generational factor is a key variable for analysis. Nevertheless, foreign immigration does not appear to have played any major role in these processes. Or so at least it would seem. For it is also true that the risk narratives, and the commentaries and discourses that accompany them, almost always contain a pivotal moment that marks the shift from the ideal past to the decadent present, and this is precisely the arrival of the foreign immigrant. What underlies the position of

this group in the discourse of neighbourhood decline? How and why is the foreign immigrant portrayed as a symptom and cause of disorder?

The negative view held by the old residents of the lifestyles of the younger generation of today (which implicitly includes their own children and, increasingly, grandchildren) is made explicit in discourses that allude to specific sectors of society. The key is the new generation of immigrants, who partially share in the change in generational values and are the preferred target of criticism because they form the social group that marks the contrast with another experience of immigration, namely that of the speakers. This contrast also serves as an escape valve for the frustration that Lavapiés' older residents feel over the absence of their own family and the direction of change, which has relegated the social status of the elderly. This indirect allusion has the virtue of salvaging the lifetime "achievements" of the old residents, which are measured in terms of the financial progress and social advancement of their children, "even if they've gone." The foreign immigrants are, then, the main (though not the only) protagonists of attitudes and behaviour patterns that also occasionally extend to segments of native society, if only implicitly. The basic criticisms refer to their unwillingness to "put up with" poor living conditions, and their demands for improvements expressed in the language of rights rather than an *unconditional* determination to work. The privileged treatment the immigrants are believed to receive from Government, via social services, distinguishes them as the beneficiaries of targeted aid. This is a deeply rooted idea, which generates a sense of grievance in a neighbourhood where both the elderly residents and the new migrants live precariously as the most needy segments of society. The habitual recourse made by some of the new immigrants to public social services and assistance also contrasts with the scant use that most of the old residents make of these resources, either because they are ignorant of their existence or out of an unwillingness to accept the stigma of accepting social assistance, which is only for the "poor and the down-and-outs" according to their value set. In the intricate context of neighbourhood life and in the discourse of insecurity that circulates around the neighbourhood's networks, providing "ready-made" characters, scenes and arguments, immigrants appear in the eyes of the old residents not as hardworking newcomers, but as interlopers who do nothing but demand their rights with the blessing of the State, which nonetheless turns its back on those who feel (invidiously) that they have more right. The old residents thus express the feeling that they have been "abandoned" by society. This is doubtless true, but it is not because they are unimportant to the social services agencies. What is really telling is that they are important. Even so, this feeling that they are not getting their due is often expressed in terms of contrast with the new immigrants, who are the other main deprived group in society (and therefore the other main recipients of social assistance) and the successors to the experience of immigration, allowing comparison with the lives of the old residents. The feeling of being sidelined and ignored among this group takes shape as a lack of public recognition of their lives. It is as if the taste of success and social advancement were once again bitter: the distant family, the neighbourhood transformed and unrecognizable, the old values forgotten and minimum comfort at home (the same as ever, but now mixed with old age and poor health).

Another aspect of the new immigrants' lifestyle that is frequently criticized is the visibility of their leisure time and their behaviour in public spaces, which once again contrast with the youth of the now elderly residents of the neighbourhood, a time when "you couldn't even afford a glass of wine because it cost so much." It is clear, however, that this issue is more far-reaching, and although the criticism is often explicitly directed at foreign immigrants, it is formulated against a wider social target that could potentially include the youth of today.

The urban malaise felt by this group of old residents, which has more complex causes than it might at first sight appear, translates above all into a pervasive fear of crime. Few conversations, either with individuals or groups of these people, are not sprinkled with anecdotes about or heard by the speaker, narrating muggings, attacks, and violence, which would seem to take place on every street corner in the district day and night. The longing for the old Lavapiés is thus synthesized in a longing for a lost security, which, however, cannot be measured only in terms of neighbourhood crime statistics. Insecurity is psychological and is derived from the conditions of life, the loss of the neighbourhood's traditional anchors (neighbourly relations and small business), the difficulties of multicultural life under precarious physical and social conditions, and from occasional episodes of crime against the district's residents. In general, then, this insecurity stems from the disappearance of an urban order that was always accepted by the neighbours, the disappearance from society of a set of values and attitudes to life, and from the public presence of immigrants as a key segment of everyday life in Lavapiés. These highly complex and varied frustrations, feelings, attitudes, aspirations, and subjective views are structured within the framework of the "insecurity"

matrix. Thus, the figure of the foreign immigrant is a protagonist in Lavapiés (as in other districts of Madrid and other Spanish cities), but the narratives in which he appears translate very local, personal, and contextualized meanings. Urban narratives may be specific expressions of narrative patterns that circulate more widely, but these are appropriated creatively, so that the urban meanings of "insecurity" form an argument that is always open and unfinished, complex, varied and, of course, impossible to simplify. It is also necessary to understand how it takes form in order to develop successful public policies.

6. Some conclusions: the null (or reinforcing) effects of public policies on feelings of insecurity

The public policies of neighbourhood refurbishment have, to a great extent, taken into account the demands of this group. The intensity of police presence, although it does, in fact, fluctuate according to news reporting that moves the "focal points of insecurity" from one place to another in the urban centre, has been noticeable on many occasions, with more frequent patrolling. Occasionally and periodically, round-ups have been made in the neighbourhood's public plazas, with identification and detention practices that have affected groups of undocumented foreign immigrants and the homeless more intensely. The new designs of the plazas, influenced by the assumptions of "safe design," have turned them into levelled cement areas with hardly any fountains, trees, or public benches (traditional elements of Madrid plazas), with the benches limited to cold surfaces with no back and with elements that make it impossible to get comfortable on them.

These kinds of measures, as can be deduced from a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the "old residents'" points of view, have not managed to reduce their feeling of insecurity at all; they even feel less safe and they repeatedly blame "the passiveness of the administration." The reason is obvious. Trapped in this "discourse of citizen insecurity," and legimized in their design and implementation by the old residents of the neighbourhood –whose discourse is, to a great extent, articulated in this same framework, the refurbishment policies have been incapable of cutting off the dynamics that are at the root of this group of residents' socio-psychological feeling of insecurity. There is only just enough space to note some data that support this.

Despite the vocation toward globality that it declares, the neighbourhood's refurbishment policy, in the framework of the ARI-Lavapiés, has been marked by a great lack of coordination not only regarding the measures to be implemented but also among the different public institutions in charge of implementing them. It has also been marked by an emphasis on urban planning measures (measures that affect the physical surroundings: streets, buildings, infrastructures). The expenditure in social programs has, in comparison, been almost anecdotal, and the neighbourhood's social services are literally flooded by the enormous demand and the lack of resources. No one has deemed the problem of having their family far away, central to the experience of insecurity, especially for people with physical limitations (due to old age or infirmity), to deserve having a sufficiently ambitious integral program designed. Just a few volunteers and a few "home-assistance technicians" go to the homes of the elderly who are less independent one, two, or three hours a week to offer them some company and help with the cleaning. In the most extreme cases, the elderly person is placed in a residence, always outside of the neighbourhood, which means a total rupture with his or her social networks. The economic development programs –which, at least on paper, declare themselves to be indispensible for, at the very least, bringing neighbourhood employment levels up to those of the rest of the city- have hardly had any practical concrete manifestation in the framework of the neighbourhood refurbishment policies.

The "star" section in refurbishment has been the subsidies for owners to rehabilitate a very aged set of housing, with 43.5% of the homes built prior to 1900. In addition, 44.7% of the total of homes are categorized as "infrahousing" (unfit for human habitation, regarding which the ARI-Lavapiés has set the ambitious objective of making them disappear). This intervention has been very complex, with a lot of money invested and a lot of work by technicians. However, the final evaluation is ambivalent; the ARI is articulated with respect to the figure of the owner and has very often weakened the figure of the tenant (the majority of the foreign immigrants and many of the more elderly residents), without being able to stem the rise of rents, prolonged situations of real estate mobbing, and evictions –even contributing to them. Despite the subsidies, some owners with little buying power in real estate who have decided to refurbish (a decision made by the majority of owners in co-owned buildings) have not, in the end, been able to afford the cost of the construction work (high despite the subsidies) and have had to face eviction. By following this path, the ARI has also caused the expulsion of the economically weaker population. With no mechanisms to reverse or channel the dynamics of the real estate market (in what have been boom years), the ARI has, in many

cases and, normally, in the most extreme cases (real estate with generalized infrahousing) been unable to affect the situations of residential precariousness. Many residents trapped in housing that is in dreadful conditions, when not ruinous, threatened by the uncertainty of the future (regarding remaining in their homes), in bad health and with even worse economic conditions, with no nearby family network, and with very insufficient public assistance services, feel threatened –unsurprisingly- by a sensation of insecurity. It is not fair or realistic to say that their experience is due to their "conservative" disposition or their "lack of flexibility for understanding social changes." And this is true even if it is also true that this insecurity, which is also directly related (as we have seen) to a generational change in values, is repeatedly expressed in the discourse that insists on the immigration-delincuency binomial as the causal axis, in the framework of this hegemonic narrative of *citizen insecurity* that is generating perverse effects on citizens' coexistence.

Other effects (or failings) of the ARI-Lavapiés also have a noticeable impact. The "hard plazas," and other elements of the "safe design," discourage the "old residents'" practices of sociability and leisure, practices that are strongly linked to meeting and chatting in public plazas. They have, however, favoured other uses, such as alcohol consumption in the street by groups of young people on the weekends. These practices (persecuted but quite extended and with a certain social legitimacy) make extra work for the cleaning services and reinforce the image that the old residents have of "young people's irresponsibility," due to the contrast of value universes according to the generational variable.

The disputed uses of public spaces deserve greater consideration, a consideration that is absent in the formulation by the ARI-Lavapiés. This formulation pivots on two objectives that are not really complementary. On one hand, there is the issue of refurbishing the neighbourhood "for its residents": improving housing and public spaces, creating new endowments for healthcare, for sports, for leisure time, etc., that favour a good quality of life and coexistence in the neighbourhood. On the other hand, there is the issue of trying to "open the neighbourhood up to the city," of "internationalizing" it, of making it attractive to the residents of the rest of Madrid and to tourists.[10] This last objective means thinking the city less from the point of view of residence or the functionality of the different areas, than from the point of view of the population (and capital) flows that move across it, defining new urban spatialities and creating the city "user" as a new kind of subject, different from the "resident" or the "worker" (Castells, 1996; Martinotti, 2008). In Lavapiés, this double approach, introduced at the heart of the ARI public policies, has translated, in practice and in a city planning context where land is scarce and very expensive, into an erratic planning of new equipment and public services. The necessary new health centre, or the sports equipment in an area that has hardly any green zones or leisure areas, have been projected for different locations over recent years; but in each case, the spaces initially intended for these constructions have finally been appointed for other uses, to the residents' perplexity and anger. The same thing has happened with the neighbourhood's public library, the enlargement of the leisure centre for the elderly (insufficient for the large demand that exists), or the protected residences and/or apartments (which do not exist in Lavapies) for this same group. On the contrary, other public endowments that have found a place in Lavapiés –a university centre, some museum spaces, a large theatre- are more closely related to what is called "equipment for the city," to the detriment of the "equipment for the neighbourhood." This, of course, harms some residents more than others: mainly those with lower incomes, greater mobility problems and health problems, and also with practices of sociability that are distant from the new dominant models of leisure and urban consumption. Many of the old residents (and of the immigrants who are in more precarious situations) fit this profile.

To conclude: this entire series of unsought effects, failures and lacks in the refurbishment policies implemented in Lavapiés condition the fact that this policy does not stem (it even reinforces) the residents' feelings of insecurity that, to a great extent, motivated their activation. No matter how often anyone states the opposite, neither the "safe design" nor the "zero tolerance" policies, not even maintaining subsidies for owners or investing in "equipment for the city" have brought (or will bring, probably) "more security" to all the residents. I hope to have contributed to an understanding of why this is the case. I do not want to end this article without acknowledging that the public policy of urban refurbishment carried out in Lavapiés over the last decade has also had positive effects on the neighbourhood's problems, which have been hard

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[10] Lavapiés is very close to the Thyssen-Prado-Reina Sofia museum axis (the Reina Sofia is right on the edge of the neighborhood), one of the areas most visited by the capital's national and international tourists. The strategy, stated in the formulation of the ARI-Lavapiés, of "centralizing the neighborhood" and of "putting it into play as a value," insofar as it has, on occasion, meant a vindication of the neighborhood's "cultural traditions," is in line with what some authors have characterized as a new model of public policies for the urban centre, based on strategies of "branding" (Muñoz, 2008b). The case of Barcelona's city centre is the one in which these kinds of policies have gone farthest in Spain (Degen, 2008).

to deal with because they are so complex. The criticisms, mobilizations, and contributions of many residents, associations, and citizens, as well as many of the technicians of the ARI itself and some local politicians, are influencing the modification of the elements of this public policy that have made it very hard for it to fulfil its objectives. What I have wanted to show above all, however, is the relevance of ethnographic studies for understanding the social logic that underlies the points of view of the different agents involved. In the framework of hegemonic discourses which, like the *discourse of citizen insecurity* analyzed, frame (and limit) the discussion of shared problems and their possible solutions, a large part of the work of formulating and evaluating urban public policies is, at times, quite unable to rise to its own expectations. Social studies can and should contribute, in this sense, to broadening the debate among citizens and to articulating more inclusive public discourses that are more respectful of one of the greatest values of urban life: its social and cultural heterogeneity.

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