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The Urban Lab of Europe !

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Project led by the City of Madrid



**JOBS & SKILLS
IN THE LOCAL ECONOMY**

The MARES project

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

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

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

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

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Partnership:

- Ayuntamiento de Madrid
- Agencia para el Empleo de Madrid (AE) - Public Agency
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- Grupo Cooperativo Tangente (TNG) - Private Company
- SIC ARQUITECTURA Y URBANISMO SLP (SIC) - Private Company
- Vivero de Iniciativas Ciudadanas (VIC) - NGO
- Todo por la Praxis (TxP) - NGO
- Fundación Acción contra el Hambre (ACH) - NGO
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1. Executive Summary

Mares de Madrid, after completing all local engagement and analysis activities, is now entering in a new phase that will be dominated by the full development of the social and solidarity economic projects that have been initiated in the last year of work.

In this second issue of the journal we intend to give the sense of this transition by putting light on the status of the setting-up of the four Mar physical spaces, on the design of local strategies for the development of the social and solidarity economy at the neighbourhood level, on the launch of a first round of consciousness-building activities aimed at informing the urban public about alternatives to mainstream economic organizations and, finally, on the activity and programming of one of the four Mar.

In the last section, the journal addresses four looming challenges and opportunities that revolve around the need of:

- 1) Envisioning and organizing the long-term sustainability of the policy;
- 2) Building a social market and doing it as rapidly as possible;
- 3) Aligning Mares de Madrid's economic projects with other forms of city government social economy's support and development; and
- 4) Articulating the local and the sectorial dimensions of the initiative and doing it in an effective way.

2. Mares de Madrid's progress

Building a social market for a new urban economy



The inauguration of the Energy Mar (Mar de Energía) in the district of Centro (City Centre) in Madrid on April 18th

2.1. Mares Spaces are catching up

At the core of Mares de Madrid ultimately lie the creation of a new sort of urban service spaces, a multi-functional hub aimed at the animation, support and also incubation of new social and solidarity economy projects (see the first issue of these journals). The creation of such spaces is implemented through the restoration and reuse of city assets located in four different neighbourhoods and that have been decommissioned of their previous use.

As expected, and as largely experienced in many other projects across the EU, the procedures related to design, procurement and construction have proved to be at times lengthy and laborious **pushing the opening of the four Mares spaces later than what had been initially**

expected. Issues related to the need of further technological betterments or heavier structural upgrades have contributed to these delays that have been addressed through the setting-up of provisional spaces that – in the lack of proper productive spaces for the Mares that need them the most (the one on food in Villaverde, on recycling in Vicalcaro and in minor terms the one of mobility in Puente de Vallecas) – have been functioning both as hubs and co-working environments where to start developing economic projects and to hold a wide range of events.

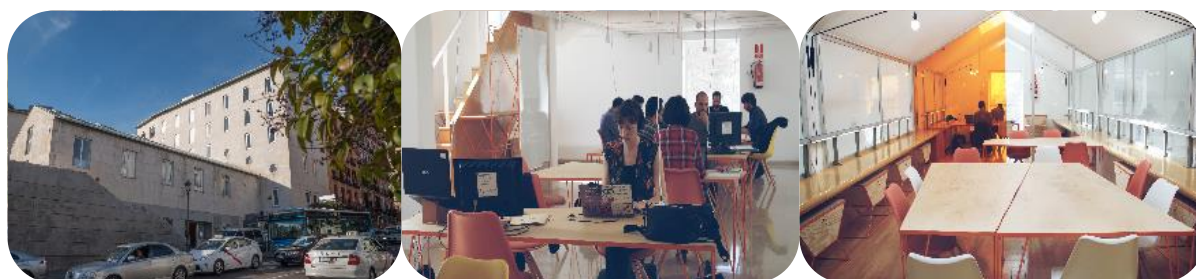
In fact, despite the availability of just temporary spaces, since the beginning of the project's 53 events of different kinds – seminars,

presentations, self-training sessions promoted by Comunidades de Aprendizaje (Learning Communities) – have taken place in Mares while roughly 40 economic projects – out of a total 154 that have been put under different forms of supervision insured by the mentoring and support services (Servicios específicos) – being incubated in the four Mar.

Now that many comparatively mature projects start to need a more organized and equipped physical infrastructure – as evident particularly in the case of projects dealing with food, for which the large kitchen currently being set at the Food Mar (Mar de Alimentación) in Villaverde is indispensable – the current status of city procedures suggest that all spaces should

be ready in the definitive design made by one of the coalition actors – VIC-Vivero de Iniciativas Ciudadanas – by the beginning of fall of this year. In the meanwhile, the inauguration of the Mar of Energy and Care (Mares de Energía y de Cuidado) in the district of Centro (Centre) has taken place on 18 April, based again on the design of Vivero de Iniciativas Ciudadanas.

The Mar is a 460m² building developed on three floors and reclaimed from a 1984 high-quality but decommissioned public building. The space has been organized around three main and interdependent functions: a lab-area, co-working spaces and finally an area for meetings and events.



The external view from Calle Toledo and an internal view of the new Mar of Energy and Care (Mar de Energía y Cuidado)

2.2. Activating neighbourhoods to build a locally rooted social economy

To move back and forth between territorial and sectorial understandings and practices of the program's goals and actions seems to be an inevitable condition for Mares de Madrid. The difficult job to constantly bridge and, in a sense, harmonize these two dimensions is becoming particularly central at this stage mostly through the actions of the line of work of so-called "Economic organizing" ("Agitación económica").

The overall aim of this line is to **orchestrate the active involvement of a very wide series of actors** across territories and sectors in the support and development of the social and solidarity economy in Madrid. The essential entry point – both in terms of gathering of

information and organizing actions – of this activity are the four neighbourhoods that, as we have seen in the previous issue of this journal, have already been involved in the skills laboratories (laboratorios de competencias) – aimed at mapping available skills in the local populations – and in the analysis of the so-called "Value chains" (cadenas de valor) aimed instead at mapping all economic activities and their multiple links and interdependences always in the four neighbourhoods (see previous issue of this journal).

If all these activities have already generated much information regarding the four neighbourhoods, what was still missing was an

additional layer of work focusing on the analysis and engagement of local actors that can prove to be key in the development of the social and solidarity economy and of its social market.

The first step of the “economic organizing” team has therefore been the completion of a map of such key actors – some of them were already known because they participated to the previous laboratories – and the establishment of a working relationship aimed at identifying their profile, activities, potentials and needs in the perspective of the work of the four Mares. Actors discovered and mapped gave a rounded representation of the very variegated geographies of local engagement made of neighbourhood groups, trading associations, NGOs, educational institutions and so on. Referring to the institutional side, particular attention has been reserved to the establishment of contacts, the alignment and participation of influential actors such as the Juntas de Distrito – the municipal governments that are active in the four district – and the Mesas de Empleo – the local branches of the employment services managed by the Comunidad de Madrid, i.e. the regional authority. In the case of the Juntas, the focus has been also through the establishment of so-called “mesas public-social” – collaborative schemes between the juntas and actors of the social and solidarity economy – the identification of potential public procurement innovation opportunities that, at district level, coincide with minor bids and contracts managed by the districts.

On the other side, referring to the “civil society” the work of the “economic organizing” team has been the opportunity to reconnect the project to the articulated network of so-called “asociaciones vecinales” – grass-roots organizations promoting advocacy and organizing activities of different sorts at the

neighbourhood level – and establish new relationships with other actors such as trading associations, welfare and cultural NGOs, innovation hubs and so on.

The mapping and involvement of all these actors is considered to be **key in the development of the “social market” at the local level**. Such actors can represent the demand of potential economic projects or they can participate directly to their activation in multiple ways, they can represent a gateway to a certain social group – i.e. migrants, older unemployed – that could be a discreet target for certain activities – “comunidades de aprendizaje” and other mentoring initiatives promoted by the “servicios específicos” - or certain economic projects or they can be important for consciousness-building activities regarding the social economy as in the case of schools and other educational institutions. Based on what emerged from this mapping and engagement work, four different neighbourhood strategies have been designed by the team.

An example of strategy: Villaverde

In the case of Villaverde – the neighbourhood where the Food Mar (Mar de Alimentación) is active – the design of the neighbourhood strategy has implied the development of a new series of research operations that have led to more accurate information regarding aspects such as the neighbourhood’s socio-demographic characteristics, the local profiling of social groups that are currently over-exposed to unemployment, the offer of formal and traditional employment supports services and programs that is locally available, the characters of the local commercial network and of its associations, the conditions and regeneration initiatives that involve the large and mostly decommissioned “Polígono Industrial” – i.e. industrial zone – located in the neighbourhood. In this context, roughly forty local actors have

been identified – ranging from already mentioned institutional actors to a wealth of welfare services and associations, a radio, several neighbourhood groups, an organization focusing on the regeneration of the decommissioned “Polígono” – and contacted with the identification of a smaller group of actors – the so called “agentes clave” (key agents) – that are considered to hold a particularly relevant leverage in contributing to the development of the social economy.

If these are the main components of the diagnostic, the strategy identifies several areas of intervention from the development of new “learning communities” (comunidades de aprendizaje) – some local actors have shown interest in that direction, also due to the very traditional organization of training employment services available in the neighbourhoods that do not seem to address specific needs properly - to the planning of consciousness-building activities in schools and other educational institutions finally to the development of a number of collaborations with “key actors” in the participation of the social economy in the Polígono’s revitalization, the development of new services for the local commercial network.

Of particular importance is the identification of a list of initiatives that can be developed in the neighbourhood in collaboration with the four mares from doing outreach in support of a certain economic project that is being developed by one of the Mares – such as in the case of several cooperative projects that are currently being supported by the Care Mar

(Cuidado) – or by showing to certain actors how the inclusion of a social economy focus can change their work – as in the case professional training institutions working on issues of food.

A new stage in the Project’s organization

All this work is closely associated to the incremental reshaping of Mares de Madrid’s organization towards a more decentralized but also more integrated model. Each Mares, besides its own coordinator has now an organizing group that is participated by the components of the different already mentioned project’s teams - the “agitación económica”, the “comunidades de aprendizaje”, “consciousness-building” plus the “mar de cuidado” that is considered to be more transversal than the other Mar – and that meet once a month in the four Mares’ spaces. These meetings are aimed at strengthening communication and coordination of activities once again trying to align the work on sectors with the work on territories. At the same time, the presence of the different teams’ members can also insure a better support to certain areas where differences and gaps in capacity among the different Mares can be observed.

In parallel, in recent months five sessions of discussion and planning participated by all teams at the sectorial level – mobility, recycling, food, energy, care – have aimed at achieving similar results by insuring that the economic projects and the wider activities promoted by the Mares are both realistic and coherent and are adequately supported.

2.3. Creating a more supportive environment for alternatives to the economic mainstream

Now that social and solidarity economy projects are starting to form, it becomes essential to start developing one of the main sub-goals of Mares de Madrid meaning the shaping of a

more receptive local environment through a set of activities aimed at involving elective targets. Given the low incidence of the social and solidarity economy in Madrid the goal of such

activities is definitively “to break the prejudices and misinformation regarding different economic forms” and to involve the public in a reasoning regarding the plurality of the forms of economic organizations that can exist beyond the standard capitalistic private or state controlled companies.

As of now the main target has been young people through the production of materials that are aimed at presenting a basic, informed explanation of different concepts and realities of the social and solidarity economy. In particular, the goal is to familiarize students to the actual possibility of contributing to the social and solidarity economy both as consumers – with information on socially responsible forms of consumption – and as producers – with information regarding different legal forms and real examples. This has been pursued through the design of a guide – **Teaching guide on the social and solidarity economy** (Guía didáctica sobre economía social y solidaria <https://maresmadrid.es/wp-content/materiales-mares-mad/materiales-comunicacion/publicaciones/Guia-diactica-economia-social-y-solidaria-MARES.pdf>) – that

has been presented to potential users in the four neighbourhoods currently involved. The final users of the guide are intended to be secondary education and training teachers who can also access these materials in an on line form.



*The cover of the Guide on the social and solidarity economy
(Guía Didáctica de Economía Social y Solidaria)*

2.4. Creating a social market for new collective economic projects: the case of the Mar of Recycling

By taking a closer look at the actual workings of one of the four Mares, it is possible to fully grasp both the progress made by the initiative as well the challenges that are looming ahead.

Currently even if the space of the proper Recycling Mar has not opened yet, the provisional space that has been in place since October 2017 – and that will be soon joined by another, more production-oriented provisional space – has been key in the formation of a series of economic projects. On one side the Mares has played the role of a hub signalling the growing potential of Madrid’s circular economy market

for social and solidarity economy actors while on the other it has played the role of a space that – through the intervention of other services activated by Mares as the Support and Mentoring services (servicios específicos) – has been incubating new, locally based, economic projects.

Significant, already established social enterprises such as Deixalles (Balears), Traperos (Basque Country), Solidanca (Catalonia) and some others in different regions – all working on different processes and components of the circular economy – have

been involved in the Recycling Mar's (Mar de Reciclaje) activities and are showing growing interest in the Madrid's context.

At the same time, four so-called “empresas de inserción” – i.e. companies that imply the employment of individuals previously unemployed – have been created and are currently, to different degrees, being supported by both the Recycling Mar's leadership and by the support and mentoring services. Good examples of them are RecuMadrid – that focuses on the reuse and recycling of hardware and textile – and LaBrecha – that is now an NGOs planning to transition to an “empresa de inserción” – that focuses on the collection and reselling of used textiles and shoes. In the meanwhile, associations such as El Olivar, Asociación La Kalle, Otro Tiempo and Otro Planeta are all currently engaged in designing, always in the context of the Recycling Mar, four new “empresas de Inserción” that will all be focusing on recycling products and services.

Such economic projects are now already installed in the Mar's provisional co-working space and will be steadily operating in the final space when it will be inaugurated at the end of this summer. In the meanwhile, the Mar's team is also working on the identification of larger productive spaces – eventually located in the local Polígono Industrial, i.e. industrial zone – where to locate economic projects whose space needs go beyond the co-working spaces available in the Mares.

At the same time, Mares de Madrid started to play also a proactive role in structuring a larger community of practice around issues related to the economy of recycling. The organization of events such as Workshops on sustainable fashion and “Ecodesign”, the setting-up of several “learning communities” (“comunidades de aprendizaje”) – focusing as of now on wood-products, commercialization strategies of “eco-

design” products, on “materials' supermarkets” – the incoming promotion of local markets and also of showrooms spaces and events for products related to the activities have all been part of the Mar's agenda that, in so doing, has intended also to develop its role as a city-scale hub for the development of the social economy in the field of recycling.

These few lines should have made clear how **the four Mares are playing a strategic role in the creation of a social market of services and products** in the local context of Madrid. On one side, just taking the example of this Mar, they act as negotiators of the involvement in the local dimension of higher scale actors – such as the SSE economy actors that are already rooted in other Spanish regions as Basque Country, Catalonia and the Balears – on the others they have been supporting – in the context of all the participative activities that were presented in the first issue of the journal – new economic projects that are locally rooted. This engagement would have been useless if at the same time, although slowly and incrementally, progresses in the innovation of public procurement processes and rules were not made by the city administration.

To build a market means to allow the creation of an offer of services but of course also a demand and, in this perspective, the opening of new public tenders will be key for both actors and their long-term sustainability in Madrid's context. Actually, this is an aspect that can be of greater inspiration in terms of the larger local economic development framework on which Mares de Madrid is based, these two types of economic projects – the higher-scale and incumbent ones and the locally rooted – upcoming ones – can converge in creating productive collaborations that combine the higher level industrial expertise of the first one with the rich local information and knowledge of

the second-one. While traditional, mainstream local economic development approaches have focused on the attraction of capital intensive and large enterprises here the focus is on processes that see such enterprises to be involved in more interactive and ultimately democratic processes of support, mentoring capacity building of more locally rooted economic projects.

For such collaborations, it will be key the further development of innovations in public procurement processes that involve both the regional and city authorities. Just focusing on recycling, the city administration has been changing rules and criteria for some upcoming competitive bids regarding the collection of used textiles and oils while, in wider terms, is aiming at deeply innovating the management of so-called “puntos limpios”, i.e. the neighbourhood-level areas where recyclable

materials are collected. These streams of innovation – that are aimed at improving the overall sustainability of the waste-management cycle while including social and solidarity economy actors – are of great importance in a local context, that of in Madrid, is characterized by a very minimal ability to locally and sustainably process waste materials collected in the city. If separation of materials has been in fact improving, most of them are still shipped elsewhere to be processed while there is still a high incidence of unselected materials that end-up in landfills.

In this perspective, the development of a locally-based socially responsible industrial ability to process such materials could become one important factor in the overall transition of the waste management system towards a sounder and more sustainable model.

3. Looming challenges and promising opportunities

As the project proceeds, longer-term challenges start to loom on the horizon more clearly

3.1. Envisioning and organizing the Long-Term

The first significant challenge regards the **long-term sustainability and development of the Mares once UIA funding will be over** and the large coalition of actors that is now involved in their setting-up will no more be engaged full-time in their management.

While the formal ownership and management status of the four spaces is not likely to change - the four Mares are hosted in four buildings that are owned and managed by the city government and that most likely will keep being so – the evolution of their profile from one of special funding-supported and experimental entities into a steady and traditionally funded entity will

surely prove to be more complex and not free from relevant obstacles. The resolution of this issue will clearly also depend on the long-term city’s administration commitment to the implementation of the wider strategy for the development of the social and solidarity economy approved last year (see the first issue of the journal).

If such commitment will be fulfilled, the inclusion of the four Mares in the system of the Offices for the Promotion of the Social Economy (Oficinas de Fomento de la Economía Social) seems to be a likely scenario even if the question of how such experimental spaces will

actually be managed will not be solved by their mere, formal inclusion in such a system. While today the four Mares are managed by highly motivated and qualified leaders who are supported by the large and equally specialized

coalition of actors, it is unclear if and how in the post UIA-funding phase this kind of untraditional, flexible and pro-active management model and style will be preserved and further developed.

3.2. Building a social market and doing it fast

The second significant challenge involves instead the **alignment between the progress** that Mares de Madrid is doing **in the generation of a sustained stream of economic projects and the actual opening of concrete market potential** at the local level. As we have already stressed, the goal of building a market – and specifically a social market of products and services in the areas of the circular and care economies - is very much the core of the project itself.

While Mares de Madrid' actors are making undeniable progress in involving a larger set of actors in the conversation – the work conducted in the areas of economic organizing (“agitación económica”) by the “Intermares” team is impressive in terms of the mapping of actors, activities and demand potentials in the involved communities – it is still unclear how deep and rapid could and will be the needed fundamental reorientation of major institutional actors towards a more socially responsible understanding and practice of their procurement needs. Larger structural, politically controversial and cumbersome transitions would be needed in some strategic areas – as in the case of the waste-management system or in that of large food procurement processes – in order to fully support the development of new and sustainable social and solidarity economy actors.

As extensively known and documented, public procurement are quite complex, multi-stakeholder if not special interests' crowded processes when looked at the scale of a large metropolitan city such as Madrid. An

overarching strategy for innovation implies at that level a very high political commitment coupled with a vast and coordinated action involving all departments that actually have procurement powers and responsibilities. Of course, it is not the case that the social economy projects will have necessarily and exclusively to rely on the organized and massive demand of products and services proper to the public sector.

In fact, many of the economic projects that are in the process of being mentored and supporter could either intercept the evolving demand of other important organized actors – such other large and self-regulating entities for example large “anchor institutions” as schools, universities, large companies, medical institutions and so on – and of more spread and equally (and hopefully) evolving preferences of the larger public.

In fact, as clearly represented by some projects in the areas as diverse as care and mobility – from cooperatives of cleaning workers to delivery cooperatives, from energy cooperatives to second hand clothing markets – the key success of such projects will be insured only if a growing slice of the aggregated demand will apply not just mainstream pricing calculations to their buying choices but also a new layer of social and environmental responsibility. Therefore, a change in cultural orientations and preferences, a change in key regulations in the areas of government and of larger organizational actors seem to be equally relevant factors in the building of such a social

market in the medium to long-term in Madrid. The work in both facilitating and monitoring openings in public procurement processes and in establishing productive relationships with

private actors are promising but, surely, efforts in these two areas should be further intensified in the incoming months.

3.3. Aligning Mares' economic projects with other forms of city government social economy's support and development

The third challenge, linked to the previous-one, regards another aspect of the **alignment between Mares' operations and the larger city strategy** for the development of the social and solidarity economy.

As mentioned in the previous issue of this journal, the city has in fact put in place both a series of financing and credit tools and of mentoring services that are aimed at supporting, in line with what Mares de Madrid does, the social and solidarity economy's entrepreneurial projects. These opportunities administered by the already mentioned Oficinas de Fomento de la Economía Social – coupled

with the ones offered by Mares' support and mentoring services ("Servicios Específicos") can act as powerful pathways to insure the needed initial support of many of the projects that are now incubated in the four Mares.

A more careful and pro-active pipe-lining of all the projects in the context of these other forms of support is therefore needed also to insure, especially in the perspective of the post-UIA transition, not only more effective economic projects but also a progressive alignment and integration of Mares with the city's established social economy policies.

3.4. Articulating the local and the sectorial and doing it in an effective way

The fourth challenge, that was in many ways expected and that is currently being addressed, is the **articulation between the local and the sectorial orientations of the initiative**. Mares de Madrid is a complex, essentially bi-dimensional operation that intends both to produce territorial effects through the development of certain economic sectors and to develop these economic sectors in a way that is locally rooted. To balance and productively link these two dimensions is all but easy and surely imply possible pitfalls in terms of local and grassroots support that have to be anticipated and managed by the teams.

On one side, it is needed to balance the continuous inputs that arise from a fairly

grassroots and participative process with the need to economize efforts making them as strategic as possible.

Especially in the case of the neighbourhood strategies, the probably unprecedented amount of information – and of relationships established with existing actors – is surely a source of strength for the overall programme in particular for its contribution to better informed and grounded choices but, at the same time, all this information and expectations risk to exercise a very high level of pressure on the teams that will be more and more called upon the responsibility to make difficult choices in terms of which paths to follow and which not.

A careful balance between these opposing forces is therefore of the greatest importance and priority for an initiative that needs to ponder its grassroots referents and legitimacy with the need to be effective and be effective rapidly.

From the ways Mares de Madrid will address these four challenges depend much of its future

success. We will see in the next issue of this journal how these and new challenges will have been dealt once that, after the incoming summer, all four Mares will be fully operational and some of the economic initiatives will have come to a higher degree of maturity.



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UIA projects will produce a wealth of knowledge stemming from the implementation of the innovative solutions for sustainable urban development that are of interest for city practitioners and stakeholders across the EU. This journal is a paper written by a UIA Expert that captures and disseminates the lessons learnt from the project implementation and the good practices identified. The journals will be structured around the main challenges of implementation identified and faced at local level by UIA projects. They will be published on a regular basis on the UIA website.