its most stable nodes, those who, in some way, are suggested as ‘institutions,’
or who simply, as Pérez Colina said, ‘have a vocation to remain.’

In this regard, it is very important to observe other self-management
and cultural democratization experiments that come from a very different
environment that is also able to offer durability to their projects. I am talking
about public institutions, and these, in turn, present their own possibilities
and limits. So I will now talk about an odd, atypical institution that in many
ways is the standard-bearer for these self-managing, democratizing drifts
of public space in the sphere usually recognized as ‘cultural’ in Madrid:
Medialab Prado.

6.2. Under the Ambiguous Umbrella of the Public Sector

6.2.1. Medialab-Prado: Institutional protocols for the participation of
anyone

Medialab Prado is a ‘program of the Arts, Sports and Tourism Area of the
Madrid City Council,’ self-defined more specifically as ‘a citizen laboratory
for production, investigation, and diffusion of cultural projects that explore
forms of experimentation and collaborative learning that have arisen from
digital networks’ (Medialab-Prado). Medialab introduces itself, therefore,
as a type of experimental public cultural institution that departs from
classical models like the library, the museum, or the auditorium. Nor does
it prioritize the publication or distribution of written culture, unlike the
tradition of associative bookstores or ‘social center libraries’ from which
Traficantes de Sueños and the other nodes of the Fundación de los Comunes
arise. Instead, it takes as a reference those ‘forms of experimentation and
collaborative learning that have arisen in the digital networks’ to institute
something like an attempt to ‘translate’ certain aspects of digital culture to
the physical realm.

In this sense, Medialab’s support for procedural aspects, for the opening
of infrastructures and processes of cultural production, for the search for
formats alien to the modern culture based on the division between authors
and public, is still more explicit—which doesn’t mean that it is necessarily
verified with greater intensity—than that of the model of activist research
collectives, self-training, and publication proposed by the Fundación de

among places, change shared understandings in the process, and return to vast
cultural resources available in each particular place through their connections
with other places,’ through a spontaneous organization that implies ‘the training
and activation of individuals who initiate advances or demands on a local scale, but
who in some way articulate them with large-scale identities and collective struggles’
(Laddaga (2006); Tilly (2002, 49)).
los Comunes. These collectives come from the world of social movements and, of course, they have encountered the explosion of technopolitics and networks along the way. But (at least with regards to its self-representation) Medialab perhaps drinks more directly than do other collectives from these latter founts, which carry inscribed within their own DNA the centrality of procedurality and open collaboration.

The model of meaning production in social movements, on the other hand, has traditionally depended more on ideas like ‘alternative information,’ which continue to stipulate the need for a ‘public.’ It has also revolved around militant and activist figures as centers from which that meaning could emanate, although all this may have changed considerably with the intensification of the logics of ‘anyone’ around the 15M movement.

Perhaps Medialab’s most paradigmatic activity is what has been called the ‘collaborative project development workshop’ or, simply, the ‘prototype workshop.’ This activity occupies the central position that in other cultural spaces would be occupied by book publishing, research seminars, informational conferences, art exhibitions, or musical and stage performances. It is a model inspired by the collaborative practices of open-source software and experimental technology, and has been formalized as a protocol with very precise organizational guidelines. First, Medialab sends out a call for projects, always with a very broad conceptual frame. For example, the premise of the most recent one is ‘Madrid, Urban Laboratory: Practical Infrastructures and Tools for Theorizing Shared Life.’ Each call is backed by three advisors chosen by Medialab, who in turn choose about ten projects to participate in the workshop.

Once these projects are chosen, 50 collaborators are convened to participate in the development of the ‘tools, platforms, and actions’ the projects propose as concrete objectives. Thus, in the example mentioned, these 50 collaborators, who are admitted on a first-come-first-served basis, will work to ‘prototype’ anything from ‘a low-cost, noninvasive electroencephalograph (EEG) to use as a BCI (brain-computer interface)’ to ‘a proposal to help the public administration understand and standardize civic initiatives that use public space as a commons’ (for example, urban orchards in vacant lots), including ‘a mobile application that helps locate accessible and adapted places’ for people with diverse functional needs, or a historical tour, all the way up to the present, of the Barrio de las Letras ‘straight from the hands of its inhabitants and users through testimonies and photographs.’

The workshops take place in intensive sessions, in this case in two phases of six and three days respectively, and are sometimes accompanied by other reflection or exhibition modules. For instance, in this case an international conference will be held between the two phases. There is also a whole series
of telematics and material infrastructures available to the projects, which can make use of Medialab's digital tools and physical space during the months that separate the two phases of intensive work.

In this way, a framework is established to provide continuity for the processes. At the same time, it also inherits the typically pragmatic vocation of open-source software programmers or those who experiment with technology, who are accustomed to working on concrete objectives for which the ideas must be proven. It should be kept in mind, on the other hand, that although collaborative workshops are perhaps the main paradigm for Medialab's activity, they are not by any means the only one. Perhaps not so unlike what happens in the CSAs—and anthropologists Corsín and Estalella have indicated the permeability and proximity of Medialab to the world of community self-management—an everyday routine is established that is rich in encounters and heterogeneous situations, going beyond the logic of the regularly scheduled events or intensive work sessions. In this regard, Medialab has been able to construct a network of participants or daily users of its infrastructures that enjoys a quite unusual autonomy in public cultural institutions, which typically rely very heavily on timely proposals from their management teams.

Furthermore, all this is not at all accidental or 'improvised': in Medialab there is a constant process of reflection about this very atypical institution that has been created and is constantly seeking to improve itself. The working group 'Thinking and Doing Medialab' indicated, in this respect, that perhaps one of their greatest challenges was precisely the creation of greater continuity for the cultural processes that Medialab facilitates or drives, as well as broadening the communities participating in these processes. Towards this end, permanent 'Workstations' were recently established, allowing Medialab's most eminently productive and procedural functions to be operational at any moment, without depending so much on the routine scheduling of intensive prototype workshops.

So Medialab's very condition as an 'experimental' institution reinforces, in a certain sense, that aspect of open cultural infrastructure creation—which is also inseparable from community culture projects like Traficantes de Sueños—with the creation of protocols, such as these 'Workstations,' designed solely to intensify it. But Medialab has also produced other protocols more directly dedicated to dealing with the no less central question of the possibility of anyone's participation or, more precisely, of the possible empowerment of anyone's abilities. (In this regard, they may have an advantage over the community culture institutions, which may not always be so well supplied with sophisticated tools.) Medialab's basic official objectives already include 'offering different forms of participation that allow the collaboration of
people with different backgrounds (artistic, scientific, technical), levels of specialization (expert and beginners), and degrees of involvement.’ But I think the most significant thing about it is the importance that Medialab gives to the figure of its ‘Mediators,’ now associated with the ‘Workstations.’ Their function is specifically ‘to respond to the needs of different types of publics and users: from general information and consultation to training, material resources, and spaces for listening and meetings,’ as well as ‘to explain the nature of the space and to put people in contact with people, people with projects, projects with projects.’

In dedicating this particular effort to, say, ‘getting someone through the door’—i.e., in giving priority to welcoming and listening to the various needs and desires of potential participants—Medialab is explicitly offering support not only for collaboration, but also for inclusivity and plurality. In recognizing the importance of ‘beginners’ or ‘amateurs,’ Medialab is trying, it seems to me, to tear down those barriers between those supposedly ‘in the know’ and those who are ‘in the dark’—barriers bequeathed to us by the tradition of artistic, technical, and scientific disciplines with which, at the same time, Medialab is officially affiliated.

This all has to do with something that in principle does not exist so concretely in the tradition of CSAs or other community cultural institutions: the desire for universality associated with the public arena, the vocation of being just that: ‘a public service.’ However, in Medialab’s case it also has to do with a particular interpretation of the public arena, which Marcos García, the institution’s director, clarifies very well:

> The difference between a public project that is for everyone (the general public, a homogeneous entity) and a public project that is for anyone is one of individuality, of personalization. It means paying attention to the particular needs of each person who comes; that is, helping each one of them develop their unique abilities.7

### 6.2.2. Risks of neoliberal capture of public cultural value

Having said this, I also want to highlight a certain contradiction. On the one hand, Medialab’s very experimentality as an institution and its calling to public service allow it to develop protocols both of intensification of procedurality, such as inclusivity and plurality. On the other, and paradoxically, its very condition as a public institution, dependent in this case on a local administration heavily involved in the application of neoliberal policies, always constitutes a threat to these same tendencies.

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7 Personal communication from Marcos García.
At the risk of oversimplifying, I think this is so mainly for two reasons. In the first place, the tradition of public cultural institutions continues to be strongly associated with the power/knowledge monopoly. Those working within Medialab itself often make the self-critical observation—and they work intensely to come up with a solution to it—that many people perceive the institution as a space of ‘specialists,’ people with highly technical and not very accessible knowledge bases. I can’t take the time to dwell on this now, but I will say that it does not seem to be an unsolvable problem by any means. In fact, everything seems to point towards Medialab already being in a position to change that perception and the realities of exclusion to which it can lead. For example, there are programs designed specifically for barrio residents, or for children; they could also prioritize activities for traditional, amateur, and everyday abilities and ways of knowing that do not require any technical specialization.

What does seem to me to be a manifestation of an ingrained structural problem is that, despite all of the above, Medialab’s very condition as a public institution dependent on an administration that strongly pushes neoliberal logics also involves the inevitable activation of forces for capturing and accumulating cultural value that necessarily counteract that same continuity. The most extreme expression of these forces—and certainly we live in a time that favors the expression of neoliberal extremism in its worst forms—took place in the form of a recent threat against Medialab’s very existence. A rumor made the rounds that the city council was on the verge of handing over the building that Medialab now occupies, the recently restored former Belgian Sawmill, to Telefónica’s ‘Open Future’ project. If this threat had become a reality, a single blow from above would have put paid to practically everything Medialab stands for, in favor of a private multinational corporation. And such a decision would have had nothing to do—in fact, quite the opposite—with the people, from both institutional positions and from outside, who have managed, given life to, used, and directly and daily encouraged that institution of participative culture for about 14 years.

But this is, as I say, perhaps only an extreme example of a tension that inevitably runs through all public institutions dependent on a state that has embraced neoliberalism as a primary means of support for social life, and therefore for basic aspects of human existence like cultural production, education, healthcare, and housework. In the case of institutions like Medialab, which have a strongly democratic operation in many senses, this tension is perhaps doubly overwhelming. It means that the protocols created to help people generate their own cultural value (e.g., workstations, prototype workshops, mediators, etc.) clash head-on with an institutional
framework that constantly exerts pressure to redirect that value back towards forms of neoliberal privatization.

An important way in which this neoliberal pressure is articulated every day is through the recurrent demand for the isolation of units of meaning—such as an event, a tendency, a name, or a concept—or, more classically, the insistence on the identification of ‘authors’ and ‘works,’ to turn them into merchandise susceptible to producing financiarized value—i.e., ‘brands.’ This always occurs at the cost of interrupting or complicating the continuity of processes of self-managed production of cultural goods that can be used directly every day by those who participate in this production.

This demand can sometimes be made directly by the public administration, for example when they continue to use quantitative criteria to value the operation of cultural institutions, at the same time as they cut their budgets. In this sense, not only Medialab but all public institutions have suffered from the infamous ‘austerity measures,’ also called ‘cuts,’ that have characterized the neoliberal management of the crisis. And yet still their activity is constantly supervised, often from productivist criteria that, instead of valuing the capacity to empower and promote cultural self-management among those who participate, simply tend to demand more events, more visibility, more attendance by the ‘public,’ etc.

On the other hand, and no less importantly, neoliberal pressure is also exerted indirectly through a widespread climate of precarization. This causes the work, energy, and time the communities that use Medialab can contribute (for example those ‘collaborators’ who participate in the ‘prototype workshops’) to be severely limited by their dependence on more and more demanding ways to earn an income, which are also necessary for their survival.

In this sense, it’s true that, as Domenico Di Siena indicated, even the notion of ‘prototype,’ which has proven to be so fertile in the context of Medialab, can run the risk of minimizing the importance of, or even fueling a certain tendency towards, self-exploitation. This is why it assumes the provisional state of what continue to be thought of as ‘projects,’ more than as tangible realities in the present. In the end, an excessive focus on that provisional state associated with the prototype process could lead to the type of devaluation that takes place in educational institutions in the prevailing neoliberalist conditions: they tend to become a kind of incubator of a value that will only be able to be put into effect outside their walls. That is, that value only has value in ‘the market,’ when the newly prepared students leave to look for work or, in the case of the prototypes, when they are finally ready ‘to be made real’ by companies that commercialize them.
6.2.3. Participation without the power of decision in the economic model (the case of PECAM)

I want to put special emphasis on these tensions because I believe that they are strongly representative of the pressures that not only the public cultural institutions but also, to a certain extent, the community and self-managed ones are feeling during the neoliberal crisis. So what becomes obvious in the problems that institutions like Medialab face is that, in fact, the assumption by the public administration of the privatizing, financiarizing, productivist, and jeopardizing criteria of neoliberalism is being turned into support for public institutions that are increasingly similar, in many senses, to community self-managed ones.

As some cultural policy critics, such as the previously quoted Rowan (2013), Rubén Martínez (2014b), and Adolfo Estalella (2012), are shrewdly noting, this is nothing new. Perhaps the best-known example is what was called the ‘Big Society’ model by British Prime Minister David Cameron, says Rowan, ‘to pressure the social base to compensate and assume the tasks not performed by the state due to budget and competency cuts.’ Opening the doors of public institutions decimated by cuts to ‘civic participation’ therefore causes a kind of potentiation of self-management that in many cases runs the risk of instigating self-exploitation. At the same time, it prevents the citizenry from making decisions about questions pertaining to the sustainability of those public institutions that now claim to be ‘participative.’

In the language of Spanish public administration, it is, in effect, more and more common to appeal to citizen participation, at the same time as line-item cuts in the financing of basic public services, including cultural ones, are already among the most significant in Europe. In the sphere of cultural institutions, to give a concrete example, this situation was clearly shown recently at the beginning of the city council’s process to develop a new Strategic Plan for Culture in Madrid (PECAM in Spanish). In 2012, the council offered a comprehensive document titled *Hacia el PECAM*, which offered a series of reflections and proposals on medium-term cultural policies that highlighted, as the aforementioned critics observed, concepts that articulate the model of participative, democratic institutions, whether self-managed, like the CSA La Tabacalera, to which an entire section was dedicated, or public, like Medialab-Prado itself.

In fact, in the act of introducing the deliberation process that would lead to PECAM, and which the city council proposed as a ‘participative process,’ the Delegate of the Area of Arts, its highest authority, affirmed that ‘the enormous effort of investment in cultural infrastructures and activities made by the previous government’ would ‘be unsustainable’ (he didn’t say
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why). At the same time, however, he indicated that culture was entering a new paradigm, exemplified by three concepts typical of the Medialab-Prado discourse, without ever mentioning this institution: ‘digitalization, the commons, and mediation.’

From these two discursive elements, the Delegate seemed to reach the following conclusion: ‘culture is made and it is lived, it is not legislated. And, of course, it is not increased or cut by decree.’ Which, of course—and as Rowan incisively indicated—is quite surprising as an affirmation pronounced at the beginning of a process designed for precisely that: to legislate culture. That is, to establish a series of public cultural policies, and at a time when the administration was indeed constantly issuing decrees that cut funding for institutional cultural promotion and production activities.

Stemming from these misunderstandings or conceptual contradictions present from the very start, the supposedly participative process that was expected to lead to PECAM basically consisted of the authorization of an email address on the council’s webpage to which messages could be sent. Of course, no direct answers would be issued, and the messages could not be seen by other users. The process also included a series of ‘regional’ meetings and another of public ‘round tables’ with ‘expert’ participants. From what I have been able to glean from the documentation on this process, it doesn’t seem like these scheduled events have been sufficient to dissipate those conceptual contradictions that the process has dragged with it from the start.

There have been interesting moments, however, when these contradictions have been starkly revealed. One occurred during the round table titled ‘Dialogue between Public Administration, Foundations, Associations, and Companies’ (Medialab-Prado 2014b) which, as its title indicated, gathered together people with very diverse allegiances and notions of ‘culture’: from a representative of the Telefónica Foundation to a participant in several Self-Managed Social Centers, among them La Tabacalera, and including a Director General of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, among other people.

This same heterogeneous table configuration was already revealing of a discussion framework that in itself is anything but neutral, as was noted and questioned directly by Carlos Vidania, the previously mentioned participant in several CSAs. He claimed that placing self-managing cultural projects together with corporate enterprises on the same plane, as if they were the same, was a sure way to repeat the types of error that have led to the economic, cultural, and city model crisis that defines the present situation. For him, the prevailing models responsible for the crisis are those of the great culture industry, the culture-spectacle, and city-brand. All of these are incompatible with true civic participation because they focus on the
‘attraction of capital, of initiatives of greater added value.’ In opposition to these models, the self-management experiences of ‘weak empowerment’ neither want nor need to compete, because they propose a different model of economy, culture, and city. ‘It’s not the same [process] to organize the Antiracist Alcorcón “Little World Cup” as it is the Olympic Games in Madrid,’ asserted Vidania graphically, ‘but more than that, it’s possible that they’re completely incompatible.’

Vidania also contributed another substantial criticism of the very process of creating PECAM, and in general of the dialogue models that propose public institutions with an associative fabric. He showed that as long as no instruments are created for citizen participation in effective decision-making on cultural policies, true participation will not exist. And he clearly explained that public institutions should promote relational paths that enable a true decision-making capacity for constructing and distributing resources, and for establishing priorities for the use of those resources. Contrarily, in the city-brand model a good number of the resources end up supporting those who, paradoxically, already have more of them: company foundations and big culture industries. Self-managed projects, however, are granted nothing more than a ‘folkloric’ role.

Vidania’s discourse had a certain performative function in that it made the immediate applicability of his arguments obvious. It received a rapid response from Carlota Álvarez Basso, the city council’s director of PECAM development, in an intervention that completely ignored both of Vidania’s critiques (the incompatibility of culture models and the false ‘participation’ that was offered). This, of course, demonstrated just what type of ‘dialogue’ the administration was encouraging in that round table. Instead of responding to his specific challenges, Álvarez Basso answered Vidania by brandishing a new defense of the ‘hacia el PECAM’ process in terms of just how much participation it promotes. She added that representatives of 80 associations had been invited to ‘regional tables,’ and then, bringing things down to a personal level, finished with, ‘I don’t remember why you couldn’t come or we weren’t able to contact you.’

Álvarez Basso also reiterated her willingness to revise PECAM afterwards based on the dialogues that were being generated in the process. In other words, her willingness, effectively, to deny direct participation in the decision-making to the associative fabric that produces self-managed culture in Madrid, and ultimately to reserve this prerogative for herself and the rest of the technicians of the city council’s Arts Area designated for this purpose, exactly what Vidania had condemned.

At this point, the Telefónica Foundation’s representative spoke up. It is important to remember that this Foundation belongs to the same company
that was about to contribute to the expulsion of Medialab-Prado from its current location, and which also, by the way, appropriated the imaginary of one of the 15M assemblies in one of its publicity spots, even as it dismissed 6,000 workers. Its representative contributed to the debate to say, in reference to what she called models of ‘subsidized culture,’ that ‘lamentably, throughout history there have been deaths.’ She added that this fact ‘is part of evolution,’ and that ‘subsidized culture’ was one of those deaths.

In this sense also, there was something of the performative in Vidania’s gesture of denouncing the incompatibility between business and self-management: in effect, the business models of culture, such as the Telefónica Foundation, seemed not to be able to exist by themselves without the need to send all the other models—what they very inaccurately called ‘subsidized’—to the tomb.

6.2.4. Culture as ‘resource’: citizens evicted from the ‘public house’

Rubén Martínez, who researches cultural policies, was also present at the round table, and he took the opportunity to nuance the idea expressed by the Telefónica Foundation representative. He chose to contribute to the distinction between the conceptions of ‘culture as right’ and ‘culture as resource’ proposed by the researcher George Yúdice. This distinction is useful for moving beyond the critique of turning culture into merchandise, because it shows how another way of endangering the right to culture is by turning it into a ‘resource,’ that is, into a pretext for something else.

From this conception, which has been predominant in recent decades, public institutions have been more worried about the ‘impact’ of culture than about culture itself, and the state has taken part to turn culture into a sector used by others: the service sector, the real estate sector, tourism, etc. Martínez therefore asserted that ‘culture as resource should become a thing of the past,’ although ‘it is at the heart of PECAM, as seen in its use of the concept of “creative industries.”’ This is nothing more than a state operation to favor the corporatization of freelancers, and later allow them, through self-exploitation, to take responsibility for carrying out functions that the state used to fulfill.

Again Álvarez Basso’s answer revealed the public institution’s position: she said that culture as right, but also as resource, and as a service self-managed by communities are all legitimate, and that they have to share ‘the space.’ She added that ‘there are very healthy cultural industries,’ and that the associative network is also ‘requesting entrance,’ but that they aren’t mutually exclusive.

For her part, Begoña Torres, the Director General of the Ministry of
Education, Culture, and Sports who negotiated the transfer of the building that houses the CSA La Tabacalera to the groups that manage it, expressed her disagreement with Rubén Martínez, affirming that ‘the economic use of culture’ has been a great discovery for Spain, because it has allowed the country to move from having one museum to having hundreds.

Thus two outright refusals to confront the disastrous consequences of neoliberal policies on culture were outlined. One insisted on the perfect compatibility of the business model of cultural industries with the associative self-managed model. The other went perhaps further still, directly defending placing culture in service to financial interests, praising the proliferation of museums by the Spanish state that has been considered one of the great emblems of the excesses of the ‘bubble’ (sometimes called the ‘Guggenheim effect’).  

To these two refusals to accept the disastrous consequences of the neoliberal model, I would like to add still another, fundamental to the repertoire of arguments used by public administrations to avoid directly approaching and simultaneously to justify and slyly promote the precarization of culture imposed by neoliberalism. It is the already classic exhortation for ‘entrepreneurship’ to cultural agents, which is nothing more, it seems to me, than another manifestation of the omnipresent pressure of corporatization that the neoliberal way of life entails.

Martínez and Rowan both participated at another dialogue table, this time with a representative of the Catalan administration, within the framework of the 2013 Indigestio Forum. These two researchers, who have extensively criticized the type of public policies that favor ‘creative industries,’ insisted that in the context of the crisis it was increasingly clear that those policies should not be repeated. They were met with colorfully recycled versions of the same arguments:

There doesn’t seem to be anything bad about a music group playing music and making money for playing music and being able to economically exploit their creativity ... If stimulating a company means helping a music group to form, and be able to write checks and pay bills, and know how to calculate, before writing a check, if there is enough money in the account, then yes, we are promoting companies—but the goal is not to make companies.

8 See Esteban’s El efecto Guggenheim (2007). Regarding transformations of cultural policies in the framework of Spanish neoliberalism, the books written by Rubén Martínez in collaboration with Jaron Rowan and signed as YProductions (YProductions 2009a; 2009b) are very enlightening. Also very useful is the article ‘Las políticas culturales en el estado español (1985–2005)’ (Marzo and Badía 2006).
Rowan synthesized these policies clearly: ‘I go with my grandmother and she tells me, “Give a nickel to the musicians playing in the metro, they have the right to earn a living.” Sure, but that can’t be a proposal from a political institution. Where’s the political project in that?’

Co-opting ‘participation’ and ‘self-management’ to integrate them into the neoliberal system. Stubbornly defending the use of culture as resource to obtain economic profits or political capital. Urging everyone who wants to ‘make culture’ to start a business even at the cost of falling into precarization and self-exploitation. These kinds of administrative attitudes can be understood metaphorically as a kind of ‘active eviction’ of cultural agents protected by the umbrella of the public arena, to throw them to the mercy of the market. And this seems a useful metaphor to me, because it allows us to relate this situation to others that deal with the most obvious problems created by the neoliberal crisis, as well as relating it to the movements that have arisen as a result.

The PAH and the Mareas Verde and Blanca, which I have already discussed, can in this sense be understood as ways of reclaiming the space that the public sphere must safeguard for the common good and the satisfaction of peoples’ basic needs, in the face of the intrusions of private interests. Housing, hospitals, and schools are the physical manifestation of that ‘space,’ which also entails many other resources, but these tend to converge around those nerve centers located in specific buildings. This is what seems to have been assumed by the citizenry. They have organized their mobilizations around the defense of, and in some cases, through experiments in the self-management of, those physical spaces to reclaim the function of protection of basic rights that must be exerted in the public sphere. But in the case of the right to culture, what would constitute the ‘public house’ _par excellence_ that needs to be defended? Perhaps those museums and art centers that are supposedly so favorable for ‘the economy,’ and that have become symbols of the bubble? Or the libraries, the archives, the auditoriums so dependent on the elitist traditions that have dominated modern culture?

I want to use these questions now to give one more turn of the screw to the analysis of the emergence of a possible ecosystem of ‘cultures of anyone’ in self-managed or public frameworks. I turn to an interesting debate about why there has not been a Marea de la Cultura, or at least none with as much force as those for health and education. I propose that both the weight of modern elitist tradition and the usual view of culture as a ‘less essential’ need have produced its greater vulnerability to forms of neoliberal privatization, and have contributed to making the type of mobilization centralized in public spaces that we have seen in the Mareas very difficult.