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Creating Communities of Urban Care: The No to the Felling Environmental Movement in the City of Madrid

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Abstract

The emergence of urban care communities has recently become a topic of study, with a focus on the social bonds shaped through mutual assistance and support in vulnerable and non-vulnerable neighbourhoods following natural disasters, pandemic situations, and collective urban emotional suffering. We argue that not only is a more comprehensive conceptualisation of urban care necessary, incorporating urban green infrastructures as a component of collective wellbeing, but that care needs to be considered as a political element to develop urban resilience in the face of climate change and extreme events. With this in mind, the present research proposes the enlargement of the concept of the urban care community by means of a specific case study and using a qualitative methodology, underlining how the environmental urban care discourse strengthens new political subjects claiming for urban care-full justice. Our case study is the No to the Felling movement, which emerged at the end of 2023 from the response of a group of residents to Madrid City Council's plan to cut down trees located mainly in the Madrid Río park to extend a metro line. The case is not only indicative of a growing concern about the preservation of green spaces in urban areas, but it is also related to the discourse of caring for the urban space. However, these demands did not arise from a vacuum. Their most direct antecedent was the emergence of networks of mutual support in the city that started during the pandemic, and already existing neighbourhood protest movements against urban planning processes. This article analyses how previous experiences of care generate conditions of possibility for current struggles and the constitution of a political subject that promotes environmental urban care through the shared perception of urban wellbeing deprivation and the absence of a caring approach to such issues.

Keywords

environmental urban care; urban care communities; urban collective political subject; urban common; urban green infrastructure

1. Introduction

The appearance of urban care communities has recently become a topic of study, focusing largely on the social bonds shaped through mutual assistance and support in vulnerable and non-vulnerable neighbourhoods following natural disasters and pandemic contexts, and emerging from urban collective emotional suffering due to severe disruption of daily life (Blanco & León, 2017; Garcia & Haddock, 2016). Considering these contexts, instances of organised citizen solidarity have emerged in urban areas to address subsequent crises in a collective and local manner, with the aim of mitigating their consequences and establishing alliances with existing social and public institutions (Moulaert et al., 2010; Walliser Martinez & De Gasperi, 2021).

Previous events such as the global financial crisis (2009) and the austerity measures and their consequences (2011) impacted cities directly, worsening living conditions but also triggering collective strategies of everyday resistance and survival. In these contexts, new urban activism emerged (Walliser, 2013), reinforcing bonds and creating new roles for neighbourhood associations (Blanco & León, 2017; Triantafyllopoulou & Sayas, 2012). Similarly, many small-scale neighbourhood initiatives to cope with the lockdown collectively appeared during the recent Covid-19 crisis (2020). Furthermore, the effects of natural disasters such as intense flooding and extreme heat waves are seriously impacting the health of the urban population, highlighting both the deficiency of existing urban infrastructures and the built environment to mitigate the effects of climate change and the need for cities to respond to them (Bicknell et al., 2009; Gabriel, 2014; Gandy, 2022; Kaika et al., 2023; Pradel-Miquel, 2024). These critical episodes potentially engender distrust in public institutions and communitarian actions, which are frequently extolled by the media (Jensen & Grindsted, 2009).

These expressions of mutual care among citizens in response to crises have been studied theoretically in academia from several conceptualisations, including the social innovation approach (Blanco et al., 2016; Moulaert et al., 2022), communitarian resilience (Muhanga et al., 2024; Othengrafen et al., 2024; Wu et al., 2022), and solidary expressions (Fernández-Salvador et al., 2024; Lara Corro et al., 2024). Nel·lo et al. (2022) coordinated several case studies in European and Latin American cities that showed citizens' capacity to create urban communities of solidarity under different local wellbeing systems, while other authors have underlined the relevance of these communities around specific topics such as co-managed public services, health (Pallares-Barbera et al., 2022; Salom-Carrasco, 2022), and education (Dussel et al., 2020; Marotta Méndez et al., 2024). Meanwhile, other authors have considered the emergence of citizen networks as care networks and the role of care as a public issue, including its politicisation (De Gasperi & Walliser Martinez, 2024; Walliser Martínez, 2022).

In light of the above, we consider it interesting to explore a less conjunctural approach to care, placing this issue at the core of the political dispute around the production of the city. What we aim to analyse in this article is the politicisation of care in urban critical contexts. To so do, we use a single example, the No to the Felling movement in Madrid, to illustrate this phenomenon over time and in relation to existing theoretical debates, to understand how previous experiences and discourses of care have generated the conditions that provide a platform for current struggles and how a political subject promoting urban care has come about. In the following sections, we present a literature review and a description of the methodology employed. This is followed by an analysis of the context and results of our case study. Last, we will draw the conclusions, linking the results of our objectives with the theoretical framework.

2. From Private Life to Urban Communities: Enlarging the Care Concept

From a historical perspective, and following Gabauer et al. (2022), the concept of care began to assume particular significance in the 1970s, owing to the proliferation of academic research and social activism. In this regard, the primary debates centred on feminist struggles surrounding reproductive work, the epistemological implications of generating novel methodologies for understanding this work, and the concept of care as an ethical action. As pointed out by several authors (Greenhough et al., 2023; Sevenhuijsen, 2003; Tronto, 2020), the first studies on care were well aware that caregiving as a task was fundamentally feminised labour, which was also related to the fact that care-related work was mostly undervalued.

As Tronto (2013) underlines, these early feminist calls were focused on understanding the political value of care. In the words of the author: "Care no longer seems to be 'at home' " (p. 1). More recently, a new perspective has drawn attention to an increasing number of practices of solidarity and reciprocity that have emerged in the last decades through new forms of interaction in urban contexts (McKinnon et al., 2022), despite modern societies being generally characterised by individualism and the fact that independent lives and solidarity among equals may be rare. These practices are interpreted as caring actions, carried out to survive collectively in the city, deviating from the idea of "every man for himself." This is clearly included in Fisher and Tronto's definition of care:

> Activity that includes everything we do to maintain, continue and repair our world so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, ourselves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web. (Greenhough et al., 2023, p. 1)

These debates focused on care reveal the social contestation of individual dynamics, intertwined with the pervasive influence of market rules in daily life. As in the early 19th century, the presence and influence of the market and the permeation of capitalism into everyday life generated not only more inequality, poverty, and vulnerability (Madanipour, 2022), but also resistance, mostly in urban contexts. In this regard, Lawson's (2007) concept of the "ethic of care" is particularly relevant. This ethical framework examines the fundamental principles of neoliberalism, an ideology that organises life and the city around the concepts of efficiency and competitiveness. Neoliberal logic aims to privatise care, relegating it to the domestic sphere of family life. In contrast, the ethic of care endeavours to shift the discourse on care to the public sphere. In this regard, for Lawson (2007), the main stance is to underline how caring work is necessary for collective survival, and as such, it must be absorbed by the public sphere.

In a similar conceptualisation, Tronto (2013) presents some ideas to understand and face the challenges of assuming politically the public obligation of caring. Caring is relational, and since all humans and non-humans are interdependent, everyone needs to care and be cared for. This relational idea of care is considered by several authors (Fisher et al., 1990; Gabauer et al., 2022; Tronto, 2020) and described as follows: "This relational space is first and foremost shaped by 'being-in-common,' which implies a view of the world in which human beings are considered as always enmeshed in social relations with others" (Gabauer et al., 2022, p. 6). However, caring is also contextual, implying that caring needs vary from one place to another. Lastly, caring should be democratic. In other words, it should be inclusive and a public task (Askew, 2009; Power & Williams, 2020; Tronto, 2013): "Democratic politics should centre upon assigning responsibilities for care, and for ensuring that democratic citizens are as capable as possible of taking part in this assignment of responsibilities for care" (Tronto, 2013, p. 140).

The concept of "community of care" therefore emerges as useful for describing the dynamics of mobilisation in the urban landscape, especially those localised in urban contexts and in times of crisis (Gary & Berlinger, 2020; Tronto, 2018) such as the global financial crisis (2008) and the Covid-19 pandemic (2020). This conceptualisation deviates from that of other authors, who have placed more importance on the concepts of solidarity and fraternity during the Covid-19 period (Nel·lo et al., 2022). Also notable is the concept of care-full justice proposed by Williams (2017) in reference to the urban context. The author posits that an account of care that fails to address justice may result in its conception as an emotional ethic that responds to individual dynamics. In this regard, an alternative concept of justice would be characterised by a universal ethic more typical of the morality of the public sphere. The author's position is that these are not two separate spheres, and that understanding the interrelationship between care and justice is crucial to account for the potential of the urban transformation of certain dynamics:

> I have developed the term care-full justice to encapsulate the potential relationship between care and justice in practice and to value both ethics equally. I do this first to develop a utopian dream and ideal for the possibility that the urban can be a just and caring place. And second, to develop a way to recognise how people are responding to injustice in the urban context to cultivate research on existing justice and care practiced on the ground. (Williams, 2017, p. 826)

In this sense, urban transformation is understood not from an antagonistic point of view of rupture with the public institutions, but in relation to everyday practices that gradually generate changes and lead to the creation of fairer cities: "Urban social change needs to be understood as…everyday practices and routines that make the city and provide viable alternatives to the mainstream ways of doing things" (Williams, 2017, p. 824).

A community of care is therefore not related to a specific action of solidarity or humanitarian assistance, but is based on an intertwined corpus of actions and relations among all living beings, be they human or non-human (Fisher et al., 1990; Gabauer et al., 2022; Power & Williams, 2020; Tronto, 2020). It is in this sense that we consider that the communities of care can be conceptualised as a political subject that is collectivised through need and the provision or privation of care. According to Rancière (1996), the process by which a political subject is constituted requires the previous step of creating a collective subjectivity or consciousness. The fact that it is political and not merely collective merges with the idea of a universal problem, the harm caused by which is not merely the outcome of a particular incident, but also engages a group of citizens who attempt to question the existing order as they deem it to be unjust. In other words, citizens identify the absence of care as a collective problem, and as a result, they attempt to rectify the harm being caused by establishing a political subject that is spatialised in a specific location. Communities of care are spatialised within a specific urban context, which reflects the way they are constituted, underlining the need to analyse the relationship between the political constitution of a subject and the spatial dimension it is influenced by.

In this regard, the urban context is not simply an empty space, which historically has been a highly vulnerable one (Gabauer et al., 2022; Power & Williams, 2020; Williams, 2017). Moreover, contemporary cities have been the focus of accelerated unequal development due to the commodification of all spaces of daily life under the neoliberal city and the global, ecological, and economic crises (Brenner & Theodore, 2005; Harvey, 2012; Smith et al., 2009). There are many examples in recent years of urban places where collective reflection on the transformation of the urban order has been seen, although the urban space is not unique in this regard since nowadays there are many other geographies of discontent (Dijkstra et al., 2020; Rodríguez-Pose, 2018;

Rodríguez-Pose et al., 2023). To this effect, we consider it essential to understand the relationship between the subject and the place in which the harm is perceived to be done, and how a collective identity is constituted by the space and the desire to fight for full care and justice. Therefore, it is necessary to analyse this process by means of a case study, considering not only the actors but also the place, as well as the sedimentation of previous daily actions in these locations, the neighbourhoods.

3. Understanding Care Communities as a Political Subject Through Qualitative Research

Our theoretical starting point is that an urban community of care can be conceptualised as a political subject that is collectivised due to the privation of urban care, and is based on an intertwined corpus of actions and relations among all living beings in a specific context. We studied the No to the Felling movement in Madrid as a case study to better understand this theoretical framework and its implications, and explore how care is politicised by political subjects in urban contexts.

The main objectives of our empirical research were: (a) to understand how urban political subjects are constructed when a critical conflictual moment occurs; (b) to reflect on how urban harm or privation is rejected using communitarian care discourses; and (c) to establish the relationship among previous discourses of care placed in a district or neighbourhood where new actions appealing for urban care-full justice emerge.

To achieve these objectives, we developed a methodology for our exploratory case, based on qualitative analysis. In turn, this qualitative analysis was based on discourse theory, which understands that both language and social practices have a meaning that cannot be understood outside the discourses to which they belong (Howarth, 2005). Hence, we used the case study method. As George and Bennet (2004) point out, this method allows for more accurate identification of the political processes under study, considering contextual factors. These factors are analysed with a longitudinal perspective, in an attempt to understand the most relevant conditions and spatial production moments of the city of Madrid and its neighbourhood Arganzuela, where the No to the Felling movement was located.

Moreover, the present study employs a two-phase discourse analysis. Phase I is an investigation of primary sources, mainly based on the production of original authors and materials generated by social organisations around the topic, along with secondary sources produced by authors who have previously explored related issues. Phase II involved conducting in-depth semi-structured interviews with members of the No to the Felling movement and the care networks, with the aim of establishing a correlation between the notion of care underpinning these new struggles (see Table 1).

From an ethical point of view, it is important to underline that the study was grounded on systematic epistemological vigilance, since the authors have all been involved in different research projects and participatory processes in the district during the last decade.

Table 1. Summary of interviewees.

Interviewee	Role	Number of interviews	Main topics	Date
HUL1 (leader of the historical neighbourhood)	Member of the No to the Felling movement and of the Platform Against the Mahou-Calderón	2	The history of political subjects in Arganzuela; The main conflicts surrounding Mahou-Calderón; How the No to the Felling movement began	24 September 2024; 1 October 2024
HUL2 (leader of the historical neighbourhood)	Member of the No to the Felling movement, the Platform Against the Mahou-Calderón, and the Covid-19 care networks	2	The history of political subjects in Arganzuela; Care networks during the pandemic; The emergence of care as a central concern in collective demands; Relations between the different collective subjects in the district of Arganzuela; How the No to the Felling movement began	27 September 2024; 10 October 2024
NUM1 (New member)	Member of the No to the Felling movement	1	How the No to the Felling movement began; The emergence of care as a central concern in collective demands; The journey of the No to the Felling movement; The subjects that are involved in the No to the Felling movement	5 December 2024
CM1 (Covid-19 care network member)	Member of the Covid-19 care network	1	Care networks during the pandemic; The emergence of care as a central concern in collective demands	31 October 2024
MPA (Member of Parents' Association)	Member of the Parents' Association at Unamuno School	1	The pacification of school environments; The dark kitchens	4 October 2024

4. The No to the Felling Movement in Context

As Ferrando and Sánchez Molledo (2018) point out, as early as the 19th century, the Arganzuela district in Madrid was under development as an industrial area, largely due to the establishment of the railway and its use

mainly for industrial activity. Arganzuela was surrounded by the Manzanares River, which acted as a natural demarcation line with respect to the other neighbourhoods and districts with large population centres. In this context, from the 20th century onwards, Arganzuela began to experience an economic development related to industry and the railway, which favoured the construction of formal housing for workers to the detriment of shantytowns and informal housing, which had previously characterised the district (Brandis García & del Río Lafuente, 1995).

A further milestone in the neighbourhood's history was the so-called Operación Madrid Río, which took place in the early 2000s under the mayorship of Ruiz-Gallardón. As studied by Pérez-Fortes et al. (2021), this project was carried out between 2004 and 2007, with the aim of relocating underground the M-30 motorway surrounding the central core of the city of Madrid. This project also included the creation of a linear park on both sides of the Manzanares River where the motorway was originally located (see Figure 1), giving rise to a revaluation of the surroundings. This process, in conjunction with a series of other minor reforms such as the transformation of the former slaughterhouse into a cultural centre and the completion of the district's transition from an industrial and peripheral district to a cultural and affluent one within the confines of the M-30 ring road, constituted a significant development in the urban landscape.

Figure 1. Madrid Río prior to and after Operación Madrid Río. Source: Ayuntamiento de Madrid (2011).

The regeneration of the area and the relocation of the M-30 were controversial due to the increased costs involved and the impact on local residents because of the long period of construction works. In this context, neighbourhood associations and environmental organisations started to question the ecological impact of the works and the gentrification effect in the area. For example, the Asociación Vecinal Pasillo Verde Imperial has been a leading organisation in numerous recent processes, particularly in the Imperial neighbourhood, where it has established alliances with the environmental group Ecologistas en Acción. At the same time, new social actors were emerging, including parents' associations and what has been termed "new urban activisms" (Walliser, 2013; Walliser & de la Fuente, 2018).

As we have already underlined, it is important to consider that no mobilisation emerges from a vacuum, making it necessary to account for the seeds previously sown and the social and political processes that have gradually generated certain conditions of possibility. As one of our interviewees said: "Undoubtedly, the previous mobilisations and the neighbourhood movement that had already been going on for years in Arganzuela have their weight and influence [in the No to the Felling mobilisations]" (HUL2).

In Arganzuela, the first close antecedent of the No to the Felling movement was the mobilisation around the use of the land formerly occupied by the Mahou brewery and the old Vicente Calderón football stadium, starting in 2012; and second, the care networks that emerged as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic in the city of Madrid in 2020. However, it is also important to consider the articulation of different actions and claims made over the last decade by the neighbourhood parent-school association network, which has introduced care discourses around values of solidarity (refugees), health and wellbeing for schoolchildren, and the improvement of playgrounds. The following paragraphs summarise the most relevant processes, with a view to understanding their influence.

The Mahou-Calderón Plan, initiated in 2008, involved the transfer of the original site of the Vicente Calderón Stadium to the Madrid City Council, which subsequently granted the land to Atlético Madrid Club for the construction of a new stadium. In addition to the purchase of the space, this agreement involved the transfer of Atletico Madrid's La Peineta stadium to the district of San Blas. This operation provoked confrontations right from the beginning, culminating in 2012 when construction started. The protest movement was led by the Platform Against the Mahou-Calderón Plan, which managed to create a neighbourhood coalition that was especially against the construction of skyscrapers in a residential area of medium-sized buildings:

> The constructions that were being proposed were monstrous. In the Vicente Calderón area, they were planning to build two 36-storey towers….It was absolutely the opposite of what was in the surrounding area, with buildings of a height of seven or eight storeys. (HUL2)

After a series of mobilisations and confrontations with the Madrid City Council, the project was modified and the plans for the skyscrapers were scrapped. The story of Mahou-Calderón is relevant in the context of this research because it was through the channels of communication opened between the members of the platform against the Mahou-Calderón Plan that individual concerns about the possible harm to the model of city they wanted to develop in the neighbourhood began to be collectivised. This opened the way for the formation of a political subject that was configured around a "we" that thinks that natural spaces should be community spaces, as opposed to "the other"—Madrid City Council and the Community of Madrid—which prioritises the private use of public spaces:

> We had a chat with the Mahou-Calderón Platform and the AMPAs [Parents' School Associations] and other neighbours, and that's how the seed was planted…then the comments started: "Hey, what are they doing…?" And then the project and the planned felling come out in the press. Then it's like we start shouting at full pelt. (HUL1)

After this cycle of mobilisations in Arganzuela, Manuela Carmena (2015–2019) became mayor of Madrid through a platform that brought together political parties and social movements. Notable in this regard is how the mechanisms of participation promoted during Manuela Carmena's term led to the strengthening of the social networks, enabling them to take part in initiatives such as citizen consultations on urban planning projects, and in activities that included a large part of the social fabric, such as neighbourhood associations and parent's associations.

Another precedent that should be mentioned for a better understanding of the groundwork of the case study in question was the Covid-19 care networks. As already stated, one of the fundamental elements that began to permeate the social networks, promoted largely by the Covid-19 pandemic, was the discourse around care.

As Gabauer et al. (2022) point out, care as the main element of dispute in the urban sphere began to gain strength in the wake of Covid-19, given that moments of crisis greatly emphasis the need for the other and the impossibility of individual initiative, fissuring some of the hegemonic discourses around the individual as a privileged element in society.

In this regard, as occurred in territories all over the world, in the city of Madrid, the Covid-19 pandemic gave rise to the appearance of numerous care and mutual support networks in neighbourhoods, with the aim of alleviating its harshest effects (Walliser Martínez, 2022). Most of the care networks were first organised around solidarity kitchens that offered residents food boxes: "We started in March. We received food and distributed food…in two weeks we had almost 300 families, and the next month we were up to 500, and a little later we had almost a thousand families [970 families]" (CM1).

Most networks of this kind soon diversified and began to offer a variety of services from psychological support to pet care, and were mainly called mutual support networks or care networks. In either case, the word care was at the core, and as stated by Walliser Martínez (2022), they were ultimately social transformation initiatives driven in most cases by mutual care and the understanding that to stay afloat at times of crisis, it is essential to rearticulate social networks and restructure neighbourhoods. On care networks, HUL2 said:

> There is personal and ethical impact and personal enrichment. The feeling that you are doing something for others, that you are socially helping the people around you, relating to people who need help like you when you need it, and that you are part of a group, that you are not alone, is very important when needs arise.

Furthermore, the pacification of school environments (see Figure 2) was based on the principles of improving air quality and ensuring the safety and well-being of children in public spaces. Since the pandemic, parents' associations in schools have persistently campaigned for the maintenance of smoke-free public childcare facilities in urban areas. This advocacy comes despite the emergence of 21 so-called "ghost or dark kitchens" in the neighbourhood, including in the vicinity of schools like Unamuno school:

> A new type of business has proliferated in the wake of the pandemic: so-called dark kitchens or ghost kitchens. These are not traditional restaurants, but rather facilities that prepare food exclusively for delivery. Orders are placed through apps such as Glovo and Just Eat, among others. The kitchens themselves are not open to the public, but rather they operate behind the scenes, with fleets of delivery drivers—often on motorcycles—picking up orders and delivering them directly to customers. (MPA)

One of the most meaningful achievements as perceived by members of the parents' associations was their successful promotion of a discourse centred on the care of shared public spaces—a message echoed in later movements, including the No to the Felling movement to protect the trees in Madrid Río park:

> It has sparked in people a renewed interest in what is happening around them—an awareness of the public sphere and political struggle—which has translated into a sense of responsibility for caring for their immediate surroundings, such as the environment in Madrid Río. (MPA)

Figure 2. Pacification of the school environment at Menéndez Pelayo School.

These caring networks, as a collective subject, therefore played a relevant role in the negotiation of urban spaces with the city council, based on demands for urban layouts that considered the care and needs of schoolchildren. After many mobilisations and legal actions throughout 2024, many dark or ghost kitchens stopped operating because of legal prohibitions, and two school environment areas in Arganzuela were included in the city council interventions for improvements. This shows an articulation around the care of human life that considers the context in which it develops, illustrating that the social and the spatial are intertwined. In other words, social relations cannot be understood outside the space in which they develop, and moreover, these social relations transform space and are transformed by it.

5. Main Findings Around No to the Felling Movement

In the context of these previous collective experiences in this district of Madrid, the No to the Felling movement emerged as a voice of resistance that also used discourses of care. More specifically, the movement emerged at the end of 2022 as a result of the existing problems related to the Metro Line 11 works. The initial plans for the project located the line's exit on the Paseo de Yeserías road, which would mean traffic restrictions for a period of time. This initial project was then modified, bypassing the necessary process of public information and dialogue required by the corresponding regulations given that the final project involved substantial changes, including relocating the Metro exit inside the Madrid Río urban park as opposed to on the road, which would entail the felling of more than 1,000 trees (Tena, 2023; see Figure 3), something that was not contemplated in the initial project. This felling was planned to take place mainly in the Comillas park in the district of Carabanchel (see Figure 3), and in the Yeserías park in the district of Arganzuela (see Figure 4), the latter located in Madrid Río, as reported by the media. The extension of Metro Line 11 would therefore have had a major environmental impact, to which local residents were opposed:

> A huge part of Madrid Río's popular grove appeared fenced off when the metro exit in that area was planned to be located in the Paseo de Yeserías. That meant that they were going to cut down a lot of 60-year-old trees. (HUL2)

Figure 3. Images of the park located in Arganzuela prior to and after the planned tree felling. Photo by Susana de la Higuera.

Figure 4. Hundreds of demonstrators under the slogan No to the Felling.

Although the works on Metro Line 11 were to be carried out by Metro de Madrid, and therefore by the Community of Madrid, Madrid City Council was responsible for granting the licences for the occupation of public land within the city, making both public institutions responsible for the resubmission of the project to public information. This unanimous decision on the part of the city council and the Community of Madrid, which was made not only without consulting the residents but also with a lack of transparency and information on the part of the public administration, gave rise to an unease which at first was individual, but gradually became collective:

> News of the extension of line 11 begins….Parents of the Colegio Dos Parques have heard that the children are to be left without a space for recreation in Arganzuela park. A parent suggested making

> posters claiming the park as an inalienable common place. The next day, the idea spread like wildfire through the AFAs [Students' Parents Associations] and in nearby circles….The second day, we got around 200 people together. (NUM1)

This is how a political subject gradually took shape. Individual perceptions of the harm that would be caused by the felling of the trees became a common perception, thereby transitioning from the individual to the collective level. In other words, it was no longer a matter of personal harm, but of collective harm that managed to give rise to the formation of a political subject. This collectivisation was also made possible by the presence of meeting spaces and small practices that allowed individuals' perceptions of the potential harm to be pooled and articulated collectively:

> Like all stories, this one begins with someone taking a first step. And that first step was taken by a father and son from the neighbourhood, who went down to the park armed with some paper and a marker pen, accompanied by three other neighbours and another child, and together they wrote posters which they stuck on the trees saying "I defend this tree," "Dad, no one is coming" [imitating the child's voice], and "Don't worry, son, they will come" [imitating the father's voice]. And here we are a year later. (AV Pasillo Verde-Imperial, 2024, 14'00")

Furthermore, the No to the Felling movement can be understood as a political subject insofar as it was antagonistic to public institutions:

> The first mass demonstration took place…on 18th February. It was surprising, exciting, impressive, seeing my neighbours of all ages, of all political colours. We understood that a very sensitive issue had been ignited, and that the politicians had failed to gauge the public. Your parks, your trees are ours, we are going to defend them. (AV Pasillo Verde-Imperial, 2024, 16'28")

Another of the critical moments in the conflict was the denunciation of the project by the No to the Felling movement through the drafting of a petition to the European Parliament, with the aim of raising the profile of the case:

> We are still in contact [referring to the European Parliament and the No to the Felling movement], and now they tell me that until the end of December [of 2024] the report will not be ready, but that they are taking it very seriously, they are making a thorough investigation…and in fact we want to take the petition up again. (HUL1)

Taking the petition to the European level had an important media impact, making the movement grow exponentially, which was experienced as a collective triumph:

> The complaint to the Commission before the European Parliament and the complaint to the European Investment Bank about the incorrect application of financial funds were the culmination of the struggle. It will obviously take time to be resolved, but the expedition to Brussels was a new media success and media attention grabber: a social agitator with expertise in communication and a local engineer lodging a neighbourhood complaint in Europe. (NUM1)

> However, it is also a political subject that is constituted as a community of care insofar as by collectivising the damage that was being inflicted on the Madrid Río park through the massive felling of trees, a collective was formed; that is, a community that defended the care of green spaces, specifically of trees as an inherent part of the same community, or in other words, the politicisation of the issue of caring for the grove. As one interviewee said, "We are leaving love letters to the trees on the railings" [referring to the railings of the metro works]. (HUL1)

The idea of being part of the same community was also fed by the sense of belonging to the space, since the children involved had grown up in the area and had enjoyed this green area with their families:

> It is undoubtedly a struggle in which a lot of women with young children are taking part, accompanied by their children, thereby bringing a vision of care to the overall struggle. The objective is to conserve the park, to defend the grove. And we have begun to generate a narrative about how and when the park was conceived, based on childhood memories, looking for old photos and studying its history as a pasture for cattle before the slaughter, and as a meadow for festivals and open-air dances. (NUM1)

In this regard, Madrid Río park was not an inert space where unrelated events took place, but was a constituent part of the community itself. Therefore, under Massey's (2005) idea that the social and the spatial are interrelated, the park represented much more than a group of trees. To this effect, caring for the space was therefore caring for the community, its experiences, its memories, and even its identity, as reported by the media:

> Around ten o'clock, around 200 people gathered in front of the construction site fence. As they unfurled a banner with the slogan "No to the Felling" on it and banged on the red and white fences, a large group entered the site. (Pedreño, 2023)

Of paramount importance was how it was subjectively experienced by the neighbours and members of the No to the Felling movement:

> When I arrived an hour before [to one of the demonstrations], it was already full of people. There were people of all ages, old people with their crutches, because it was their park, and they were not going to allow their park to be destroyed. (HUL1)

> The pirate ship [a children's play construction located in Madrid Río] and the trees next to it are in danger. This idea alone shatters the memory of all the generations of people who have spent Sundays with their children at this iconic attraction….We were not the four old men representing public health or just any other social struggle; it was an intergenerational phenomenon in defence of their playground, of a social place fixed firmly in their memory. (NUM1)

The political subject was therefore constituted as a collective that was also a community of care seeking to challenge the neoliberal city, calling individualism itself into question. This occurred by defending care for the environment as a form of care among neighbours, under the realisation that in the urban environment, no one can survive alone. In other words, it is a new way of understanding the right to the city (see Figure 4):

> However, perhaps the most important thing is that we have sown something, a green conscience. And we have forged links between neighbours who did not know each other before. We have created a neighbourhood and together we have generated another way of living together and thinking about the city to protect and care for what is common, what belongs to everyone. (AV Pasillo Verde-Imperial, 2024, 24'58")

The No to the Felling movement is a political subject that is still active today. One cannot foresee how it will develop—and neither is it the intention of this article to do so—but what is certain is that it has established itself as a political subject that places care for the environment at the centre of its discourse, thereby defending a society where the care of all with all (including its surrounding context) is paramount. This political subject is currently particularly active in making demands related to the broader care of the Madrid Río park. For example, a demonstration recently took place to prevent the installation of decorative lights along the river as they could harm the surrounding flora and fauna. It has also prompted a campaign in Arganzuela, which is hoped will extend to the entire city, to ask the city council to plant trees throughout the entire urban area.

Last and notably is the fact that this political subject constituted in Arganzuela as a community of care responds to an issue that has been alluded to throughout this article, which is the idea of sedimentation. This means that the community of care has been able to flourish in Arganzuela because others of this kind were already present there, while similar processes in other territories have failed due to their previous absence. Moreover, the mobilisation of the other green spaces affected by the Metro Line 11 works was also led by the No to the Felling movement, despite not being in the Imperial neighbourhood. In other words, the sedimentation alluding to the mobilisations for the Mahou-Calderón and the networks of care during the Covid-19 pandemic made it possible to re-articulate this existing network in a moment of crisis around the idea of care for the commons, enabling the progression from the event to the constitution of a community of care as a political subject.

6. Conclusions

The following points recapitulate some of the issues mentioned above, linked to the initial objectives. Regarding the first objective—understanding how a political subject in relation to a place is constructed when a critical conflictual moment appears—we have shown how various political subjects have emerged throughout the recent history of the neighbourhood through processes of collective subjectivation (Rancière, 1996). These include the platform against the Mahou-Calderón plan, the movement for the pacification of areas around the schools, the mutual support networks during the Covid-19 pandemic, and more recently, the No to the Felling movement. These political subjects did not arise spontaneously or independently, but rather through the sedimented social and spatial dynamics present in the territory, which enabled the collective to articulate their demands. For instance, the platform opposing the Mahou-Calderón plan mobilised a collective discourse centred on the collective need for public facilities to improve life in the neighbourhood, which laid the groundwork for the emergence of the mutual support networks in the Arganzuela district during the Covid-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the parents' associations have worked to establish networks and alliances among different school associations. Last, the No to the Felling movement, which initially began as a more individualised form of protest, was quickly collectivised thanks to the pre-existing discourses in the area—those shaped by earlier mobilisations and the mutual support networks—allowing for a rapid transition from individual to collective action.

Regarding the second objective, which was to reflect on how urban harm or privation is discursively rejected and faced using community care discourses, this article shows that discourses of care have gained increasing relevance over time. The protests against the Mahou-Calderón plan sparked the articulation of care for public space as a political concern. Here, care is understood as encompassing all actions aimed at improving our world, not only through bodily or interpersonal care but also through environmental stewardship, as emphasised by Fisher and Tronto (1990, as cited in Greenhough et al., 2023). This concept of care—as a means to enhance the world we live in—was taken up more explicitly by the mutual support networks that emerged during the Covid-19 pandemic, which were structured around principles of reciprocity and interdependence (Fisher et al., 1990; Tronto, 2013, 2020). In addition, as a result of Covid-19, mobilisations appeared in school environments demanding the care of public spaces. These evolving discourses on the need for collective care of the environment for the wellbeing of children and their families culminated in the 2022 No to the Felling movement, reaffirming the interconnectedness between the environment and the people defending it, as previously emphasised in local mobilisations.

Regarding the third objective—to establish the relationship among previous discourses of care located in a district or neighbourhood with the emergence of new actions appealing for urban care-full justice—we argue that the various political subjects operating within the same territory are deeply interconnected. This is not only because of overlapping participation among local residents, but also because the discourses mobilised by each movement reflect and build upon prior ones. In this way, we can trace a continuous thread linking the previous experiences in the same area. Histories of public space privation and demands to improve the environment and the quality of life of inhabitants can be traced through these mobilisations, as can the conception of being able to politically and legally change previous projects through participatory processes, protests, and negotiations on the production of urban spaces. The Mahou-Calderón Platform, the demand for pacification of school environments, the Covid-19 mutual support networks, and the No to the Felling movement reveal a sustained dynamic of political subjectivation grounded in shared space and collective memory.

Last, coming back to the theoretical framework, we state that the No to the Felling movement currently functions as a community of care that recognises urban space as a constitutive element of the community itself. Within this framework, the urban environment is not merely a backdrop for social relations, but is actively intertwined with the individuals who inhabit it; space and subject are mutually constituted. This understanding highlights the need to care for context, not as a private or isolated responsibility, but as a collective, justice-oriented commitment. In this regard, caring for the Madrid Río park is seen not simply as environmental activism, but as a discourse capable of driving urban transformation.

In summary, we follow Williams' (2017) conceptualisation of care-full justice because we consider it a useful way of recognising how people are facing injustice in the urban context through the politicisation of a care-full demand. We also consider communities of care as being tightly related to politics rather than merely solidarity actions or humanitarian mutual assistance, as many authors have pointed out (Fisher et al., 1990; Gabauer et al., 2022; Power & Williams, 2020; Tronto, 2020).

Moreover, based on our findings, we argue for a more dynamic conceptualisation of communities of urban care, which is less identified with a specific moment or struggle. In this regard, they should be understood not only as linked to a specific geographical location or political moment, but as open entanglements of discourses, actions,

and practices centred on the need for public and social urban care. These discourses, actions, and practices could be interpreted and reinterpreted by different collective subjects facing different circumstances over time as they negotiate, confront, and create new demands of public caring for citizens and the environment. The prior existence and varied expressions of urban care communities in a given place may help explain why critical situations trigger resilient and politicised responses in some urban contexts, while in others, they do not. In summary, we consider them as entangled communities of care.

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Conflict of Interests

As stated in the body of the article, the authors have paid particular attention to epistemological vigilance, given their involvement in various participatory processes in the district over the past decade.

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