Juventud Sin Futuro

Subjective Experiences of Spanish Youth: Resistance and Organization in the Context of Economic Crisis

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Acknowledgments

Once upon a time there was a place where no one had eyes. People didn't bump into each other for they possessed a powerful sense of hearing. The dominant belief was that they knew all that could be known. They listened carefully to what they were told, believing that there was but one way to live, and one way to know the world. They were taught to trust the loud voices whose powerful speeches deny any other sound that didn't resonate with their own. But despite their efforts to suffocate and deny other frequencies, these sprang up everywhere. While most ears were trained not to hear them, some started to perceive whispers in the distance, but sometimes these vague echoes were confused with the sound of strong winds. But the voices were there, and vowed never to surrender, sometimes chanting, sometimes yelling, sometimes singing and blessing the words that allowed them to speak what others were reluctant to hear.

I want to thank the voices and the words that showed me there are other ways of living and relating to others. That it's worth it to listen and speak, even when all eyes are closed and all ears are deaf.

In this journey I learned a lot about myself. There were challenging moments, and wonderful encounters with people whose paths I may (or may not) cross again. I consider myself very fortunate for having the support, trust, guidance and love of many that has contributed to my personal and professional growth; those who have made this experience invaluable. I don't think it is possible to mention the names of each and every one who has shaped my way, challenging or supporting me during this ride. For this reason I am choosing to name mostly those who, for the past year and half, shared the important moments of this process with me. However, I want to state that this doesn't mean I am not considering those who have walked with me up until this point (from a distance or side by side).

First, I want to thank my family for their love and support. I am aware that in every accomplishment in my life, you have played an important role. Second, I want to thank those who became my closest confidents, friends, and at times the best procrastination partners I could have ever found. Those who gave me shelter and contributed to the recollection of the lovely moments I'll keep in my heart. You know who you are…

Third, I want to thank those who brought examples of hope, who trusted me, and shared what I value the most, their personal stories. This is for you and because of you. Thank you for reminding me the importance of solidarity. Fourth, I want to thank Roy for his guidance and helpful suggestions. I also want to mention that I could not imagine doing this research under the supervision of anyone else other than Rosalba. I want to thank her for her support, guidance, patience and trust. For kindly reminding me in moments of confusion and doubt, that I was not so lost.

Finally, I want to thank the one who made me put its needs above my own, teaching me with love the importance of serving others, *Gracias Jacinto.*

Contents

List of Acronyms

ETT	Temporary Employment Agency
EZLN	National Liberation Zapatista Army
ILO	International Labour Organization
INE	Spanish National Institute of Statistics
NEET	Neither Employed Education or Training
NINIS	Neither Employed Education or Training
PAH	Mortgage Victim's Platform
PP	Popular Party
PSOE	Spanish Socialist's Workers Party
YWF	Youth Without Future

Abstract

This paper looks at the subjective experiences of Spanish organized youth who are being affected by the economic crisis. This paper follows a standpoint epistemology. This research focuses on how their practices question the current dominant discourse depicting today's Spanish youth as a "lost generation". Theory on generation is used in order to denote the problematic idea of trying to identify today what can only be defined (in the future). Ideas from anarchist politics and autonomous movements are used to explore Spanish youth current ways of organizing and making politics. Post-structuralist theory is used to explore the influence of discourses in constructing reality. The theories used, together with the stories collected through fieldwork invite us to: First, consider other realities and possibilities of future. Specifically the ones that don't follow the dominant way of being economically developed. Second, move from the event that defines a cohort (economic crisis) in order to focus on the experiences of those who are being affected by it. Finally, look at the ways these youth are resisting and organizing, creating alternatives within the context of economic crisis.

Relevance to Development Studies

Headlines I have come across speak of the lost generations, the youth of the crisis. It seems that it has become a shared experience for young people in Greece, Spain, Portugal, Italy, and many other places in the world, and not only a problem of the Global South anymore. In developing countries the lack of opportunities often pushed young people to migrate, or pushed them to become part of the informal sector, excluded from long-term contracts and benefits. The fact that many youth today in the developed world are facing a similar situation is an interesting and relevant issue to study.

For youth studies it would be relevant to explore how today's Spanish youth affected by the economic crisis engage politically in and outside Spain. Perhaps to try to think of youth as political agents of change today, not in the future. Taft (2011) interviews teenage girls who are activists and who claim they are not the future, they refuse to wait "to become" while they already are in the present, facing so many issues they can fight for today. Problems that exist now, and will continue to exist if nothing is done to change reality. For them, waiting to be part of the future that is upon them is like renouncing to their ability to engage now[1]. Sinha-Kerkhoff (2011) mentions how the state constructs the idea of youth making them either a problem or idealizing them by placing the future in their hands. These two ways of understanding youth influence the type of policies that are meant to target them (as in the case of "youth at risk").

Keywords

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[1] Fragment taken from previous unpublished literature review (Trejo Mendez 2013).

Spanish Youth, economic crisis, autonomous movement, collective action, precariousness, anarchist politics, future, prefigurative politics, generation.

Chapter 1 Setting the Stage

 "The lost generation? If we are the most educated and with lots of skills! The problem will be with the generations to come, those who won't remember that things were different, and will grow up adapted to these realities believing there is nothing else, not knowing that things were different. But I know it, we know it " (Achi 2013, personal interview).

Achi is 29, just a year older than me. We are talking about the crisis, having to look for jobs. I am finishing an MA and she can't study full time because she can't afford it. She has been taking courses while working. She has been thinking to switch and try to become a lawyer instead "even if takes me ten years".

In Spain 6,202, 700 people are currently unemployed (INE 2013). According to INE, the most affected sector of the population by the current decrease of job opportunities are those between the ages of 25 to 29 (Ibid). The rate of youth unemployment has reached 57.22% (Lantier 2013). INE data from 2012, shows that the number of registered migrants who left Spain since 2010 between the ages of 16 and 34 is of 45, 000 (Carretero 2012). While the reality of many young people (not only in Spain) is that making a living or the conditions/ access to formal jobs, social security, opportunities for a good quality of life is not a possibility. Young people are having a hard time in the present economic reality. How can youth focus on the future when the current conditions are so discouraging?

My research aimed to look at the collective *youth without future* formed by young people in Madrid in the spring of 2011. They were involved in 15-M[2] *indignados*. The name *youth without future* called my attention, it made me think of the discourse that I have heard many times (and read). Depicting young people as the leaders of tomorrow, or the next generation, the future of…

More specifically I wanted to look into YWF initiative called *"we are not leaving they are kicking us out"*[3]. On March 2013 they uploaded an interactive map in which Spanish youth who left looking for better opportunities to other countries, could upload their location in the map and tell their story. The idea behind this initiative was to give a face to the number of people in exile and to connect with those who left. This idea of focusing on the stories rather than the numbers influenced the choice of my topic and approach. After fieldwork in Madrid I realized the interest to focus on the subjective experience of the Spanish youth, to explore what kind of alternatives they come up with and how do they experience the crisis, policies meant to target them, remained a priority. Following Haraway's views on the production of knowledge I focus on the experiences of young people who are affected by the economic crisis and re-

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[2] On May 15 2011 Spanish citizens, youth collectives, groups gathered to protest. It was the beginning of a movement. People occupied main plazas in cities across Spain.

[3] Link to the interactive map< http://www.nonosvamosnosechan.net/>

forms implemented, so they can share their understanding of the effects of unemployment, precariousness, and the economic diaspora. Haraway (2002) states the relevance of a standpoint epistemology that brings the voices of the oppressed. She mentions the importance of knowledge production from the position of the non-dominant in order to create realities that are not the views of the powerful under the claims of "objective truths" (Ibid).

After fieldwork there was a shift in my research focus. This meant looking at other organized youth in Madrid not only those involved in YWF. The interactive map became my entry point into this topic and how I got to know Spanish youth in the Netherlands who organized; not the central aspect of my research. In Madrid I met youth who were not part of the collective YWF but who were also politically active. Some utilizing the autonomous spaces I refer to in this paper. I realized that these spaces were important points for social, political and cultural interactions. I kept going to these places for those reasons and meeting some of the people whose comments and stories shaped this research. The map slowly went aside. The Spanish youth who migrated and their stories are still of great interest to me. However, the experiences in Madrid took me to a different path. In the following sections I will explain the questions, methodology and main objective guiding this paper.

1.1 Questions

R.Q: How does the subjective experiences of the economic crisis of Spanish youth, questions the current dominant discourse depicting them as a lost generation?

Sub questions:

1-How do politically active youth from Madrid resist the economic crisis?

2-What kind of alternatives or initiatives are they creating?

3- How are the autonomous spaces used by these youth contributing to create such alternatives?

1.2 Methodology

In order to address the question guiding this research, the methodology used has the following elements. First, it stresses the perspective of situated knowledges. Rose (1997) explains feminist methodology utilizes situated knowledges. Who produces knowledge has an influence on the outcome. The researcher because of her identity may have open access or not to research material. To conduct this research I will situate myself as a young, Mexican female student living abroad. I am also an activist. All these aspects of my identity determined the relationships I created with the youth approached. During fieldwork I often had to Arrive by myself to meet people I didn't know in places I had never been to. As intimidating as that can be, I never felt unwelcomed. Starting conversations and interviews with members of YWF and other youth I met either in Amsterdam or Madrid was easy. It felt like we had something in common.

Second, and in accordance with a situated epistemic position regarding knowledge, my methodology stresses subjective experiences. I am interested in

understanding the economic crisis and its impact on the lives of Spanish youth, also in exploring from their view, the role they have in resisting and creating alternatives. Haraway (2002) speaks of feminist objectivity as coming form a specific location (situated knowledge). She emphasizes the advantage of the view of the subjugated, which brings the perspective of the non-dominant, while recognizing from personal experience the forms of oppression. I know what it is like to be away from home looking for a better opportunity. I was living between my friend's house and my ex-boyfriend's, didn't have a job and volunteered for two NGO's before coming to the Netherlands. I relate to the experience of being young and facing difficulties to make a living. I graduated in 2009 from College in The US. Prior to that day while my friends and I were doing unpaid internships many saw people get laid off. It was hard for most of us to get a job that was either related to what we studied or well remunerated. I am too a young person who has been affected by the economic crisis.

Third, the methodology was attentative to social media spaces, following them on facebook and other online platforms. Social networks are tools used to connect and organize to protest, to keep each other posted on news, events, and concerns. The interactive map initiative is an online project. YWF publish press releases on their website, their campaigns are publicized through social media. From the beginning I wanted to do research on the experiences of young people who are affected by the economic crisis. It was in those hours spent online that I came across with YWF. The name immediately caught my attention. It was before they launched the initiative mentioned above. Fourth, committed research and participatory observation were also two central elements of my methodology. I approached 15-M Amsterdam and attended some of the meetings and events. They organized the protest that YWF was calling for in which I participated. Knowing them allowed me to create links to other people in Madrid who I met during fieldwork.

An example of the above elements is Juris (2008) who followed anti-corporate globalization movements and found himself engaging in the protest and meetings. He speaks of militant ethnography, which in his case reflected his involvement and participation in the movements he was researching on. He was not a passive observer. He states that militant ethnography is "ethnographic research that is not only politically engaged but also collaborative, thus breaking down the divide between researcher and object" (Juris 2008:20). Militant ethnography can be experienced in the body, in the case of research with movements and protests the researcher may relate/ connect emotionally with other activists. During protest intense emotions are experienced which he believes are useful for research purpose (Ibid).

Juris (2008) also recognizes the transnational character of these movements and mentions multisided ethnography as part of his methodology. I relate to him. I often found myself participating in debates, protests and meetings. Part of My research was in Madrid where I interviewed participants of YWF, and part of my research involved connecting with the Spanish youth who live in The Netherlands. My research has multisided character and involves virtual and physical spaces. Finding Juris work helped me reflect on the ethnographic approach I was already using.

Part of the tools used in my research was note taking. I have a journal in which I documented what came up during meetings, as well as my reactions to what I heard, saw and experienced in the events I was part of. During field-

work most of the information gathered came form informal conversations and interviews. Also, observation of the autonomous spaces and the people who use them.

To address the research question from a situated knowledge perspective it was relevant to gather information through informal conversations. Surveys, quantitative analysis would have guided my research in another direction; perhaps assessing the impact of the economic crisis in income would be significant but not in line with my epistemic position. I used ethnography and decided not to do focus groups, or formal interviews. I realized that is in open conversations, while having a beer, sitting in the park, visiting an autonomous place, walking in the street, where people opened to share their stories with me.

1.3 What exactly is this research about?

The focus of this paper is to explore in which ways the organized youth I looked at are questioning and rejecting to be defined by a discourse. This discourse belongs to a specific model of development in which these youth are perceived as a future-less generation. A discourse employed by the political elite. Carries the perspectives of a certain economic class, and a previous generation. For this purpose I turn to the subjective experiences of Spanish youth explored in the following chapters. Trying not to look at the historical common event (economic crisis) to reveal what may define a cohort but at how this crisis is experienced. Emphasizing the fact that this is happening in the present moment. Stressing that it is problematic at this point, to speak of what will define (years from now) today's youth. A current look at their experiences reveal that the economic crisis doesn't have to be the historical event defining them, perhaps their resistance to be a lost generation through alternative practices.

1.4 Structure

This paper is structured in the following way. Chapter 2 explores aspects related to youth politics and activism. Explains the concept of generation and how these are theoretically defined in retrospective. Such categorization is marked by a significant event in history. In the subsequent section the relationship Power/knowledge is used to look at the discourse depicting a "lost generation". Anarchist politics, autonomy and social change are briefly explored to emphasize that the organized youth portrayed in this paper are using the past as their reference in terms of organization. Trying to make evident the influence of these ideologies and practices in the way youth is making politics.

Chapter 3 begins by exposing Madrid's history of autonomous movements. Mentioning some of the spaces *okupied* by the youth of the previous decades to socialize and make politics in their own terms. Showing how the autonomous movement of Madrid has influenced today's youth. The stories collected during fieldwork, bring examples of self-managed autonomous spaces used for cultural, social and political purposes. The following section depicts how the economic crisis affects Spanish youth. Examples of the policies implemented as a consequence of the economic situation and the responses from

YWF to these policies. This is to illustrate the situation these youth are facing, to understand the context in which they are organizing. Chapter 4 looks at the subjective experiences of the economic crisis. The stories of struggle and organization. Chapter 5 focuses on the reflections, exploring alternatives and initiatives created by organized youth. It presents examples of autonomous spaces used by these youth. This is to understand how are these spaces contributing to create such alternatives. Chapter 6 brings the concluding remarks.

Chapter 2 "The problem with reality is that it knows nothing about theory![4]"

2.1 Youth, Politics and Future

I will begin this section with a brief review of some aspects exploring youth activism, their ways of resisting and organizing. Define the concepts of youth and generation. The following part will provide a glimpse on power/knowledge. The last section looks at anarchist politics and autonomy. This theoretical journey served as the tools to try to explore organized youth from Spain. Trying to understand how they perceived their role as political agents, as youth affected by the economic crisis and as a collective in the case of YWF.

The ability to link people who have migrated brings into light the reasons; stories and realities youth keep facing outside Spain in the search for a better life. The technological tools youth posses to engage in collective activism have diverse impacts in the way of organizing and reaching out. Casero-Ripolles and Feenstra (2012) explore how 15-M movement in Spain has used social media in order to spread information and bring their concerns into the light of dominant media; changing the ways in which news are produced. Citizens are the ones organizing and uploading information, holding public discussions, and influencing traditional media, which now turns to them, and make their demands visible affecting political discourse.

Costa (2004) mentions Spanish youth of the okupas movement create alternatives to the system and institutions by taking the space collectively and using it in many ways. Okupas are people who find empty buildings or houses and move in with no legal contract or permission to do so. These people not only create a home out of an empty building, but also transform the places into spaces for social or creative activities. They bring life to the empty and make use of their ability to imagine claiming their power to create where and when they are not supposed to (Ibid). She points that due to the temporality of their occupation, they need to focus on the now, because the next day they might be forced to leave. These young *okupas* are in a sense renouncing to the idea of being the future by moving away from the system and by rejecting the traditional ideas of stability, use of space and by their capacity to create and affect the present. She claims "Everything melts and acquires meaning in the here and now, in opposition to traditional politics that deposits its desires, efforts, and hopes in a better world for the future generations" (Costa 2004:120).

Costa (2004) states that the conditions of unemployment and the difficulties youth face are aspects reflected by this movement, they take control, reject and create different realities. She mentions, young people show their power to re-shape their identities. They refuse to be portrayed in the way young people

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[4] By Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos from EZLN (2012).

commonly are and contest the ideals placed upon them with their actions, activism, organization and resistance. What Costa is mentioning is what this research attempts to show through the subjective experiences of the Spanish youth. Taft (2011) mentions how some girl activists believed there is much to learn from the struggles, from being politically active and involved. These girls learn and teach others outside school. They take control and find creative ways to open up spaces for producing knowledge or exchanging knowledge, rising awareness on the problems they are concerned about.

Many are aware of the limitations that particular systems (education, economic, etc.) bring. "We are not against the system, the system is against us"(one of 15-M mottos). They reject to be an audience or shadows in the realities placed upon them. It would be interesting to understand how young people perceive themselves in their struggles and collective actions. How they understand the role they have in changing and challenging the systems they are part of and why do they need to do so. Taft (2011) mentions the story and struggle of a Wsanec teenage that along with other young people are fighting to preserve their indigenous culture and they are occupying the mountain, which is an important sacred symbol for them, now being destroyed. Some people who were present in the camp organized by 15 M in 2011, were interviewed and shared that such event filled them with hope that things could be different (Jover and Verdaguer 2011).

Taft (2011) writes about hope within political activism, even if the youth involved in the examples of collective action are challenging the idea of being the future, that doesn't mean there is no hope in the possibilities of change. Otherwise why engaging in trying to create alternatives or challenging the systems in the way they do. In fact all their actions carry different emotions from anger, frustration, etc. With the belief that things can be different, that they have to make an effort in creating the reality they wish to experience. Such effort happens today with big and everyday actions. No struggle is left for tomorrow and even the hope placed on the possibilities of change are the hopes of today's actions not of a utopic future they can comfortably wait for (Ibid). Taft (2011) speaks of a form of Utopia that is linked to girl activists. It's about the process of creating new possibilities rather than reaching an ideal future. This kind of hope Taft talks about is similar to the one people who were present in the occupation of the public spaces across Spain in 2011 have talked about in interviews, documentaries, personal stories (Jover and Verdaguer 2011).

The economic reality has placed many in a vulnerable position. The structures, discourses, institutions that locate young people in the place they are (exile, precarious conditions, unemployment) need to be explored through their eyes. It is important to look at how they are involved or not in the influencing of policymaking intended to target youth unemployment and why. Zibechi (2000) mentions that is not the same when a political party speaks for the workers or takes control in their name. Following that line nobody should speak in the name of young people, they shouldn't have to locate in the spaces created for them to do so. They need to create (they are doing so) the spaces and terms in which they want to engage. Zibechi remarks that when party and state get together, they direct/take control of the social movement (Ibid). Considering that State and political parties are actors that contribute to the prevalence of inequalities young people face today. It is not surprising that

many young people[5] look for alternative ways separate from the terms of the State[6].

There is an authentic feeling of separation from those who are supposed to represent people and the people themselves. The major political parties PP and PSOE are been perceived by a large amount of Spanish citizens as foreigners to their causes. One proof of this is the 1.402.854 signatures collected by PAH[7] in their attempt to promote a legislative Popular Initiative[8] (ILP) in order to change the mortgage legislation. This would have prevented many families from being evicted and still carrying a debt (PAH 2013). The new Mortgage Law approved on May 2013 does not incorporate any of the demands requested and signed by citizens (Sosa Troya 2013).

For Sara, the way the crisis has been handled by the government of Spain has contributed to the current precariousness people are facing.

"They don't govern for the people, they do it for themselves. They changed the constitution to make private debt a priority. It is legally giving the back to the people" (Sara 2013, personal interview).

Emiliano Zapata was a Mexican revolutionary leader. The figure from which EZLN take their name. This is one of his famous quotes "No peace for the government if there is no justice for the people". At the bottom is the logo of PP Spain's current political party in power. Source: YWF facebook page 2013.

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[5] Example, Russel Brand's interview by Paxman http://roarmag.org/2013/10/russell-brand-bbc-newsnight-paxman/

[6] Section taken from previous unpublished literature review (Trejo 2013).

[7] *Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca* citizens led movement of mortgage victims.

[8] Allow citizens to propose laws/reforms with minimum 500.000 signatures to be considered by congress.

2.2 Youth & Generation

"It is impossible to think about having children, I couldn't afford to have one, or maybe my children wont have education. I would have to tell them "go play with my roommate's kids"… everything for our generation is unstable, filled with uncertainty" (Sara 2013, personal interview).

The night I met with some of the people involved in YWF, we talked about them, about why they organize (motivations) the political context, their experiences of the economic crisis, their thoughts on how those in power have been handling the situation. We also talked about ourselves, how I was temporarily staying with family or friends not able to pay for my own place and how insecure that makes me feel sometimes, they could relate to that, someone mentioned "well, our lives are like that all the time…that sensation that damm! Life is so unstable right? " Then mentioned how her older sister became independent in the 90s, how she went from one place to another, that before it was expected that young people graduated from University and entered that type of process getting their first job, later a better remunerated job gaining some sense of stability.

Edmunds and Turner (2002:6) explain the concept of cohort as "an age group defined by a specific point in time". Then they state that generation may be described as an "age cohort;" however this cohort most form a cultural identity influenced by a shared historical context. Manheim also brings the concept of generational units, which marks differences amongst a generation, sometimes opposing one another (Ibid).

According to Edmunds and Turner (2002) "generations and their role in social change are best conceptualized retrospectively". They explain that is difficult to appreciate the impact of a generation in the making. I could not agree more, however my research focuses precisely on the process of a youth collective and organized youth. They are trying to figure out how to respond to the economic and political realities of their time. That time is now. Manheim brings the concept of generational location; referring to opportunities in life that are available to a specific age cohort. Then the concept 'generation as actuality' which occur "when a concrete bond is created between members of a generation" sharing "a set of historical responses to its location" (Edmus and Turner 2002).

On the interactive map one can click and look at the ages of the Spanish people who emigrated. Most in their twenties or thirties. I have mentioned that the economic crisis in Spain affects the most those under 29. How youth in Spain are organizing as in the case of *youth without future*, and those outside Spain are becoming the "*marea granate*". These young people clearly share an experience (economic crisis) and belong to the same time period. Edmunds and Turner (2002:10) mention, "Generations that process a historical consciousness of their situation have the opportunity to exercise a decisive role in historical change". Young people from the Netherlands, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Belgium, Germany who like myself, got together to protest and block the European Central Bank in Frankfurt on May 31 2013; are aware of how measures taken at a national level and at the EU level, affect them. They Organize to respond to a common issue, the messages were clear and in many languages: "We don't owe, we don't pay". "solidarite Internationale contre L' Europe de Capital". "A- Anti- Anticapitalista". Someone mentioned "they wanted a

united Europe, here we are". The promise was that those who belong to the EU would benefit from being able to move freely within its member states. Economically, it was going to bring great opportunities for the European youth.

"The young are the largest and most visible section of Europe's 26 million jobless, and even as many find work of some kind and drop out of that total, they will have been a part of it. Far more than 26 million people will grow older having had the experience of struggling to be valued" (Dorling 2013).

Traumatic experiences can characterize a generation by triggering a collective response to these events a "catastrophe that unites a particular cohort of individuals into a self-conscious age stratum" (Dorling 2013). Elder's work focused on the generation of the great depression. These economic tough times were the traumatic experience marking this generation (Edmuns and Turner 2002:13). In many cases young people are forced by circumstances to accept a job that is far from offering the conditions of a life out of precariousness. The lack of contracts, or temporary contracts that won't help to get full benefits as previous generations did; when stable jobs allowed them to qualify for pensions, etc. "the employment situation elsewhere in Europe is so bad that what once would have been painted as unforgivable is being largely accepted as unavoidable. A few years of recession produces growing distrust and disillusionment" (Dorling 2013).

They are restricting public health, making education only for an elite, many families would have to face whether to send their children to school or maybe which children should go to school? There are no policies meant to offer possibilities of housing for young people not even of decent jobs. By 2009, "350, 000" youth left" (Sara 2013,YWF interview).

For Sara, the way the crisis has been handled by the government of Spain has contributed to the current precariousness people are facing. Another important issue she mentions is the fact that Spanish youth are having to leave the country looking for opportunities elsewhere. When I found YWF they were launching the campaign *We are not leaving they are kicking us out*. I knew immediately this was something I wanted to explore. This is how I met the youth involved in 15M Netherlands. They organized the protest that YWF in Madrid was calling for. The interactive map was launched in March and immediately Spanish youth around the world started answering the questionnaire to place their spot in the map. Questions like "Have you being forced to migrate?" or "Do you think coming back is an option? Would you have a dignified alternative?" They also ask people to write their story of precariousness. At the top of the website the following can be read: They are kicking us from the country, labor exile, nomadic lives, and organization: class fight. Followed by "Precariousness, precariousness everywhere" at the top of the map.

Yellow circles are seen across the map. One click is one story, the name, age, profession and why they left.

precariedad, precariedad everywhere
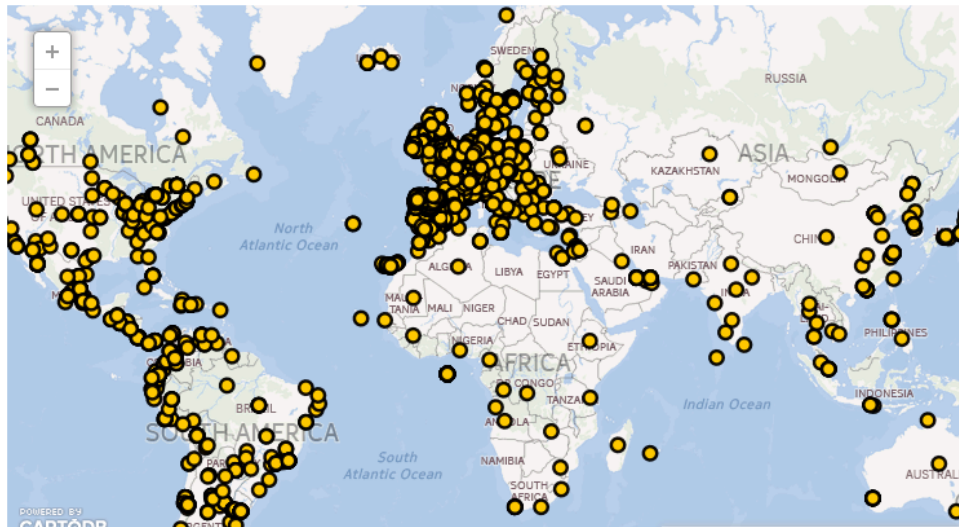
Fernando, 39 years old, chef in Miami with no contract. "Mi problem was that I did not want to be part of any political party or union…" Lidia, 25, Germany *contrato indefinido* "I studied, I could only find internships earning 400 euros, here in Germany I found a permanent job right away". Laura, economist, 23, Mumbai, intern. "I am here thanks to an internship program for students…thankful that I can do something related to my field, there are many people in Spain that do not have that chance". Olazabal, Mauritania, Temporal contract "Temporality always".

I want to finish this section by explaining the relevance of this particular theory on generation. I am looking at a cohort. Trying to understand through their personal stories how are they experiencing the economic crisis. This crisis is a common event amongst these youth. The stories presented in the following chapters show, this crisis triggers a range of responses. Anger, frustration, willingness to engage and "build something" are some examples.

2.3 Power/knowledge

"The main media of the country *El Pais*, etc…started talking about the "lost generation" because suddenly it was easy to identify and many people who read the news, let's say there is a biologist with no job and she reads about the lost generation in the news, checks facebook and sees a collective posting things all the time called: Youth Without Future; and is like, I see it in my life, I see it in the media, and these people are telling me. Let's fight, make a positive thing out of it, let's build something…"(YWF 2013, Interview)

In academia exists a current that explores the production of discourse in

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9 Source: www.nonosvamosnosechan.net

the construction of reality, known as post-structuralism. Eleftheriadis (2013) defines post-structuralism as an "epistemological approach" and as a "theoretical movement" whose main exposés were Foucault and Derrida. They believed a person is "the product of her social relations". This section looks to share aspects of these theories, to relate it to the current dominant discourse portraying a "lost generation". Eleftheriadis (2013) mentions the capacity of "language" and "symbols" in shaping an individual's identity. This is sustained through the reproduction of discourses and through institutions. He explains being "free to become" is an illusion: every person can only be what her specific historical-cultural context allows (Ibid).

Eleftheriadis (2013) explores Foucault's idea of Biopower. Explaining that Foucault viewed power not as limiting or repressing, but as having the capacity to produce the subject, reality and what is taken as "truth". Biopower is "productive power" constructing through "discursive formations". In this production of reality institutions play an important role reproducing discourses and truths. A young person aware of her precarious conditions finds the numbers of those affected by the economic crisis. Knows she is one of "them", those belonging to the "lost generation". Eleftheriadis (2013) states that through these theories assumptions or "truths" about a subject can be avoided. Derrida brings the concept of deconstruction. "Everything appearing to be outside of a given system, is already inside it, everything appearing natural, is historical" (Ibid). For Derrida, meanings belong to a moment in time, changing throughout history. Meanings depend on the construction of its "antagonist". "Heterosexuality, (…) needs homosexuality in order to perpetuate its domination, it needs homosexuality for its own definition"(Eleftheriaidis 2013). For a lost generation to exist, its opposite has to exist as well. How do these come into existence? What are the meanings, expectations given to the idea of being young in that context?

Mills (2003) reviews Foucault's view on the inseparable relation of power/knowledge. Claims that knowledge is embedded in the struggles over power "Where there are imbalances of power relations between groups of people or between institutions/states, there will be a production of knowledge" (Mills 2003:69). She explains those who have often become the objects of study tend to be economically unprivileged. The production of knowledge by the unprivileged can "alter the status quo" (Mills 2003:69). In this same view Mignolo (2009:160) mentions those who produce knowledge tend to "map the world", "classify people" and develop "projects" for the others. He asks to see "all knowledges are situated and every knowledge is constructed". The known and the knower belong to a specific political and geographical context. To think on "who, and when, why and where is knowledge generated? (Ibid)" He speaks of focusing on the knower, to "change the terms of the enunciation" (Mignolo 2009:162).

Mignolo (2009) explains the modern understanding of the world "created the figure of the detached observer, a neutral seeker of truth and objectivity who at the same time controls the disciplinary rules and puts himself or herself in the privileged position to evaluate and dictate" (Mignolo 2009:160-178). He also explained "Eurocentric" became "Universal". If we consider these, the prominent ideas of economic progress and the way to achieve development are

not universal. These "ways" belong to a specific context. The idea of "lost generation" is linked to the dominant economic model. Mignolo thinks it is necessary to "change the terms of the conversation"(Ibid). To understand there are other realities, other ways. The "lost generation" is one particular view. Then the questions would be whose, why, when, where?

YWF in my view are not passively accepting a discourse that tries to define their identity and possible futures. I was told they chose the name a couple of years before the media came up with the whole discourse on the "lost generation". Mills mentions "rather than knowledge being a pure search after truth, in fact, power operates in that processing of information which results in something being labelled as a 'fact'"(Mills 2003:72). She gives an example in the way news are produced, how information is consciously chosen (other left out). This process of picking something over another "may at the same time play a role in the maintenance of the status quo and the affirming of current power relations" (Ibid).

 Florez (2009) speaks of "the win decade in Latin America" the 80s read through its social movements instead of the tag of "lost decade" which is measured in economic terms and the idea of economic progress. This labelling Florez speaks about, occurred while looking at the past. However, the current discourse I am looking at, is trying to depict today's youth. Portraying mostly the current lack of alternatives. These alternatives too, belong to a particular idea of economic progress. Why not portraying the youth who organize, resist, who create alternatives in their everyday life?

Eleftheriaidis (2013) mentions he used constructionist and post-structuralist social theories with social movement's theory to "understand how different social and cultural standpoints produce different interpretations of the same movement" (Ibid). He states that collective identity in movements as explored by Della Porta and Diani (as a process) is "constructed" and "promoted through the movement's discourse" (Eleftheriaidis 2013). I end this section by pointing that I am looking at a cohort, perhaps a generation in the making whose identities are been constructed. Who are in the process of… whose stories in the following chapters bring another side of the picture that mainstream media often neglects.

2.4 Anarchist Politics

"It is the consciousness of the need for struggle, of the need to take practical steps to achieve the liberation of society, that takes anarchism into the world of politics"(Woodcock 2004).

In this section I explain the ideas surrounding anarchist thought. Briefly mention where it comes from. Trying to expose how it relates to social movements. The last part tries to make visible the ways in which people are organizing to deal with and resist the economic crisis. These practices are rooted in ideas and practices of the past such as anarchism. During fieldwork I perceived that "consciousness of the need for struggle" Woodcock refers to. The youth I interviewed

mentioned in different ways the need to "do something". Whereas some may be looking for some sort of "practical steps", many are already engaging in practices within collectives or their own neighbourhoods to try to bring about change. These practices represent the ways in which these youth are making politics.

Woodcock (2004) Explains the diverse currents of anarchist thought. He states "Historically, anarchism is a doctrine which poses a criticism of existing society; a view of a desirable future society; and a means of passing from one to the other" (Woodcock 2004:9). He mentions that main differences between currents are rooted in their practices. Whereas some see unavoidable that in revolutions violence occurs (that doesn't mean they find it desirable), others oppose to it in all its forms. The modes of economic organization differ as well. Identifying the following lines: Anarcho-syndicalism, anarcho-communism, anarchists pacifists, collectivism, individualists and mutualists. He states that anarchism as a "doctrine" and as a "movement" is continuously changing. Recognizing its flexible non-dogmatic character and expressing that anarchism looks to changing society. Its emergence can be traced to the 1840s in France, when Proudhon referred to himself as an anarchist. Proudhon stated "laws by which society functions have nothing to do with authority; they are not imposed from above, but stem from the nature of society itself". Proudhon believed that a free, self-organized society should be creating those laws (Woodcock 2004:12).

Woodcock (2004) states that anarchists trust in a natural sense of fraternity amongst people. This sense of fraternity is what can maintain a free society together. A society in which there is no need for authorities of any sort. Anarchism calls for the individual's sovereignty. Envisions a society organized by free will, where there is no subordination to authorities or institutions. Anarchism understands people as social beings by nature. It looks for a society in which relationships are based on "mutual agreements" (Ibid). Thinkers whose work has been considered anarchist in essence are Bakunin, Kropotkin, Malatesta, Godwin, Tolstoy. Woodcock (2004) believes anarchist thinkers have expressed the idea of destruction in relation to the possibilities of the creation of a different world. An idea commonly misunderstood. He states that anarchists see the terrain in which ruins rest, as the ground where something new can be build, a better reality. It's an idea that expresses the vanishing of institutions would give rise to a free society organized by its own will, and for its own interests (Ibid). Unlike today's dominant ways serving the interests of an elite. Proudhon's expressed the idea of how that society would be like. Federations, communes, cooperatives "based economically on a pattern of individuals and small groups possessing (not owning) their means of production" to guarantee "each individual the product of his own labor" (Woodcok 2004:12).

"I am doing my thesis on those communities that are starting outside the cities, some are anarchists, some with no specific political inclination but organized by people who are looking for other ways of living, they are organizing in non-hierarchical assemblies and growing their food, etc. this is happening" (Julia 2013, personal interview).

Graeber (2002) believes that a great part of "radical politics' creative energy comes from anarchism". He mentions that unlike common perceptions anarchism is not anti-globalization. Something it is against is neoliberalism, which he describes as "fundamentalism of the market" in his view it portrays "only one possible direction for human historical development" (Graeber 2002:3). He speaks of the global character of anarchist movements. He men-

tions that people from diverse groups connect and work together in different ways across the world (Ibid).

Another aspect Graeber (2002) touches upon is the recurrent violent character portrayed by mainstream media. He brings examples of massive protests with a clear lack of violence from the protesters. Where some dress up in costumes, groups like "The Revolutionary Anarchist Clown Bloc" and the "Pink Bloc" (dressed as fairies). He also explains that creative ways of militant non-violent tactics are often used "if you make a huge web of strands of yarn across an intersection, it's actually impossible to cross; motorcycle cops get trapped like flies" (Graeber 2002:7). For him the tactics are in tune with "the general anarchistic inspiration of the movement" which looks for "exposing, delegitimizing and dismantling mechanisms of rule while winning ever-larger spaces of autonomy" (Graeber 2002:8). He states these can only be achieved where peace prevails. Mentioning the fact that anarchism became prominent in the radical left during the mid 1800s in Europe. In a political climate that unlike the 1900s didn't see the constant rise of wars. Stating anarchism has "reappeared" at he heart of the revolutionary left (Ibid).

Pink Bloc. World Bank/IMF protest in Prague, 2000.

In Madrid neighbourhood assemblies are everywhere. Initiatives by people from 15M and other activists are feeding people who are facing challenging situations. Self-managed foodbanks and popular free meals in *plazas* (Esteso Poves 2013). Examples of solidarity, of that "fraternity" early anarchist thinkers' talk about are seen around Madrid. People are organizing to look for their own interests and those of the community they belong to. The role of authorities is constantly questioned. Juris (2008) explores network-based movements in Catalunya. He mentions links with anarchism such as self and horizontal organization, solidarity and participatory democracy. I want to mention that this section is not meant to imply that the collective YWF or the youth I met during fieldwork are anarchists. Juris brings into light that many of the activists he interviewed wouldn't classify themselves as belonging to a specific ideology.

However the ways of organizing and making politics was linked to past ways influenced by political ideologies and practices such as anarchism (Ibid). This applies to most of the youth whose stories are exposed in this paper, as it will be displayed later in the following chapters.

2.5 Autonomy & Views on Social Change

I want to begin this section by giving a definition of autonomy. Then, explaining how it is conceived in relation to social movements. Mentioning how it has been shaped in the European context. Moving on to other examples of Latin America. Finally, stress that these examples serve to understand the roots of the political practices of the youth I focus on.

According to Katsiaficas (1997) Autonomy is used to describe the separation from the state, trade unions and political parties. He points that autonomy in European movements and in other parts of the world shares some aspects. These are the search "for "Power to the People" and decentralization of decision-making concentrated in nation-states" (Ibid). He speaks of the autonomous women's movements in Italy and Germany. These "set an example of a "politics of the first person" as opposed to traditional notions of revolutions leading the nation or the working class" (Katsiaficas 1997). He points that the ways in which many feminist groups organized are still central in the autonomous movement's today. These include "self- managed consensus, making decisions independently of central leaders and implementing them according to their own self-discipline" (Ibid). He speaks of the Autonomen as those who implement "direct-democratic forms of decision-making and militant popular resistance"(Katsiaficas 1997). They would not define one specific way of being autonomous. However, looked for an alternative to "authoritarian socialism (Soviet-style societies) and "pseudodemocratic capitalism."" (Katsiaficas 1997). He believes autonomous movements come into existence due to "material conditions of late capitalism, specifically in the extension of power and production from the government and factory to arenas of everyday life". Stating that these also permeated the "traditional opposition" which rested on "unions and political parties" (Ibid).

Katsiaficas (1997) explores the emergence of autonomous movements in Europe. He speaks of Italian *Autonomia*. Workers in the "hot Autum" of 1969 took the factories. Their demands were leaving unions and political parties aside. By late 60s and 70s women autonomous movements were also rising. "groups like *Lotta Feminista* and *Autonomia Feminista* called for wages for housework" (Ibid). Others called for the legalization of abortion. In 1976 the first cultural center for women was opened as an autonomous space that offered courses. According to Katsiaficas (1997) their ways of organizing set an example for others. Due to rural to urban migration from 1969 to 1975 there were about 20,000 squats in Italy. He also speaks of the student autonomous movement that emerged in the late 60s with a wide range of demands. University first and later high school students joined in. Organized in commissions and assemblies. Interacting with workers. In 1969 an educational reform allowed factory workers to get paid study leaves (Ibid).

Katsiaficas (1997) mentions autonomous youth collectives that emerged in

the 70s in Italy. He speaks of the Metropolitan Indians. "working-class youth whose expectations of material and social freedom were dashed against the reality of the austerity measures of the 1970s". He states "putting play and joy at the center of political projects" marked a clear rupture with "previous generations of radicals" (Katsiaficas 1997). Stresses how the autonomous movements emerging in the 70s and 80s in Germany, Netherlands and Denmark borrowed strategies of each other. He speaks of the okupation of buildings by young people, severe police repression and counter attacks. He mentions victories that allowed these youth to stay in these buildings. How they prevented nuclear plant projects, organized massive protests. The moments in which many resulted injured, imprisoned and the criminalization of squatters (Ibid).

Roos (2013) speaks of revolution not as an "insurrectionary" event, but as a process. He explains the "problematic" idea of seeing revolutions as an event that allow for possibilities of change. In his view the possibilities already existed and the event is a "latent potentiality" part of the social struggle. The process is an ever-going one. Revolutions in his view means, "the unleashing of autonomy". The main call in this process is "the elimination of all power structures that allow the few to exert power over the many, in particular the power of capital to undermine the most basic human needs" (Roos 2013). He explains how there will always be the tendency of some to have "power over others". Which is why revolution is, and will be, an ongoing process for autonomy (Ibid). He points that continuous social struggle can allow "freedoms to be expanded". He finds it vital to develop organizational forms that are based on non-hierarchical principles, to move away from illusionary "democratic practices"(Ibid). The type of practices that support the current system of oppression.

In 1994 Mexico and the international community turned their eyes to EZLN. The movement formed mainly by indigenous people from Chiapas, peasants. In the following years they proved there are other ways of existing, as it was said "not better or worse, just different". They have autonomous communities based on participatory democracy. The spokesperson is known as Subcomandante Marcos. He mentions anti-systemic movements are important to change social relations and truly modify the system. He states that major transformations don't come from those above, in fact these might even seem small and irrelevant for those in power. He claims that is through the organization of groups and collectives that other forms of making politics are created (2012). In the complex interwoven realities of the economic crisis, Spanish youth trying to organize and resist are co-creating alternative ways of making politics and changing social relations. Examples of these will be explored in the following chapters where YWF and the stories collected during field-work are presented. Juris (2008) mentions that "the *Intercontinental Zapatista Encuentros* led to the formation of solidarity groups in Spain, Italy, and throughout Europe". During fieldwork, I remember going to *Patio Maravillas* for a meeting with the youth of the writing workshop. A documentary on Zapatistas was playing at the room in the first floor. Achi and I talked about them as well; she mentioned a phrase of a sign in Zapatista territory, which states, "Here people rule, and the government obeys".

"You are in Zapatista rebel territory. Here people rule and the government obey".

Meyer mentions "movements include not only public challenges oriented towards the state but also the vast array of actions undertaken by individuals and small groups in everyday life as part of a struggle for social change"(Meyer 2004:291). Such everyday things contributing to changing-constructing other reality are called prefigurative politics. Marina Sitrin (2010) speaks of autonomous movements based on prefigurative politics, with a horizontal structure specifically from those originated in Argentina as a reaction of the economic crisis of 2001. Zibechi (2000) mentions that in order to become fully emancipated autonomy is necessary, he stresses the relationship of these two which he points are "natural aspects of social struggles" (Ibid). He defines autonomy as the capacity of self-determination and emancipation as being linked to the capacities of "social and individual autonomy" (Zibechi 2000).

In the next chapter I briefly explore the history of autonomous movements of Madrid in the last decades. Trying to make visible the links between this movement and current ways in which the youth of today's economic crisis are making politics. Juris (2008) explains autonomous movements as those that incorporate "an informal network of militant anti-capitalist collectives, including squatters, antimilitarists, and media activists who primarily emphasize autonomy, self-management, and confrontation with the state".

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[10] Source http://elesmo.tumblr.com/post/2154413843/kakoalvarez-esta-usted-en-territorio-zapatista

Chapter 3 Youth Without Future

The first part of this chapter includes a brief view on the history of autonomous movements of Madrid. Given that the stories presented in the following chapters show the use of autonomous spaces. The last section brings into light the numbers of the economic crisis. It ends by looking at the policies implemented by the government.

3.1 Looking back: Madrid a brief history of Autonomous Spaces & movements

In the decades of the 80s and 90s there was a strong autonomous movement around the city of Madrid. Devi (2012) explains her involvement in the autonomous scene. She mentions some women felt the need to create autonomous spaces for women. She speaks about sexism and brings examples of women who suffered violence within autonomous spaces. That is why the space Eskalera Karakola was created in 1996. To be *okupied* and used by women. She also mentions how the differences amongst those who used this space intensified with the time (Salamanca and Wilhelmi 2012).

Devi notes there was a current of women at Karakola that were producing written work. This, unlike the type of work that is today produced by 15M economy's group, which tries to translate complicated terms and to make it easy for everyone to understand, ended up excluding. In her words that work used "language almost illegible which one thing can be justified or the opposite, and only that who wrote it and those around her perhaps to avoid looking like fools would accept and praise it" (Salamanca and Wilhelmi 2012:24). 15M makes efforts to use a language that most can understand, the idea is to be inclusive, to reach out. In YWF facebook page are videos and explanations on what certain reforms mean, the language used in their campaigns and publications reflects the inclusive approach they are trying to achieve. However, most of their campaigns are made public utilizing social media. That in itself targets a certain group of people. How inclusive this really is. Is an aspect to consider.

Dominguez mentions there was a thirst to organize and make politics beyond traditional ways (Salamanca and Wilhelmi 2012). The autonomous scene of the nineties reveals diversity of backgrounds and profiles uncomfortable with the systems of oppression and inequality, aware of the precariousness experienced by many. He states it was common interests rather than shared life conditions what resulted in grouping within the autonomous scene (Ibid). Dominguez speaks of practices that created spaces (social centers) and the occupation of *Laboratorio 1*. Occupied by different groups, collectives whose diversity would challenge the existence of the space itself in the following years. It presented the opportunity to engage in a different way of making politics. Being autonomous, horizontal organization through assemblies, direct democratic participation, self-managed, etc (Salamanca and Wilhelmi 2012). These characteristics are to be found in 15M years later and around other spaces in Madrid like *Tabacalera*.

Wilhelmi (2012) speaks of autonomous movements in Madrid, in his words part of the essence was "transformation of the here and now". Such

okupations meant to address the reality of a lack of access to housing and the need for cultural self-managed spaces. He speaks about an autonomous social centre LA (Coordinadora Lucha Autonoma). By the end of the nineties LA grouped around 13 different collectives focused on precariousness launching a campaign against the ETTs (Temporal work agencies). LA collaborated with unions and supported organized workers (Ibid). This movement tried to dissolve the main differences form the many political inclinations that conformed it, a challenge that was not always achieved (Salamanca and Wilhelmi 2012).

The reason why I mention this autonomous past is, to stress the link or heredity in terms of organization and use of spaces by today's politically active youth. The following Characteristics are present in collectives like YWF and others who may (or not) belong to the same political ideology. Horizontalism, assemblies, and self-managed spaces used for political, cultural, social activities. Juris (2008) mentions the squatting movement of Barcelona was also present in cities like Madrid and Bilbao. He states, *okupation* of these spaces "involves a radical critique of free market capitalism and urban speculation by re-appropriating and collectively self-managing abandoned buildings" (Ibid).

3.2 If tomorrow belongs to the youth what about today?

Economic Crisis & European Youth

We were having a drink before lunch time, it was a hot summer day in Madrid, Julia looked at Achi and asked -do you remember Juan[11]? He is going back to Chile, he quit his job because he could get fired anytime, so it wasn't anything sure, and he decided to go back for other 6 months.

The economic global crisis is affecting unevenly the youths of the EU; Spain showing the highest numbers of youth unemployment amongst its members' States. Spanish youth are migrating looking for opportunities to Germany, The Netherlands, and other countries within and outside the EU. According to ILO the increase in youth unemployment in the EU and the developed economies from 2008 to 2012 has been of 24.9% (2013). Projections estimate that from here to 2016 it wont drop below 17%(Ibid). In the report is mentioned that the current economic crisis is leaving "scars" on today's youth who can't seem to trust the system (socio-economic and political). In Greece and Spain youth are massively protesting (2013). ILO states that young people are almost "three times more likely than adults to be unemployed" (Ibid). In 2011 40.5% of employed youth in Europe worked on temporary contracts. The report states there has been a rise in youth part-time work, and temporary employment. Evidence demonstrates is not by preference (ILO 2013). 1 in 4 young people in the EU are out of work (European Youth Forum 2013). "The right to decent work and protection against unemployment are fundamental human rights" (Ibid). In the EU 30.1% of young people have been unemployed for 12 months or more. The measures of austerity that have been implemented to deal with the economic crisis have made the situation worst placing "an entire generation at risk" and to change the current situation, policies of growth that open access to employment are necessary (European Youth

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[11] This is not his real name.

Forum 2013).

Spain, Economic Crisis & Youth

According to the European commission by the end of 2011 in Spain the youth unemployment rate was of 49.6%. One of the highest youth unemployment rates within the EU (2012). To worsen the situation, the government's cuts on sanitary, education and other aspects of social protection created an atmosphere of indignation and insecurity. University tuitions increased, they have risen up to 67% (Vallespin 2013). At the same time many people were losing (still are) their houses to the banks. According to El Pais in 2012 there were 32,490 evictions (Romero 2013). The temporal job rate is of 25%, which has been pointed to be much higher than in most members of the EU (BOE 2012).

"We have been denouncing it since long ago: This is not a country for young people, your crisis and policies are kicking us out"(Juventud sin Futuro 2013b). One of the recurrent mottos from *youth without future* is that they are left with three options: "precariousness, unemployment or exile". Taibo mentions that by the summer of 2011 in Spain "45% of young people were unemployed and 650,000 of those between the ages of 16 and 29 were neither studying nor working"(2012:156). This trend is well known in Mexico. The youth in such situations are often referred as *ninis*. These youth don't belong to one specific social class and being neither studying nor working is the reality of seven million eight hundred thousand young Mexicans (Avilez 2012). Apparently, a problem not exclusive of developing countries.

Taibo (2012) mentions "54% of people between the ages of 18 and 34 were living with their parents"(Ibid). He portrays other issues young people face in Spain. Accessibility of education in which not only costs are increasing but fewer scholarships are available due to the measures employed by the government (budget cuts, and austerity policies). Related to the job market he points out, youth are also in a vulnerable position by getting temporal contracts. Making it hard to plan a future or keeping them tied to low income causing other types of insecurities (2012:156). It would be hard to focus on a future when the present needs are barely met. The vice president of FENAC[12] mentions an entire generation of youth (highly educated) are leaving Spain due to a lack of job opportunities. Compromising the future of the country. This generation is referred as overqualified youth migrants or JESP[13]. He points out by the end of 2011 there were a million and a half people with University degrees registered for unemployment subsidies (FENAC 2012). Duran mentions that like his young daughter many qualified young people are leaving Spain in search for opportunities. He explains that in Spain young people are often categorized as "the lost generation" and he believes that by leaving they are rejecting to be part of that grouping (Duran 2012).

There is much to struggle for in the present for many young people who are unemployed or tied to poorly paid jobs. In such circumstances life is filled with uncertainties and meeting everyday needs become a priority. Options like being financially independent, having a family, being able to own a house, or to

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[12] National Federation of Consultant Associations.
[13] jovenes emigrantes sobradamente preparados.

live without the help of others (parents) stop being a choice. The hardships youth in Spain face described above are the reality for many young people where I come from, Mexico. Too often young people leave the country looking for opportunities perhaps as undocumented migrants to the North, or in the so called brain drain for those who had access to education but not to good opportunities within Mexico. Europe (and basically the countries of the North) were in many cases perceived as the places where opportunities awaited, where educated young professionals could make it, and low skilled migrants could look for better life conditions as well. Young people in Spain are looking outside the boarders with the hope of finding better possibilities just as the Mexican youth I described. But they, coming from the developed world, are not only looking into the Global North, they are also migrating to Latin America and many other places.

Policy responses to the crisis

INE states that the total rate of unemployment is of 27,16% (2013). Accordig to Encuesta de Poblacion Activa[14] (EPA) for youth below 25 the unemployment rate in 2012 was of 55.13% (2013). Since 2010 around 6, 700 millions of euros have been withdrawn from education (Aunion 2013). The labor reform implemented in 2012 was met with great skepticism workers already faced much insecurity. This reform has been pointed out to facilitate part-time contracts, which according to the government are of great benefit for redistribution of employment (BOE 2012). The ministry of employment and social security defines part time contracts as those that settle less hours of work a week, month or year than permanent workers carry out (Ministerio de Empleo y Seguridad Social n.d.). 99.23% of companies in Spain have fifty workers or less. The reform is facilitating open-ended contracts for these companies (BOE 2012). These contracts do not establish for how long a worker's services will be required (Ministerio de Empleo y Seguridad Social n.d.). Other reforms have been implemented; in 2013 incentives became available for companies that higher youth under part-time contracts as trainees. Also, for those companies whom higher interns for their first job experience (BOE 2013).

Interpretation of the policies by YWF

Spanish youth are facing problems that affect and limit their life choices. *Youth without Future* tries to make visible the issues they are experiencing as youth directly affected by the economic crisis and by the policies implemented as a response to the financial situation. In a press release on their website, *youth without future* condemns the government's measure of giving incentives to the companies that higher under temporary contracts people under 30. They believe these "mini-jobs" are not the solution since it reinforces precariousness and disguise the problem instead of eradicating it (Youth without future 2013c). This collective, as many other organized youth, make use of the technology to connect, organize and inform other youth and the public in general. Social media is an important part of the movement that has allowed them to maintain communication not only with other youth within Spain, but with the

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[14] EPA means Active Populations Survey. Carried out by INE (Nacional Institute of Statistics).

ones who had to leave the country looking for better opportunities or in many cases any type of opportunities (not necessarily good ones).

This chapter seeks to make links from current ways of organizing politically to recent past ways of making politics. Bring into light the "big picture" of the economic reality in Spain. To show the measures which have been taken by the government in trying to deal with the economic crisis. These measures have generated discontent amongst those who find themselves as target, those whose needs are not reflected. YWF have been expressing that such measures affect young people and are far from providing solutions to their problems. Some of these problems are precarious living conditions and unemployment. To conclude this chapter I want to state that the numbers of the crisis, the measures implemented, the manifested inconformity are part of the fuel triggering responses of organization and resistance. Young people resist the measures, protest against the decisions taken by the political elite affecting their lives, and organize to create alternatives, to find other ways.

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[15] "You won't have a home in your fucking life". Source: YWF facebook page.
[16] "Youth without closets, youth without fear". Source: Ibid.

Chapter 4 Through the skin[17] of the Spanish youth (Stories of resistance and organization)

"The world is made of stories, not of atoms"[18]

In this chapter I want to share the stories collected during fieldwork. These are the subjective experiences of the economic crisis from those who are being affected by it, who have been resisting and trying to find alternatives within their own realities. The material presented here was mainly gathered through interviews and informal conversations. I am hoping these will provide an insight into the experiences of some of the Spanish youth in the current economic crisis as well as an understanding of their role in re-shaping the ways in which they are being perceived.

In the previous chapters I tried to bring into light the different issues young people are facing due to the economic crisis and the policies implemented. The numbers of unemployed, the reforms that seem to bring instability and facilitate informal jobs, people having to leave their country. In this scenario YWF called for the need to make visible the stories behind the numbers of those having to look for opportunities outside Spain. Creating a space (virtual) to hold the subjective experiences and make politics in their own terms. Also utilizing the physical spaces that allows for people from different political inclinations, ages, backgrounds to co-exist. This chapter is following the pursuit of YWF in focusing on the personal. These conversations and observations during field work revealed an impulse for breaking barriers based on dogma, social class, race, nationality and the search for inclusiveness and to reach out.

4.1 In between: The story of Achi

"Stories allow to transform the distant into the near"[19]

Achi is 29, she is from Madrid. She has a strong personality, no tolerance for injustice, a kind heart. We met months ago in Amsterdam where she had been living for some years now. I remember how she suggested making a list of places that exploit documented and undocumented immigrants; pasting signs that would denounce such exploitation outside the local businesses that were on the list. This was a suggestion to denounce precariousness when the protest of April 7 2013 proposed by YWF reached the Spanish youth living abroad. It was one of the meetings of March in preparation for that event. These meetings where rapidly spreading in cities all over the world because of the campaign *We are not leaving, they are kicking us out* which had just been launched a couple of weeks before by YWF.

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[17] The word "skin" as it is used in Spanish, denotes the 'experiencing of…" is that part of the body allowing to experience the world.
[18] By Muriel Rukeyser
[19] By Eduardo Galeano http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ky1p1yOvpWg

In the interview with some members of YWF they talked about that campaign as a very successful one in which the most important was that they managed to "touch the political with the personal". That people could see how it wasn't their fault, and that they could resist and organize (Interview YWF). This campaign gave rise to 33 international cities in which Spanish youth are organized. And those from YWF in Madrid have expressed the fact that they are still trying to figure out what to do next with all these, perhaps find a way to continue it, and if so they don't know how yet. In the interview it was said that "touch on the things people experience and call it politics I think is one of the best things YWF does (YWF 2013, interview)". It was mentioned how important it was naming it exile, when speaking of those who left because of the economic situation in Spain. To denounce those who leave their families, friends and hometowns are in many cases doing so because there is no better choice for them, no opportunity to live a decent life in Spain. This doesn't mean they'll find it wherever they go, and this is how I want to go back to Achi, the young woman from Madrid in her twenties that I met in Amsterdam a few months ago.

When I went to do fieldwork in Madrid I knew Achi was going to be there, she left in June to see her family and try once again to get a job so she could stay in Madrid this time. We met at the Park El Retiro. She had been back in Madrid for a month now, sending CVs everywhere, trying to figure out whether she can stay (if she finds something) or if she should go back to Amsterdam. She left 7 years ago, before the crisis. But as time passed everyone (family, friends) kept telling her not to come back, things were not going well in Spain. She tried to go back in 2011, before 15-M. She sent CV's and was looking for a job for six months. She mentioned on one occasion she was offered a job for 4 euros the hour, having to work 10 hours a day but she had to agree to sign the papers to resign before starting. She got really angry, went to INEM to file a complaint, it was not legal. She entered depression but realized people were organizing, there were protests around Madrid almost every week. On one occasion she saw people been repressed by the police and approached the protesters, the police asked for her information, saying it was just routine, a couple of weeks later she received a fine for 900 euros, the charge was "trying to enter congress". She remembers being furious because it was "a clear violation to my right to freedom of speech".

She decided to go back to Amsterdam. Then 15M happened in Madrid and in other cities of Spain like Barcelona. She decided that it was time to organize and started trying to contact Spanish people who were living in The Netherlands through facebook. She remembers that her account was blocked for sending messages to people she didn't know. That is how she contacted other Spanish youth, 15M Holanda organized its first protest. Della Porta and Diani mention "for protest to emerge, activists must believe than an opportunity exists, that they have the power to bring about change" (2006).

4.2 On work and Struggle

This is difficult; I wont take it you know? I wont be able to work for 4 euros an hour and then let them treat me like that…I easily explode and under such conditions…

In Amsterdam I had a job delivering letters, I could do it from my home, I paid little rent like 150 euros a month, so I could manage, and I still had time to study. But I got fired one day, just because it was a holyday so they didn't bring the letters, and they did the day after which I was not told that it would be like that, with no previous advice, so I didn't know…and that is how I lost my job. But I am getting tired of these, I have been working since I was 16 I had about 50 jobs. And there was one in which they told me I would earn 7 euros an hour but then I was leaving that job and I wanted my money, he hadn't pay me and he tried to pay me 6 euros an hour, and I got so angry I told him I was not going anywhere until he paid me everything and since he didn't do it, I opened the register and took what was missing from my wage and told him If the tried to stop me I would destroy everything. I can't stand those abuses, I am tired!

My friends who occupy a house in the neighbourhood here in Madrid, they said sometimes they get paid 3.50 an hour!! And they told me that one ETT[20] was destroyed with a molotov cocktail once. Before we didn't have those ETT, now there are everywhere, and there was even a time in which you could walk in with your CV, now they get so many applications that you have to send it via e-mail. And they get you a crapy job and they take some of your income, that's what they do.

4.3 Julia

Achi and I met for a drink at a café close to the street Hernan Cortes, where the PAH was trying to stop a women in her sixties from being evicted that morning. Achi was going to introduce me to a couple of friends so I could interview them. And that's where I met Julia, who is part of 15M and was also living in Amsterdam some time ago.

I was going to have some work this summer but is not happening anymore. The thing is this lady whose husband is going to the US looking for some work because things are tough here, well she needed care for her daughters during this month and the school charges 500 per girl! So she told my mom and my mom told her that I could take care for them for 500 both girls. At first she agreed and then just a couple of days before I had to start, she said that what if she gives me 300 instead. For the whole month 9 hours a day! I thought about it because 300 is better than nothing, but I know I wont be ok about it, I even told her to give me the 300 now and the rest she can give me 50 euros a month for the next months but she refused, so I declined the offer. Now I don't have a job.

Achi sent me a message wishing me luck with everything; she was going to take a job for one month in London. Painting henna tattoos, hoping to get some money and go back to Amsterdam, find a job.

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[20] Temporal employment agency

4.3 Youth Without Future

"La juventud toma la palabra"[21] (Juventud sin Futuro 2011)

It's a hot night in Madrid, and I arrive to the bar at *Patio Maravillas*. I know this Friday night is the turn of youth without Future to run the bar. They know I am coming. I don't know what to expect. I have been there before. The autonomous *Patio Maravillas* just celebrated its sixth anniversary. It's an okuppa building that is used for cultural, political and social activities. Many collectives make use of this space. Maravillas means wonder. I spot them and introduce myself.

Youth Without Future is a collective created by middle class University students of Madrid. Some of them were militants and part of other collectives. It was in 2011 when it came together. They organized a protest in April that year, and together with *Democracia Real Ya* called for the well-known May 15 protest at Plaza del Sol. This became the occupation that triggered mobilizations in other cities around Spain. They have three main focus areas: housing, education and precariousness. There are about 50 members, although I was told that around 25 are most active. They count with many other young people and students who are not members, but who sometimes participate in protests or other events organized/supported by the collective.

"We realized, once again, that when we are together, we are capable of making worth the rights of everyone more than the benefits of the minority". (Juventud sin Futuro 2013d). This was expressed on a press release on their website after stopping the police from evicting three families in the neighborhood of Tetuan in August 2013. Many low-income families, immigrants and unemployed people live in Tetuan (Juventud sin Futuro 2013d). Of course YWF were not the only collective present in this action, neighbours, members of PAH, 15M, Asamblea Vivienda, people that go to Patio Maravillas, etc.

Some of the triggers that gave birth to these collective are: reforms made like the one that changed the age of retirement to 67 and declared that in order to get 100% pension thirty-eight and a half years of work will be required. YWF recognizes how these changes are gender blind and many women are still the ones who quit their jobs in order to take care of children, sick family members, elderly, etc. Other issues are the rising in University tuition, the threat of Public Universities losing their autonomy, temporal jobs with no benefits, the *Estrategia Universidad 2015 in order* to "situate the University to serve the economy" (Juventud sin Futuro 2011).

4.4 Being Youth Without Future

"It is heavy to say it, especially when you are 23 years old and want to eat the world, it is a contradiction, is like 'ok I want to be called that' but emotionally and personally implies assuming things that…god! My expectations of the future…is heavy… but we played with that tension, I think it was considered and still is considered that this tension is very rich, precisely in that ambivalence a political subject is being created" (YWF 2013, interview).

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[21] Youth take the Word.

The name denounced a reality. For these young people it was clear in 2011 and still is, opportunities of living a life out of precariousness for youth in Spain are limited. The slogan printed on their shirts states: *Youth Without Future, without a home, without a job, without pension.* And at the bottom highlighting the font the words: *without fear.* To counterbalance what some see as a pessimistic depiction of young people I was told by one of the members. She mentioned how they were not trying to be fatalistic nor naïve, but "reality is there and can't be ignored". Almost 60% of Spanish youth are currently unemployed, and many hold jobs that are just to get by with no security at all under terms that are abusive. Mar is a young journalist, she goes to *Patio Maravillas*, and was told at the office to stay extra hours without getting compensated, she refused and was advised by her superior that given the circumstances it was risky to make those decisions. She said "they are doing this because of the crisis, they know the situation, and they want us to feel thankful to be able to go to work. But I tell myself: Mar, you choose to work every day, remember it is a choice".

A week later she explained that they all were told that from that moment on they wont get paid because "there is no money", but they can still come to work and stay extra hours of course. In her frustration she knew this is to avoid getting people laid off and compensate them economically. She also mentioned how important it is to refuse those extra hours for all those who are exploited and for those who want to take advantage of the fear many have of becoming unemployed, to be part of the *paro*. CIS[22] reported in July's 2013 barometer that 63,9% of Spanish population earns less than 1,200 euros per month. It was mentioned how 20,1% of the people interviewed refused to answer the question and 15,8% earns more than that. (Machuca 2013).

Oscar is a man in his forties who has been working for several years carrying boxes, he doesn't have a University degree, he talked about his job, about his family, about his sister in law who has two children and hasn't been paid her full salary in four months. He mentioned how sometimes they give "a bit of money to the workers so they still show up the next day". They are told that they will get paid completely once things get better. While the economic crisis is affecting enormously Spanish youth today, there are other vulnerable groups that have no choice but precariousness. YWF recognizes they are part of a specific social class and most of the members have University or master degrees, there is only one member who dropped out a few years ago. There is one concern that they are trying to address. They want to reach out to those who never finished high school, to those who are not middle class, to those who won't have University degrees, to young immigrants as well. The question they are discussing is how to do this?

I was told I arrived in a moment of re-structuration in which they are trying to figure out several things, this was one of those "things". "We want to broaden the juvenile precarious subject in every way, we want to open so everyone fits, sometimes there are things we leave out" Interview YWF). I asked why do you think these youth that has no University degrees etc, are not identifying themselves with YWF? Why are they not attracted to YWF? She believed there was a class issue, being militant costs money, many members of

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[22] Centro de Investigaciones Sociologicas

YWF are students and have economic support from their parents. Being a student in certain faculties around Madrid implies getting in contact with politicized spaces, where is easy to find collectives, groups to join. If you are 16 or 18 and have to work all day you probably have other things in mind, and no contact with these specific spaces. Juris (2008) mentions that amongst the Spanish and Catalan activists from network based movements he focused on, many were University students. Many had precarious jobs "thus tended not to have families or full-time employment, allowing them ample time for grassroots political activities" (Juris 2008).

"When we launched the campaign *we are not leaving, they are kicking us out*, we had a big contradiction, we were talking about being the most educated generation, having master degrees, a career, speaking languages, but that is only one specific youth, leaving another youth out. In that sense we want to do a huge effort which is really important from now on to open and try to reach the other youths" (YWF 2013, interview).

4.5 Why organizing?

"We demand the creation of a new contract that attends the needs of youth at the moment they integrate into the labor market. We understand that the right to labor is a correlation of forces in which we are clearly losing. We most revert that" (Juventud sin Futuro 2011).

Sara shared some aspects of her reality, some of her personal concerns and understandings of the implications of the current economic crisis in her life and in the lives of many others. "50% of my wage goes to pay rent. I have no contract. I have been working for ten years, only three of those years actually counted as jobs with full benefits. My parents had money saved for their retirement, money they worked so when the time comes they can actually go travel around or live out of that money, I know I won't have that, none of us here will" (Sara 2013, personal interview).

The Youth Forum (2013) states that "moves to further privatize third level education as an austerity measure after the economic crisis have left many young people in a situation where they are locked out both education and employment". Also that temporary work may show a reduction of youth unemployment but not necessarily make the life conditions of young people better. Moreover, youth unemployment has reflected on social exclusion and poverty within the EU (European Youth Forum 2013). The Youth Forum has been lobbying to implement a guarantee program that would provide training, retraining or employment to those who have been unemployed for a period of 4 months. This is expected to decrease youth unemployment and it would by changing the numbers of those "neither working or studying" (Ibid). However those young people who need to work to survive, or can't afford to be trained or re-trained (not having an income), would probably find this program not as coherent to their real needs.

To finalize this chapter I want to do a recap not of the stories or main ideas of the sections in it, but of the different emotions involved in these stories. For this purpose I chose the following images that represent parts of the struggles and that which motivates to keep on trying "to build something together". Most of the images were taken from the facebook page of YWF, ex-

cept for one taken during fieldwork. They are a collage of feelings and moments that invites us to look at what is happening in the lives of the organized Spanish youth this research focuses on.
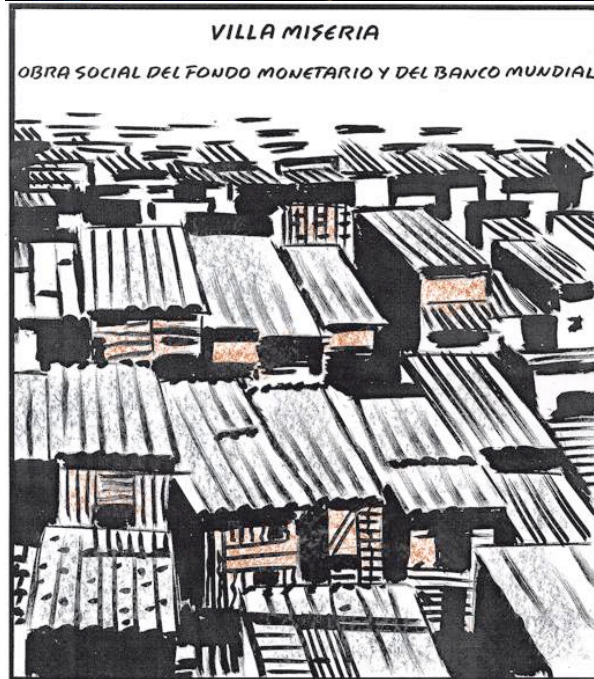

VILLA MISERIA

OBRA SOCIAL DEL FONDO MONETARIO Y DEL BANCO MUNDIAL

elroto.elpais@gmail.com [25]

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[25] "Misery village: Social project by IMF - World Bank"

Chapter 5 Changing Perspectives & constructing realities otherwise

"Utopia is on the horizon. I move two steps closer; it moves two steps further away. I walk another ten steps and the horizon runs ten steps further away. As much as I may walk, I'll never reach it. So what's the purpose of utopia? That's why it's there…to keep walking (Galeano n.d.)."

This chapter is composed of different reflections that came during fieldwork. First, an example of an initiative by organized youth. Second, a redefinition of youth. Young people I met often associated being young with facing precarious conditions of living. Finally, the last section turns to the autonomous spaces used by some of these youth.

5.1 Organizing & crafting possibilities: The Precarious Office

"So, from here, without fear, let's see what we can build" (YWF 2013, interview).

The precarious office comes from YWF, but is now independent from them. Pablo from the Precarious Office mentions "It comes into existence as a response from organized youth facing the permanent exploitation in which we are supposed to choose between unemployment and precariousness, either you remain unemployed or accept conditions that are far from containing all the rights earned historically, from 8 hours shifts, paid holydays, social security coverage. All the rights that had previously been accomplished with the organization and pressure from the workers (Pablo 2013, personal interview)".

PO is giving legal free advice a couple of hours a week to those who can't afford it. Has its own legal team that can be reached either in person or through Internet. They study the case and are willing to do so free of charge. The legal team of the precarious office has gone to court and won a few cases. When that happens they do require just enough money to give something to the lawyers so it is also fair for them. One of the cases won became an important accomplishment. A lady who was fired for going to a protest. PO managed to get her job back, to get the salary that she didn't receive during the time she was fired. This part is one of the core three main focuses of the precarious office.

The second has to do with alternatives they are proposing " We are proposing what is known as social economy or alternative economy, new channels starting to emerge of production, distribution, creation of everything with another model, a cooperative model. It's a legal form which can be registered as a company" (Pablo 2013, personal interview). Pablo speaks of the way cooperative companies work "Decisions have to be democratic inside, since we demand democracy with other movements to the system in general and to the economic system why not asking directly from the company. The objective of the company is to satisfy collective and individual needs not only to benefit a minority, therefore wealth is meant to serve, any business you can think of can be established as a cooperative. Around here, an academy of private classes, which could be a private company but chose to be a cooperative, they have

assemblies to make decisions, the benefits revert to the cooperative, it is trying to find more dignified and democratic work conditions"(Pablo 2013, personal interview).

The PO gives legal advice to those who are interested in establishing a cooperative. They guide and explain what and how to do it. Also point people to a cooperative that works on giving advice, developing communication strategies for other cooperatives. He mentions that in Madrid the "social market" is growing, that there is a "circuit of cooperatives" (Pablo 2013, personal interview).

The third and last core focus of PO, has to do with action. It has to do with the following questions: How does a young person without a contract goes to strike. How dos someone who cannot miss a day of work (afraid to lose their job) go to a protest. He mentions " Is not that they will fire her, is just that there is no contract... how does these people participate?"(Pablo 2013, personal interview). PO tries to analyze the changes in the current "work model". Pablo mentions full-time worker with all benefits, previous worker's rights that some took for granted (contracts, etc) are changing. He explains that PO is trying to address these changes through organizing, going to companies to make pressure so people do not lose their jobs. He mentions a campaign they are working on focused on internships and apprenticeship. In this specific type of contracts they seem to find many abuses. Pablo expresses "In Spain they take advantage of interns, they are hired to replace workers, so you have a young person earning half of the salary to do the same amount of work, without the status because he is still "training" doing an internship under the excuse of acquiring experience, we did a strike about this" (Pablo 2013, personal interview).

Naafs (2013) speaks of class-privileged youth who can afford to be interns to get some work experience. Internships in many cases are poorly paid (if paid), and can become a vicious cycle from which young people can't move out off and into a stable job. She mentions internships make evident the fact "Contemporary education and labor policies, often informed by a neoliberal logic, hold individual youth and their families responsible to invest in education and training in order to improve their 'employability' in the job market" (Ibid). The youth Forum (2012) launched an initiative recommending the EU ensure internships are not taking advantage of young people (as it often happens). "Social partners did not engage in social dialogue regarding the issue of quality internships and urges the European Commission to take urgent action. We also urge relevant stakeholders to develop a set of support and monitoring policies for the better implementation of quality internships that includes a defined legal framework and the recognition of skills acquired (Youth Forum 2012)".

5.2 Re-defining Youth: Youth=Precariousness

During fieldwork I came across with a shared perception on who experiences the hardships of the economic reality. I had in mind that young people are indeed very affected by the current economic crisis in Spain, and had an idea in terms of age of who these people were until several people I talked to like Sara, mentioned "Age has nothing to do, is how we are forced to live. I have friends in their 40's that have to share an apartment and live like young

people would usually live" (Sara 2013, personal interview). Data from the latest EPA shows unemployment has raised along with part time jobs and 16,4% of all working people are part of the part-time work force (Gomez 2013).

In 2012, 59.724 Spanish people left their country of origin. The majority were between the ages of 25 to 44 (INE 2013).

The dominant discourse before the crisis portrayed young people as "the future of…" In the past years the dominant discourse has changed completely. Portraying the current youth as those with no future. "The precarious" a lost generation. During fieldwork I encountered youth who organize, who envision other ways of building a future. Many under precarious conditions, but part of a youth who resist, who are working on crafting possibilities.

5.3 Dignity: Changing Perspectives

"YWF also tries to revert this, the thing is not that people don't study nor work, is just that there are a lot of professional trainings that are not considered and lots of jobs that right now lack contracts, etc… and what is wrong are the categories in which youth is being defined because it is another youth, with a different economy, with a different *academic training*, different *attitudes*, in another globalize world, with other interests, the *ninis* are super important, there was this need to build on that discourse" (interview). The latest policy paper states "12.9% of young people in the EU are not in employment education or training (NEET)" (European Youth Forum 2013).

People from YWF mention some youth can't study due to the rise in tuition, others need to work instead. Many who are part of the *paro,* is not that they don't want to work; they are finding it difficult to get a job. The conditions offered are often precarious; those who can say no (have relatives to support them, etc.) do it. Mignolo (2009) speaks of knowledge production. He mentions the importance to focus on the knower instead of what is known. Some media and people's perception, portrayed the *ninis* discourse placing more responsibility of the situation on the youth themselves rather than the socio-economic and political conditions in which these youth are living. This releases the government from certain responsibility. It seemed that many of these youth are choosing not to do anything. The guarantee program provides youth with some occupation whether remunerated or not. Seems like two things are being of great importance for policy makers. One is that the numbers of unemployed youth decrease (that doesn't mean their marginal conditions get better). The other is to prove that something is being done to address these youth (whether it has a positive impact or not, is a different matter).

I was told that the name was in part a premonition of a reality that was around the corner. I think the name itself is a protest and a contradiction. In a way it is denouncing young people's unstable reality; in another way their present actions reveal they are working on building a different one. It is also a statement of rejection of a future expected for them. They mentioned that their lives are full with instability, uncertainty. That appears to be true. However it seems to me that the terms in which they would acquire some sort of

stability (or at least the illusion of it) those that their parents took for granted: study, graduate to get a stable job, buy a house, save money for retirement, etc. And do not move away from a system of oppression are not the terms many would want to engage with anyways. Perhaps they are youth without a future, but the kind of future that was previously expected for them following the same path of economic development. Indeed different from that which some are creating with their actions today. Those actions include and are not limited to prefigurative politics, cooperatives, initiatives and campaigns to denounce precariousness to try to reach other youths (solidarity).

5.4 Autonomous Spaces

Youth: Opening Spaces & Breaking the walls of prejudice

"Many years before the cataclysm the world was already limited by a crystal cupola and rested on the shelf of a room without anyone paying much attention to it, but inside that crystal semi-sphere life boiled, there were cottages and fields on which it snowed arbitrary, due to the god's whim and will, huge snow flakes the size of a house that would cover entire villages between *choco-pan* and thick air, because air was not really air but some sort of liquid and translucent ether, a substance that the gods from the Universe knew very well and would look at with the interest of the ordinary and called water, the ether-water was filled with oxygen particles that allowed the inhabitants of the semi-crystal ball to breathe, and between inhale and exhale, relate to each other, love, hate, conceive life or kill each other, actually they wouldn't stop killing each other, even though there was a time in which they lived under the illusion of having achieved reason, in which they seemed more participant of life than death during a mirroring era in which cottages became houses, roads became highways, schools became Universities, small towns became cities, Rilka became the most extraordinary of the cities and weapons vanished, this era of indolent pleasure became known as the golden era because during its time people lived happily inside the crystal bubble, earning money, using all resources they wanted to without worrying about the future and they built non-stop under the doctrine that the only way of growing was physically and that things were better if bigger…" (Gabriel Jimenez Gomez)

The previous fragment was written by a young man of the writing workshop at *Patio Maravillas*. As it has been established, Madrid had a strong presence of autonomous movements in the previous decades. Different buildings were okupied and transformed into sites for social, political and cultural exchange. Juris (2008) mentions characteristics of similar spaces used as social centers. He states that these allowed for "countercultural values and practices" to emerge. He explains these belonged to a group of "self-managed movements" from previous decades (the 90s) in which the following was present "antimilitarism, alternative communication (pirate radios, websites, counter-information), and solidarity economics (fair trade, cooperatives)" (Juris 2008).

Campo de Cebada is a self managed, autonomous space at barrio La Latina. I visited during the popular summer university. Carmen is a young woman in her twenties who was involved in organizing and making this Popular University happen. In a hot Saturday I attended the lectures on autonomous movements in Madrid. The program could be checked online. There were people of several ages 50s, 60s, 40s, etc. Many are neighbours in the area and

the full program covered several areas. Everyone was free to join for one course or all if they wanted to. No money was required. This space I was told, used to be a public sports center. It was demolished some years ago to build something else which due to lack of resources was never built. Leaving a concrete whole next to the old market. This concrete whole has been transformed by many people into a center for cultural, social, political, and other sorts of activities. There is an edible garden in which they take care and use what has grown there for personal consumption. There are movable benches build with wood, and tables. These I was told are made for free by the wood collective; they just get the wood and build things around. In another occasion I went there to watch a play. Again people from several ages, and different looks, were around. Some watching the play, some "hanging out" at the bar, yes, there is a bar.

Campo de Cebada. Source: Fieldwork 2013.

Tabacalera is another self-managed building at the barrio of *Lavapies*, close to the rotary of *Embajadores*. This beautiful building used to be a tobacco company. They managed to get support form municipality to use the space for cultural and social activities but it is still autonomous. The first time I visited this place was for a meeting on media activism. Carmen from Campo de Cebada was there, many activists from Acampada Sol, diagonal, autonomous, Tabacalera, Ninja media (from Brazil), and other independent media activists, neighbors, mostly women. The meeting had online interaction for those who couldn't physically be there and the idea was to find ways to collaborate as media activists, not to do a joint project but just keep some sort of network. Perhaps to share a platform and not be isolated.

The activist from Ninja media talked about the current protests in Brazil. He mentioned how this has transformed into an opportunity for those young people interested in letting know what happens to build networks and become

active in the production of information. Coming from below, from the people. He mentioned how these protests revealed a crisis of intermediaries misrepresenting. How this gave voice to those who want to reveal what is going on not for money but as an act of social responsibility and how these events saw the emergence of a politicized middle class. Ninja media has a facebook page and he mentioned how 70% of youth within the *Fabelas* have a facebook profile. The idea here is to reach out. Foucault speaks of that knowledge which is "not dispassionate but rather an integral part of struggles over power" (Mills 2003:69) emphasizing that "in producing knowledge, one is also making a claim for power" stressing the relationship of power/knowledge (Ibid). These media activist are precisely fighting to produce the information that is left out by main stream media, information that plays an important role in shaping the discourses and "truths" that get to be known by the majority of the people and maintain the existing power structure.

The second time I went to *Tabacalera*, I was asked to join a recently married couple in their mid thirties who are both free lance journalists in Madrid. They were looking for interesting options to spend a Sunday evening and there happen to be a free circus at *Tabacalera*. So we went and the place was filled with children, and people of all ages and looks. It was mentioned that the students from the circus school of Madrid were performing. They were mostly in their late teens and early twenties. In their show they presented a piece in which they made reference to domination, dogma and egoism as the blue prints of the system. A system that was dismantled in the end. It wasn't the only political reference of the show. In another act these young people spoke of "the system of oppression that only benefits a few and places some people on top of others". And like other circus there were clowns, Jugglers, acrobats, etc. It was a nice way to spend a hot Sunday afternoon in the city of Madrid. It also was another example of how politics, the crisis, are present in everyday life of these youth and in the spaces they share with the community.

Spanish Youth of today's economic reality are called the lost generation. Why? The discouraging numbers. Also, the lenses that some are choosing to use in order to read their realities (the discourse). Yes, we cannot deny the *paro*, we cannot deny the almost 60% of youth unemployment, or the numbers in which they are leaving Spain, the opportunities or lack of these for having a decent well remunerated job. But what about looking at these youth and their role (which may not be fully understood) in the midst of the current crisis? The youth who organize, who protest, who resist. What about looking at their role in shaping the terms of making politics and providing alternatives virtual and physical for other ways of relating socially? Mignolo (2009) speaks of decolonization in the production of knowledge, he mentions that it is necessary to "change the terms of the enunciation" and to focus on the knower. Following Mignolo those who converge in the production and understandings of these youth as a lost generation should come into question. However, can we fully understand the input of these youth in social change as it is happening?

I would say that these youth are facing difficulties and making their choices. In these cases consciously breaking with old ways of relating to the environment, between them and those different to them, while using as reference past ways of resisting. Something that was clear to me during fieldwork is the use and creation of autonomous spaces. Even though the majority of people using such spaces are those with ideas in common, there are people who evi-

dently (because of their ways of dressing, profession, ages, life style, etc) are not necessarily anarchists, nor from the left, nor precarious. At the writing workshop at *Patio Maravillas* three people who had never been there arrived. Two of them almost in their forties. They study together in a writing institution but had other professions and jobs. One of them was a paediatrician. The people from the workshop explained to them that they follow no structure in the sense that they don't have a program, they don't focus on genre, style, etc. That this space is for expressing and sharing what people write and to receive constructive criticism. They decided to stay, integrated and share one of their writings. Those form the workshop were also open to share the space with them. In the end we all went to the bar downstairs. In the workshop the first time I went there were only four women and one man. All between their late twenties and early thirties. One unemployed, about to leave to the Netherlands to study, and the rest had jobs. The second time three men and another woman joined. One was a Phd student, another unemployed and the rest had jobs.

Chapter 6 Conclusions

In this section I want to do a recap of the main ideas explored in this paper. Mention what is the contribution of this work. Explain the challenges encountered during research. Indicate aspects that I couldn't cover. To finalize, some last thoughts.

I speak of "future" in relation to a specific way of "becoming" (economically developed). This is related to the dominant discourse of "lost generation". A lost generation can only exist when compared to other generations. In this case a previous one under the understanding that there is a specific path to follow. This paper argues the actions of current organized Spanish youth question such discourse. In doing so they also question the dominant economic model. For this purpose it was relevant to look at the capacity of discourses in constructing reality. Emphasizing that those producing discourses should come into question.

According to Roberts (2012) a cohort may (or not) become a generation; in any case it's too soon to know. Roberts (2012:482) mentions, "Those who experienced prolonged youth unemployment are most likely to be long-term disadvantaged". Then he states, "Adult opportunities and experiences of both groups" (those who didn't suffer prolonged unemployment included) will depend on future economic and labour market conditions"(Roberts 2012:482). The future is yet unknown, what will define these youth may be evident in retrospective. This doesn't necessarily have to be their economic opportunities or lack of them.

Mignolo's (2009) perspective "changing the terms of the enunciation" is useful as an idea that invites us to look at other realities. Politically organized youth, with their actions, are rejecting to be those with no Future. I focused on the experiences of organized youth mainly in Madrid. Their autonomous practices, taking past ways of organizing and making politics as their current reference. Solidarity is another aspect present in their practices. The stories of the people I met during fieldwork bring experiences of organization within the context of economic crisis. These are examples of how the discourse mentioned above is being questioned.

With this research I try to contribute to youth studies, in particular to theories on generation, by looking at a cohort in their present, not from a specific event (economic crisis); but following my methodological approach, from the subjective experiences of those who belong to it. Personally this research has contributed to my understanding of other possible realities and futures. A personal interest guided me to explore experiences of youth affected by the economic crisis. The numbers and discourses portrayed a desperate situation. However, through this research I didn't encounter a complete hopeless scene. But different realities and the eagerness to work together on changing things: Hope.

Bumps on the road...

Conducting fieldwork in Madrid was challenging given my limited budget. I could only spend there a couple of weeks. I contacted YWF in order to get as much as I could from this experience. Decided to use a social network called couch surfing[27] to seek for free accommodation. Luckily I was received by a young man who is part of the writing workshop at *Patio Maravillas* and lived only a few blocks walking distance from there. My limited budget proved to be challenging but not limiting. Another challenge was arriving during the summer, when most members of YWF try to leave Madrid during those hot days.

What else could be explored?

An aspect that I would like to explore further is in which ways the conditions from those who stayed in Spain differ from those who decided to migrate in terms of opportunities (non exploitative jobs, etc). Further research would be necessary to address this. Another aspect I left aside was the interactive map that brought me to YWF. It would be interesting to look at how it connected those outside Spain from those who stayed.

A last thought...

One night we went to a protest, the proofs that the Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy and other members of the PP party are involved in receiving considerable amounts of extra official money from the ex-treasurer of the party came out. Many were furious and went to the streets to protest while asking for the prime minister's demission. Police immediately broke and surrounded the protest, asking for people's IDs (mostly to send fines). Tension escalated, there were more police than people protesting, and they had cornered everyone. I managed to leave using an underground metro station while it started pouring, I was hoping to see my friends but I could only see the hostile police hunting people. I saw a woman crying trying to throw herself to the metro stairs. A policeman ran and hugged her, while in the other side another policeman didn't allow my friend to cross the street and pushed him before throwing him into the van, to Moratalaz detention centre.

Sol Legal (from 15-M) is the free service to get advice on these kinds of matters, organized by a special commission of this movement. Through them we found that our friend had got a lawyer. The next day he would revealed that he was facing charges of aggression, that they were telling him all the way to Moratalaz that he had attacked a police man who was in the hospital, and many other things to scare and confuse him. There were different opinions in the media. One said it was a violent protest that police had to arrest someone. In other platforms people told their stories, what they saw, a guy trying to cross when the light turned green who was immediately and violently stopped, then

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[27] An online network to travel and seek for free accommodation at members' houses across the World. It is a way to meet people. Members offer a couch. Anyone who sends a request (approved by the host) can spend a few days.

thrown into a *lechera* (police van). This inspired a young woman from the writing workshop who was with me at the protest. In her blog she published,

"Imagine that instead of wanting to cross the street while having a green light you had stolen, lied to an entire country. Imagine that is the case and nothing happens. Or stop imagining and go to the next protest. This happens here, in your city"[28].

Madrid. Source: Fieldwork 2013.

Juris (2008) speaks of his personal experience doing militant ethnography. He mentions the intense emotions strengthened during protests. He speaks of "affective solidarity" which is the awareness of experiencing such emotions. He states this "prepares activists bodies for action" (Ibid). These events are intense "in part because activists use their bodies to enact radical confrontation, but also because they introduce elements of danger, uncertainty and play" (Juris 2008). He indicates how these types of actions build solidarity through the magnification of "affect", building a shared experience of that which is unfair (Ibid). I can relate to Juris depiction of his ethnographic experience. This research has been an intense emotional journey. I have shared in protests and debates sentiments of frustration, injustice, indignation, dignity and hope with other youth along the way. He states "It is largely through collective praxis, rather than discursive unity, that political alliances are forged" (Juris 2008).

. "Prolonged youth unemployment or precarious employment may create a lost generation, but no necessarily" (Roberts 2012). The constant referral to a lost generation is marked by the past. The past with full employment benefits their parents enjoyed, and in relation to a specific economic model. The ways of resisting and organizing within this economic crisis is also linked to the past,

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28 Blog: http://yelclavodecidiocaer.blogspot.ch/.

one of autonomous struggle. But the crisis, discourse, resistance, is all happening at the moment.

Perhaps it would be best to try to find better suited categories once we can look back in time and realize what marks these youth leave in their political and social realities. I am trying to analyze here people who are themselves trying to figure out in the current crisis how and what to do? They are taking action and creating alternatives but it is a work in process for sure!

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