'Vamos Lentos Porque Vamos Lejos'
Towards a dialogical understanding of Spain's 15Ms

by

Pablo Ouziel
M.A., University of Victoria, 2009
B.A., University of Sheffield, 1998

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in the Department of Political Science

Supervisory Committee

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Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC)
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Abstract

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Four years ago, on May 15th 2011, we witnessed in the Spanish State 'something' that was quickly and popularly referred to as 15M or the Indignados. Since that day, 15M has had a tremendous impact on the way a large part of the Spanish population understands itself and its response-abilities and rights. In addition, 15M has affected the way in which a large part of the Spanish population understands its environment and those living-beings with whom said environment is co-created and co-inhabited.

In this essay I immerse myself in an on-going non-disciplinary, multi-traditional multilogue with individuals being 15M. What I witness, feels and looks like a complex; mutating and dialogic; collective and cooperative; agonistic and transformative 'climate' that many refer to as *el clima 15M* (15m climate).

Allowing different 15M wisdoms to frame the research, I envision this essay as an attempt at gaining a dialogical understanding of what it is that we might be speaking of when referring to 15M. Through this exploration, I seek to place my work within the sketched parameters of what James Tully refers to as public philosophy.

The essay engages with individuals being 15M and with the vast literature in Spain around 15M and party-movement Podemos by academics and participants, and the European literature around populism, horizontality and Podemos grounded in

Antonio Gramsci. It also draws on reciprocal elucidation literature in theory and in participatory, community-based social science. Moreover, the essay enters into dialogue with a whole body of literature on instrumental versus constitutive means-ends views of political change going back to Mahatma Gandhi and forward to Aldous Huxley, Richard Gregg, Hannah Arendt, Robert Young, Gene Sharp and Cesar Chavez.

By giving 'perspicuous representation' or thick description of 15M by means of reciprocal elucidation, I am able to make a unique contribution to the *theoretical* literature on reciprocal elucidation and public philosophy. I am also able to disclose the field of 15M (the phenomenon) in a way that shows it to be different from the way 15M appears in other theoretical frames. Finally, the use of this method of reciprocal elucidation makes a unique contribution to *community-based and engaged forms of social scientific research.*

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List of Acronyms

AGE - *Alternativa Galega de Esquerda* (Galician Leftist Alternative)

APD - *Asociación por la Paz y el Desarme* (Association for Peace and Disarmament)

ARECA - Asociación de Represaliados por el Desahucio de Caulina (Association of those Repressed at Caulina's Eviction)

ATTAC - *Asociación por una Tasación sobre las Transacciones Financieras Especulativas para la Ayuda a los Ciudadanos* (Association for a Tax on Speculative Financial Transactions in order to Help the Citizenry)

BBVA - *Banco Bilbao Vizcaya* Argentaria (Bilbao Vizcaya Argentaria Bank)

BNG - *Bloque Nacionalista Gallego* (Galician Nationalist Block)

BOE - *Boletin Oficial del Estado* (Official State Bulletin)

CAPs *Centros de Atención Primaria* (Primary Care Centres)

CAPH - *Célula Armada de Putas Histérica*s (Armed Cell of Hysterical Bitches)

CCOO - *Comisiones Obreras* (Workers Commissions)

CEOP - *Coordinadora Estatal de Organizaciones Pacifistas* (State-wide Coordinator of Pacifist Organizations)

CESICAT - *Centre de Seguretat de la Informació de Catalunya* (Catalan Information Security Centre)

CGPJ - *Consejo General del Poder Judicial* (General Council of the Judiciary)

CIE - *Centro de Internamiento de Extranjeros* (Foreigners Internment Centre)

CIS - *Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas* (Centre for Sociological Research)

CIU - *Convergència i Unió* (Convergence and Union)

CNT - *Confederación Nacional del Trabajo* (National Confederation of Work)

COAP - *Comando Okupa Armado de Paciencia* (Squatter Commando Armed with Patience)

CSE - *Coordinadora Syndical Estudiantil* (Student Unions Coordinator)

CSI - *Central Sindical de Izquierdas* (Central of Leftist Trade Unions)

CSOs - *Centros sociales Okupados* (Occupied Social Centres)

CUPs - *Candidaturas d'Unitat Popular (Popular Unity Candidatures)*

CUT - *Central Unitaria de Trabajadores* (Central Union of Workers).

DRY - *Democracia Real Ya* (Real Democracy Now)

ERC - *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* (Catalan Republican Left)

ETA - ETA *Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* (Basque Homeland and Freedom)

EU - European Union

FSORE - *La Federación de Sociedades de Resistencia de la Región Española* (Federation of Resistance Associations of the Spanish Region)

GIP - Group for Information on Prisons

GRECO - Group of States against corruption

IA - *Izquierda Anticapitalista* (Anti-capitalist Left)

IMF - International Monetary Fund

IT - Information Technology

IU - *Izquierda Unida* (United Left)

JSF - *Juventudes sin Futuro* (Youth without a Future)

LOU - *Ley Orgánica de Universidades* (Organic Law for Universities)

MJG - *Movimiento de Justicia Global* (Global Justice Movement)

MOC - *Movimiento de Objeción de Conciencia* (Conscientious Objection Movement)

MPDL - *Movimiento por la Paz* (Movement for Peace)

MRG - *Movimiento de Resistencia Global* (Global Resistance Movement)
NATO - North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO - Non-governmental Organizations
OECD - Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSCE - Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PAH - *Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca* (Platform of those Affected by
     Mortgages)
PNV - *Partido Nacionalista Vasco* (Basque Nationalist Party)
PP - *Partido Popular* (Popular Party)
PRC - *Plan de Rescate Ciudadano* (Citizen Rescue Plan)
PSOE - *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (Spanish Socialist Workers Party)
SAT - *Sindicato Andaluz de Trabajadores* (Andalucian Workers Union)
SINTEL - *Sistemas de Instalaciones de Telecomunicaciones*, S.A.
     (Telecommunications Installation Systems S.A).
SMS - Text Message
SOC - *Sindicato de Obreros del Campo* (Land workers Union)
SUP *Sindicato Unificado de la Policia* (Unified Police Union)
TSJ *Tribunal Superior de Justicia de Catalunya* (Catalan Supreme Court)
UDM *Unión demócrata Madrileña* (Democratic Union of Madrid)
UGT - *Unión General de Trabajadores* (General Workers Union)
UIP *Unidades de Intervención Policial* (Police Intervention Units)
UPyD - *Unión Progreso y Democracia* (Union Progress and Democracy)
UN – United Nations
WTO - World Trade Organization

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I would like to thank all the individuals who whilst being 15M agreed to enter with me into dialogues of reciprocal elucidation. I would also like to thank two people who made possible my returning to the university after a ten-year absence. My friend Ricardo critically supported my intellectual and practical explorations when most around me thought they were a waste of time. Noam supported my application to the University of Victoria when I needed all the support I could get.

I am grateful I have such an amazing committee. Michelle Bonner has supported my work since I began my Masters at the University of Victoria. She was a part of the committee that helped me with the development of my Masters thesis. She has also provided me with much needed funds to get through my PhD. These funds have come in the form of research assistantships, through which I have learnt much about the political realities of countries in Latin America. Her very illuminating comments on this dissertation have clearly focused my aspirations.

Francisco Colom González has presented me with the opportunity of having my work on the Spanish State challenged by a Spanish academic working from within Spain. This dissertation, although about Spain, is presented in Canada. Therefore, Francisco helps open a discussion between the ideas presented in this text and prevalent ideas within the Spanish academic system. His comments on this philosophical essay have helped improve my reciprocal elucidation approach.

Matt James has offered a constructive and persistant critique through out the writing process. Matt's comments have helped me correct weakeness in my approach to public philosophy.

Illustration of the route
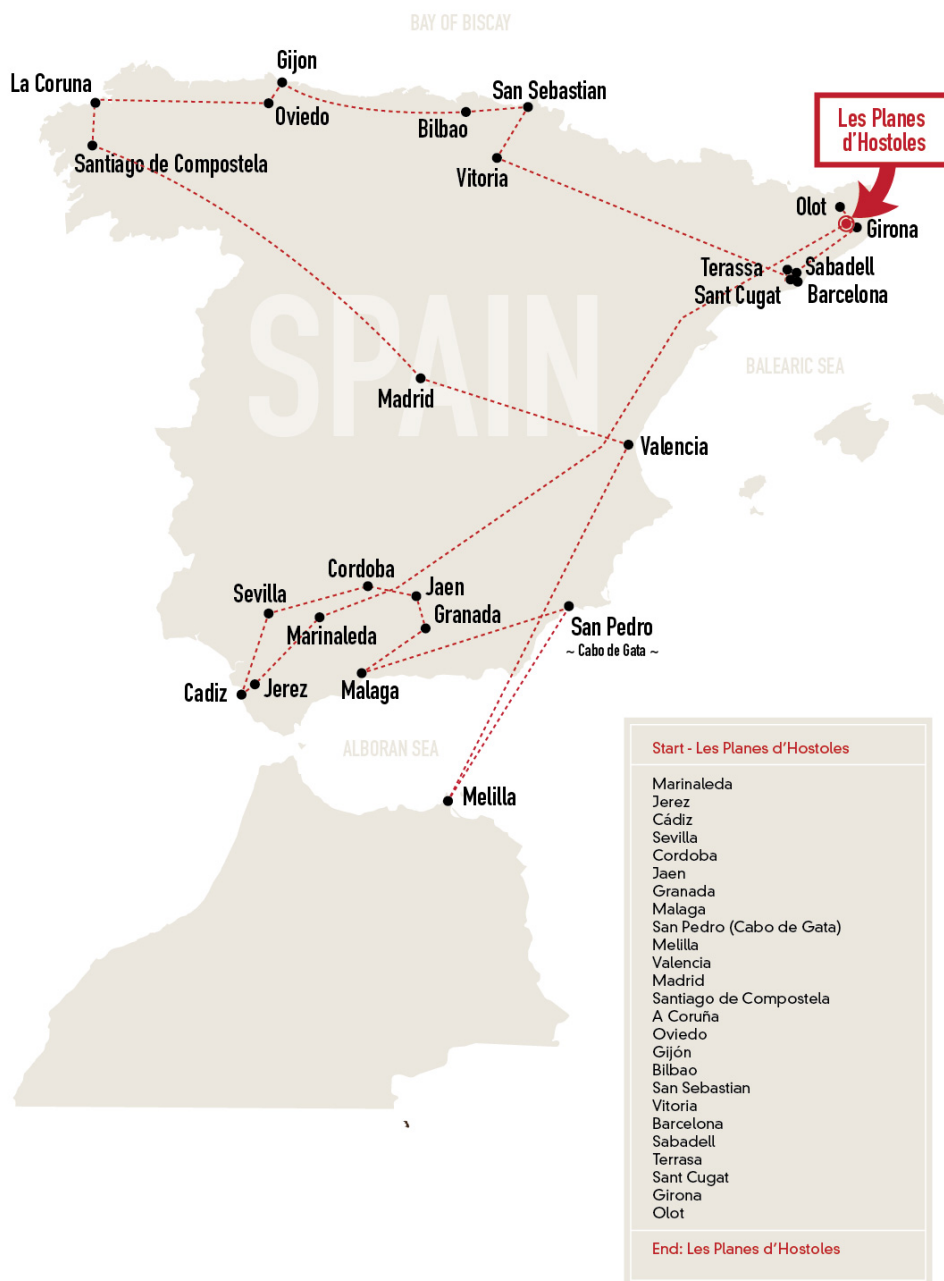
*Illustration by YuPing Yen

'Vamos Lentos Porque Vamos Lejos'[1]
Towards a dialogical understanding of Spain's 15Ms

By Pablo Ouziel in dialogue with 213 Anonymous Individuals

We might be inspired to 'be' with them instead of delegating our response-abilities to their goodwill
Anonymous Spanish Citizen

Introduction

Overview

When 'being' with*in* 15M one has always the feeling of arriving to Macondo for the first time.[2] I do not know if you as a reader are familiar with the novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, by Colombian writer Gabriel García Márquez. In its first page, the writer begins describing the village of Macondo and he sets the time as a time in which "the world was so recent, that many things lacked names, and in order to indicate them it was necessary to point."[3] And this is how I have felt often with*in* 15M whilst learning practices, sharing ideas and working on theories and methods.

Four years ago on May 15th 2011, we witnessed in the Spanish State[4]

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[1] I am grateful to Professor James Tully, co-supervisor together with Professor Matt James for this dissertation, for coining what in my opinion is the best translation to English of the Spanish phrase *Vamos lentos porque vamos lejos*. The English phrase being: We go ever so slowly because we are going on forever.

[2] 15M is the name most broadly used for describing a collective presence which began with a set of occupations of public squares on May 15th 2011. When referring to people identifying as being with*in* 15M, humanist, economist and writer Jose Luis Sampedro spoke of quincemayistas (Mayfifteeners). Sampedro died in 2013 (age 96), and homages to him, came from many whom formed part of the collective presence that had filled Spanish public squares in 2011. Many felt he understood them. In his last public appearance, he told them (the Mayfifteeners) that he loved them, that they had given him a sense of hope for the world before his death, and he left off telling them he was theirs. See 'Entrevista a José Luis Sampedro', *Encuentros Piensa Opina Reacciona* http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eIZrcC3IYyU

[3] Garcia Marquez, G. (1967/2014) *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, London: Penguin.

[4] Throughout this text I will be predominantly speaking of the Spanish State rather than Spain, in order to make sure this multilogue remains inclusive. Numerous interviewees – especially in the regions of Cataluña, Asturias, the Basque Country, Galicia and Andalucía – expressed rejection to the term Spain, because they see the Spanish State as an Imperial force imposing itself on them as peoples and nations.

'something' that was quickly and popularly referred to as 15M or the Indignados.[5]

Since that day, 15M has had a tremendous impact on the way a large part of the

Spanish population understands itself and its response-abilities and rights. In addition,

15M has affected the way in which a large part of the Spanish population understands

its environment and those living-beings with whom said environment is co-created

and co-inhabited. Since May 15th 2011, 15M has altered the way in which many

individuals engage with*in* their spiritual, environmental, social, political, and

economic realities. It has affected their ways of thinking about family; love;

community; hierarchy; patriarchy; imperialism; colonialism; capitalism; socialism;

humanism; communism; anarchism; feminism; the environment; debt; government;

monarchy; history; food; art; the private; the public; and the common. These and

many other ideas and realities have been and are currently being reengaged. 15M has

affected thinking, feeling, intuition and action in an unquantifiable number of ways.

  15M is 'something' collective and personal; global and local; theoretical and

practical; revolutionary and reformist; progressive and conservative; civic and civil.

15M has a temporality which encompasses past, present and future; and works within

and without societal structures of power. 15M is movement; 15M is transformation;

and 15M is hope (in a non-Obama sense of the term).[6] 15M is alive; it is a multiplicity

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Numerous interviewees do not identify with Spain as a nation or a country, and speak always of the Spanish State.

[5] Very early on in the project it became apparent that what I was studying was not a movement, and that it was not about indignation. Most of the people interviewed rejected the term Indignados as a name given by the media and thought of what they were engaged in as being about empowerment, freedom, transformation, justice and mutual aid. All of the interviewees identified with the term 15M.

[6] Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano, explains very well why it is important to emphasize the kind of hope we are referring to when speaking of hope in the era of Obama as president of the United States. Galeano cites the words of one of his teachers, Carlos Quijano, and says: "All sins have redemption. All but one. It is unforgivable to sin against hope." Then Galeano in reference to Obama says: "Obama is sinning against the hope that he himself was able to awaken in his country and the whole world." It has become frequent for me to be in conversations where different people have specifically used the word hope and then told me that they meant the word in a non-Obama sense. The hope I have experienced in 15M is an action-based hope. People are acting together to try and improve their worlds and in the process of acting are feeling hopeful. The slogan for the PAH *Plataforma de Afectados por*

of ideas. It is a constant mutation of something that escapes definition.[7] Yet, 15M is

easily recognizable and can be genealogically explored through its ideas, its

relationality and its actions. 15M is a multiplicity of knowledge(s).[8] 15M is dialogical;

it is new and old; it is wise and ignorant; vanguard and rearguard; mainstream and

marginal; migrant and immigrant. 15M is rupture and continuity, destruction and

construction. 15M is internal and external; inclusive and exclusive. 15M is utopian

and grounded; virtual and real; intuitive and analytical; spontaneous and planned.

15M is legal, illegal, and alter-legal. It is all this and much more.

Much can be said about 15M, and yet, as mentioned above one cannot

genuinely define it. So how can I best engage with*in* 15M? And to whom and for

what purpose can the outcomes of such engagement be helpful? These are the

underlying and foundational questions that have guided this critical and exploratory

'beingness' I have been engaged in whilst working on this study. Ultimately, the

question I am seeking to answer is the following:

What is the phenomenon that calls itself 15M?

It has been an on-going process since I first camped in Barcelona's *Plaça*

Catalunya in May of 2011. Since then, I have come to tentatively regard 15M in the

Spanish State in the following manner: 15M is a way of being in the world with

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la Hipoteca (Platform of those Affected by Mortgages), and how popular it has become is indicative of this action-based hope. As homeless families and other activists working in the PAH continue to organize, plan, and occupy new buildings marred in corruption scandals or owned by the tax-payer bailed out banks; PAH participants and supporters can be heard shouting, *¡Sí se puede! ¡Sí se puede!* (Yes we can! Yes we can!).

[7] There can be no exact statement or description to capture the full nature, scope, or meaning of 15M.

[8] In Spanish for the plural of the noun knowledge in this context I would use *saberes*, because it clearly speaks to the different types of knowledges inhabiting the same space. For this reason I am using the plural of knowledge in English 'knowledges', which although not common, I have seen being used in different spaces. Throughout the essay I will be adding specificity to this concept of knowledges via my own mode of translation and personal definitions stemming from lived examples.

fellow living beings. In this sense, 15M presents us with some hints – mostly in the form of questions and explorations – regarding what happens to us as human beings and spiritual, environmental, social, economic, and political agents; when we engage and articulate collectively, horizontally, and non-violently, different knowledges. Knowledges that exist in addition to, and outside of, established hegemonic and dogmatic belief systems. It is in 15M's abundant questioning and exemplary explorations that I see its transformative power.

Approach to the question of what is the phenomenon that calls itself 15M

Because of all the reasons cited above and in order to answer the study's central question (*What is the phenomenon that calls itself 15M?*), careful consideration has gone into figuring out how best to engage with*in* 15M. What I have come to realize is that for me the most useful way to approach it, is to try first to enter 15M with an absolute openness to learning new languages and practices. To enter making a conscious effort to not superimpose upon what I see, hear and practice, any predefined frameworks of analysis that might have been acquired in other spaces I inhabit. This is a task that I undertake accepting that I will fall short of this ideal. Nevertheless, it remains an aspiration. This is a difficult challange, with an inherent tension, which must be consciously navigated through at all times. The ability to not superimpose ones own pre-established frameworks on something new we engage with is seldom achieved. However, it is in the intent that we perhaps are able to behave as part of a global 'people's microphone'.[9] Able to voice what has been said for others to hear; and thus hopefully contributing valuable insight about 15M that otherwise remains drowned under the surface of non-dialogical analysis and propaganda.

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[9] Practice used at Occupy Wall Street, by people in order to transmit knowledge to each other in the occupied square, when it was made illegal for the occupiers to use megaphones in their assemblies.

When trying to answer the question '*What is the phenomenon that calls itself 15M?'* one is impelled to reflect on the most adequate epistemological and normative templates for social and critical interpretation. How can we try to understand the agency of those being 15M without reifying them or submitting them to a cognitive hierarchy? This is a critical issue that is raised when approaching social interpretation and which raises two important questions. First, it makes us reflect on whether it is our ethical duty as researchers to take at face value the self-representations of those we are trying to understand. And second, it raises the question of whether such an ethical duty in anyway impedes social interpretation by reducing the role of the researcher to a mere 'sound box' of the discourses of those being engaged.

There is always a possibility in a participatory approach that a method of listening to political actors might reduce the researcher to a mere 'sound box'. This point is much discussed in the literature on participatory approaches. However, in the case of this research, I do not think the study is bound to such a limitation. I do not aim in this essay to merely record what actors are saying, what I aim towards co-constructing throughout the study is a reciprocal dialogue. First I listen and let 15M voices be heard and then I reply to them and listen again. Throughout the essay, as my findings are presented I carryout this process of reciprocal elucidation with 15M actors. I set out what individuals being 15M are saying and then I respond to it in various ways as the research progresses; increasingly I do so in my own voice. In this sense, although by listening and presenting what I have been told I do initially act as a people's microphone, as the essay advances I progressively respond with my own analysis. The process is dialogical not monological, in the sense that it does not just listen and record and instead focuses on reciprocal elucidation.

It is now widely agreed in the social sciences that social and critical

interpretation requires a first step of always listening to the voices of the other and the way they speak. Then one goes on to reply in various ways. A recent and well-defended example in the theoretical literature of the way I attempt to be as true yet critical of the voices of those being 15M I have heard, is presented by Michael Temelini. In *Wittgenstein and the Study of Politics*,[10] Temelini defends this method of reciprocal elucidation and attributes it to Quentin Skinner, Charles Taylor and James Tully. This is certainly a tradition with which I identify and which has inspired my own method of reciprocal elucidation. Through this method for disclosing the field of 15M I am able to answer the question '*What is the phenomenon that calls itself 15M?*' in a unique manner.

Chapters one to four

By giving 'perspicuous representation' or thick description of 15M by means of reciprocal elucidation in the first four chapters of the essay I am able to make a unique contribution to the *theoretical* literature on reciprocal elucidation and public philosophy. Chapters one and two survey multiple 15Ms[11] to highlight some of the agonisms,[12] differences and convergences that exist between them. The chapters also survey the numerous and constantly mutating practices of those being 15M, and study 15Ms chronological temporalities. The chapters approach this task by taking the reader to the different cities that I visited and introducing the voices of different

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[10] Temelini, M (2015) *Wittgenstein and the Study of Politics*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
[11] From this moment onwards when speaking of 15M I will often use its plural '15Ms' in acknowledgement of multiplicity.
[12] In *The Subject and Power,* Foucault says the following (EW3 342): "At the very heart of the power relationship, and constantly provoking it, are the recalcitrance of the will and the intransigence of freedom. Rather than speaking of an essential antagonism, it would be better to speak of an 'agonism' – of a relationship that is at the same time mutual incitation and struggle; less of a face-to-face confrontation that paralyzes both sides than a permanent provocation." Cited in Tully, J. (2002) Political Philosophy as a Critical Activity, in *Political Theory*, Volume 30 Number 4, August 2002 533-555, page 533.

people being 15M in these localities. <u>Chapter three</u> explores multiple traditions existing in and shaping 15M. It does this by genealogically working through some of the traditions, which those being 15M that I interviewed recognize as having contributed to the construction of that which we refer to as 15M. <u>Chapter four</u> presents different visions of alternative futures co-existing within the 15M climate. The future-visions presented are drawn from dialogues within the dialogical sisterhood of individuals being 15M.[13]

The value of these first four chapters is in the interviewing and capturing of the complex, messy, and indeterminate meaning of 15M in a thick way, based on hundreds of interviews and thousands of social media documents.

Chapters five and six

Through my method of reciprocal elucidation I am able to disclose the field of 15M (the phenomenon) in a way that shows it to be different from the way 15M appears in other frames. In particular for the purpose of this study, I am contrasting the findings of my method of disclosing the 15M phenomenon with discourse arising out of Podemos supporters using a Gramscian imaginary to construct their understandings of 15M and the subsequent rise in Spain of party-movement Podemos.[14] From this contrasted frame, 15M is viewed instrumentally as a means to gain political power and criticism is made of horizontal political practices being all

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[13] I use the word sisterhood here because when speaking in the plural it is common within the 15M climate to speak in the feminine, in Spanish, *nosotras* instead of *nosotros*. In the closing remarks of chapter two (which serve as closing remarks for both chapters one and two), I will briefly raise some concerns regarding the use of the term sisterhood when considering some of the tensions that existed between feminists and numerous 15M encampments.

[14] When speaking of a Gramscian imaginary I am thinking about what Mustapha Kamal Pasha describes as neo-Gramscians holding on to an implicit notion of an imaginary outside of capitalism from which they formulate their strategies of counter-hegemony. See Pasha, M.K. (2013) 'Return to the Source: Gramsci, Culture, and International Relations', in *International Relations Theory: Modern Princes and Naked Emperors*, edited by Alison j. Ayers, London: Palgrave Macmillan.

talk and no action. This imaginary has gained a strong foothold in the Spanish and European left, as Podemos continues in its struggle to 'capture' (using language often used by the leaders of Podemos) the power of the institutions of representation of the state. In <u>chapter five</u> of this essay I discuss it in detail and contrast it to understandings of 15M unearthed by my reciprocal elucidation approach. Aided by this method of reciprocal elucidation, I am able to present 15M as a political phenomenon in its own right that is overlooked by framings of 15M stemming from within this Gramscian imaginary. In addition, through this approach to 15M I am able to give another interpretation of Podemos, as potentially giving rise to a relationship of subordination (power-over) rather than a democratic relationship of equality (power-with).[15]

When intellectuals work within state-centric research frameworks, as is the case with those defending the rise of Podemos from within a Gramscian imaginary, there is a tendency to reconstruct movements like 15M in a way that conceals the lived experience of 15M.[16] The value of chapter five is in the fact that it offers an alternative to state-centric understandings of Podemos as presented through a Gramscian imaginary within Spain's current context. There is a vast literature that has

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[15] Through the essay I will be making a distinction between 'power-with' and 'power-over' which will become clear as the essay progresses. The distinction derives from my engagement with James Tully's work, although it is important to mention that Hannah Arendt also tried hard to get theorists to see outside the ruler-ruled assumption or worldview in *On Violence*. Arendt makes the distinction most fundamentally in 'Socrates', in Arendt, H. (2005) *The Promise of Politics*, Edited and with an Introduction by Jerome Kohn, New York: Schocken Books. For further analysis on these two concepts and their connection with Hannah Arendt's thought, see: Tully, J. (2011) *Violent Power-Over and Nonviolent Power-With: Hannah Arendt On Violence and Nonviolence*, Unpublished article, Oklahoma. Tully has also traced this distinction between 'power-with' and 'power-over' to Follet, M.P. (1932) *Creative Experience.*

[16] When speaking of state-centric research frameworks I must make the following clarification: I see two types of state-centrism. The first state-centrism, like the one that frames this essay takes state borders as spatial borders worth taking into consideration because of the reality of an existing politics of the nation state. The second-state centrism, gives a central importance in politics to state institutions. In the first reading of state-centrism the state is considered when thinking about politics because of the abuse of power by people holding on to the power of the state. In the second reading of state-centrism, politics is defended as a way of fighting for state power. Through this second reading collective presences such as 15M are seen as proto-political. It is in this second sense, that state-centrism is critiqued throughout this essay.

developed in Spain around the rise of party-movement Podemos by members of Podemos, by individuals being 15M and by academic commentators. In chapter five I engage critically with Podemos defenders and discuss in great detail the possibility and risk of Podemos subordinating 15M.

One of the valuable discoveries of this chapter is that most of the pro-Podemos theorists whose work is discussed within the chapter, ground their analysis in Antonio Gramsci in one way or another. Nevertheless, the chapter reveals how a careful reading of Gramsci warns against the rise of precisely the kind of unequal and authoritarian relationship (charismatic Condottiere) that their analysis of the instrumental Podemos-15M relationship seems to be uncritically enabling.

In chapter six I present what through this method of reciprocal elucidation has crystalized as an important paradox of our times, the never-ending search for democracy via non-democratic means without acknowledging that it cannot be attained non-democratically. The chapter presents two hypotheses which if reflected on can help overcome this paradox. *First*, the 'Goya Hypothesis', which acts as a cautionary tale pointing out that when elites attempt to steer 'societies in movement' towards institutional politics of the kind instituted by those defending the *status quo*, power-over methods leave leaders who employ them without reliable bases for accountability.[17] This hypothesis aims to encourage members of Podemos to work out more respectful relationships of mutual accountability with 15M and other networks of nonviolent and horizontal mutual aid. Finally, the *second* hypothesis presented in this chapter, the 'Ever-so-slowly hypothesis', suggests that individuals being 15M

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[17] When thinking of accountability, I am thinking of a kind of dialogical and horizontal accountability that is beyond legal or social accountability. Following my dialogues of reciprocal elucidation with*in* 15M, it became clear to me that individuals being 15M when thinking of accountability are thinking of an ability to revoke collectively granted powers at anytime, and to be able to discuss issues deemed important at any given moment with those having been granted temporary representative powers. This kind of accountability gets lost when a power-with relationship becomes a power-over arrangement.

remind us through their actions that in order for democracy to be enacted both their way of being (power-with) and temporality (one step at a time) have to be taken into account.

The possibility Podemos subordinating 15M, which was the central theme of chapter five, is also central to chapter six. However, in chapter five the issue is addressed through the vast literature in Spain around 15M and Podemos by academics and participants, and the European literature around populism, horizontality and Podemos grounded in Gramsci. Chapter six draws, instead, on a whole body of literature on instrumental versus constitutive means-ends views of political change, going back to Mahatma Gandhi and forward to Aldous Huxley, Richard Gregg, Hannah Arendt, Robert Young, Gene Sharp and Cesar Chavez. The chapter shows that this problem of treating grass-roots organisations as instrumental means to gain political power, rather than ongoing and intergenerational forms of cooperative organisations in their own right, and as the basis of representative institutions in practice, has been a central problem throughout the 20th century and a whole body of critical literature has developed around it. It is not new, there is a whole century of practice and reflection on it.

In chapters five and six we can see that when we disclose the field of 15M through a method of reciprocal elucidation, 15M appears not as an instrumental means to gain political power for Podemos. 15M is not an instrument in the service of Podemos in the first instance, but rather, a confluence of power-with organisations that embodies a completely different view of relations between means and ends: namely, a constitutive or pre-figurative relationship of 'being the change'. This is the point that the 15M slogan which I have used as title to this essay *(vamos lentos porque vamos lejos)* is trying to make. We go ever-so-slowly because we are going-

on-forever because means and ends need to align for us to be the change we want to see.

These two chapters suggest that we need to think of a new kind of representative relationship between 15M and representation (Podemos); one of "joining hands"; rather than one of subordination as revealed by chapter five and enabled by leftist intellectuals working within a Gramscian imaginary. As chapter six shows, Hannah Arendt points out that we need to do this in *On Violence* but she does not go into any detail about it. She also does not discuss power-with organisations, so these chapters are an important contribution to bringing this theory into the realm of practice. They are also useful in order to guard against the dangers Gramsci warns us against, and they offer a unique contribution to distinctions being carved out in the academic literature between ways of being and practices of civil citizens and civic citizens.

Serving as a concluding chapter, chapter six finishes with some closing remarks regarding the question of what is the phenomenon that calls itself 15M. Here suggestions are made which reveal how the interview approach of this research is a unique contribution to *community-based and engaged forms of social scientific research.*

The interviewing process

My engagement in this on-going non-disciplinary, multi-traditional multilogue I have been a participant in since May of 2011 has been in transition.[18] It has shifted

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[18] I use the term non-disciplinary rather than multi-disciplinary. I do this because I think it is more reflective of the fact that although the multilogue takes place between individuals coming from numerous disciplines and spaces, there seems to be a conscious effort to transcend disciplines in order to grapple with the question of what 15M is and what it has done or is doing. Throughout the following chapters I intend to contribute to this non-disciplinary multilogue more thoroughly.

from what was clearly a position of observer and external analyst, to one of

participant-observer re-articulating my own ways of thinking from within the spaces

of 15M. This has been an organic transformation that began in May of 2013. At that

time, I made the decision to think through some questions; and I set out on a trip to

ask those questions in engagement with people identifying themselves as being 15M

(or identifying with and/or feeling proximity to it).

Questions that I asked revolved around the following topics: What is 15M?

What does the word Indignado say to different individuals? What is original in 15M?

What traditions and movements are nourishing it? Does it have goals, and if so, what

are these goals? What methods does it include? What gives it legitimacy? What has

been its social impact? What are its most efficient practices, tools and weapons? And

what institutional responses has it received? I have also been interested in asking

whether the Spanish State's transition from dictatorship to democracy has had any

influence on 15M. Whether different individuals see similarities between 15M and

events and acts from other historical moments. And whether political majorities can

be achieved through the imaginary of 15M.

Other questions have included the following: Can the success of 15M be

measured and if so how? How is 15M understood in the international context by those

'being 15M'? How is digital activism understood in relation to physical activism?

How are representation and participation understood from within 15M? And how are

revolution and reform thought about from within it?

In addition, throughout the engagement with individuals 'being 15M',[19]

questions pertinent to current Spanish political, economic and social concerns have

been asked. Opinions regarding the potential independence of Cataluña; the state of

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[19] Often when speaking of 15M people speak of being 15M. *Yo soy 15M* (I am 15M), *eso es 15M* (that is 15M).

the monarchy; the country's reality of corruption; the types of repression being witnessed; the country's economic and political future; the possibilities for nonviolence remaining the preferred approach to resist and gain ground; and, the role of Europe and its future. I have also been very interested in people's sources of theoretical and practical inspiration. And finally, I have asked about their social and political trajectories, or/and social and political commitments prior to 15M.

In order to ask these questions, I have travelled in an old van across the multiple territories that make up what is today referred to by many as Spain.[20] Through this process I have immersed myself with*in* what now to me feels and looks like a complex; mutating and dialogic; collective and cooperative; agonistic and transformative 'climate' that many refer to as *el clima 15M* (15m climate).[21] The trip lasted for six months from May 2013 until November 2013. As an outcome, there are 213 interviews that were conducted in twenty-five different cities and in numerous smaller towns and villages. This experience has taken place within eight of the country's autonomous communities. It involved on-going conversations, which took place alongside and sometimes within visits to assemblies; cooperatives; liberated social spaces; community-run recuperated social housing estates; union headquarters; factories; offices; universities; parliamentary buildings; farms; public squares; virtual meeting rooms, secured military level encrypted video conferencing spaces (for cases where people are in hiding); and people's homes.

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[20] The van is a 1980 VW Westfalia that has been collaboratively prepared for the road by a group of Spanish activists. Turquoise blue with white roofing it is now known in 15M spaces as La Pasionaria, name given to it in tribute to Dolores Ibárruri, Basque revolutionary and Spanish Republican leader during the Spanish Civil War. The van is now part of a collective known as Barraca 2.0. Barraca 2.0 is a pedagogical project of reciprocal elucidation, in which city activists travel to small villages around the country conducting workshops on urban activism practices, and interviewing local activists on their specific struggles.

[21] Term coined by Spanish philosopher Amador Fernández-Savater.

I have discussed 15M with many people that prefer to remain unidentifiable. Interviewees include town mayors; politicians of numerous political parties; union leaders; hackers; lawyers; public intellectuals; philosophers; artists; school and university teachers; journalists; squatters; and members of public administrations. All of who have in common, the fact that they identify themselves as active participants in 15M; or as having collaborated or felt close proximity to 15M.

The research on the road has been an academic and socio-politically transformative experience: Listening and enticing dialogue or simply witnessing it flourishing while coexisting with a multiplicity of ideas. It has been an amazing way of enriching my academically trained philosophy by entering a philosophy of shared experience with fellow citizens. Working within the same broad multilogue each with our own specific skill set. Through this dialogic lens I have been able to see the world differently and have realized that another Spain is not only possible but that a multiplicity of Spains are currently actual.

As I write this introduction it has been almost two years since the time on the road came to an end for me. Since then, I have transcribed interviews and collected 853 pages of elucidating material from which to excavate different 15M knowledges; practices; traditions; languages; debates around alternative futures; and also its chronological temporality. The process of transcription has added an important layer of depth into the listening process, which I find absolutely necessary for the kind of dialogical investigation I am carrying out. It is now, as I read through the transcribed material that I begin to hear from the interviewees what might be of importance to write about regarding 15M from within Spain's current political context.[22] In this

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[22] I am amazed at how a conversation comes back to life when I start reading what I first asked those whom I have been interviewing throughout my trip, and whose words I have transcribed and I am enjoying the pleasure of reading. I am just amazed at the process of learning one undergoes when one

sense, I have become aware of the fact that if I am to avoid the superimposition of existing frames upon the knowledges coming from 15M, it must be different 15M knowledges that help frame this philosophical essay.

This essay and the larger project

As mentioned above, I envision this research as an attempt at gaining a dialogical understanding of what it is that we might be speaking of when referring to 15M. More specifically, I am concerned with understanding what is the phenomenon that calls itself 15M. In addition, through this exploration I seek to acquire practice in being dialogical as an academic. This I do in alignment with the sketched parameters of what James Tully refers to as public philosophy.

For over five years I have been engaged in an on-going dialogue with James Tully's public philosophy. This dialogue has been helpful as I continue to struggle in my attempt at throwing a critical light on the field of practices in which civic struggles are taking place in the Spanish State, and the multiple practices of civic freedom available to change them. For Tully, public philosophy is practical, critical and historical. According to him, it has four defining characteristics. *First*, "it starts from and grants a certain primacy to practice. It is a form of philosophical reflection on practices of governance in the present that are experienced as oppressive in some

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first interviews someone, then transcribes the dialogue that has taken place, and then undergoes the process of reading and analysing the conversation in the form of text. This action of deep engagement with another human being, allows for the expansion of the temporality of conversations. What took one hour to be spoken about has become an on-going months long dialogue with each one of the participants in the research. This I say because the interviewing was only the beginning of the conversation with each of the participants and a multilogue is now taking place through the action of reading them all with each other. Just like process is important to the kind of 'beingness' exemplified in 15Ms, process must also be key in the kinds of methods used to try and better understand different 15Ms. For this reason, as the essay evolves, this 'on-going multilogue' research approach will be further described, critiqued and refined. Throughout the essay this process will be deeply reflected on. Questions such as what I want to get out of it and how it has shaped the work and shaped me will be more thoroughly addressed, together with its limitations and further possibilities that could be explored.

way and are called into question by those subject to them."[23] *Second*, "the aim is not to develop a normative theory as the solution to the problems of this way of being governed, such as a theory of justice, equality or democracy. Rather, it is to disclose the historically contingent conditions of possibility of this historically singular set of practices of governance and of the range of characteristic problems and solutions to which it gives rise (its form of problematisation)."[24] *Third*, "this practical and critical objective is achieved in two steps. The first is a critical survey of the languages and practices in which the struggles arise and various theoretical solutions are proposed and implemented as reforms… The second step broadens this initial critique by using a history or genealogy of the formation of these specific languages and practices as an object of comparison and contrast."[25] *Fourth*, "the approach seeks to establish an on-going mutual relation with the concrete struggles, negotiations and implementations of citizens who experiment with modifying the practices of governance on the ground."[26]

Because of the way this research is being approached, I understand it as standing with*in* the tradition of public philosophy as Tully describes it. In this sense, I see the *four* defining characteristics of the public philosophy Tully practices as being present in this essay. *First*, throughout the essay practice is granted a certain primacy. *Second*, the study does not attempt to develop a normative theory and instead attempts to disclose contingent conditions of possibility of 15M practices. *Third*, the thesis attempts to be practical and critical through conducting a critical survey of the languages and practices of 15M and through presenting a genealogy of the formation

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[23] Tully, J. (2008) *Public Philosophy in a New Key: Volumes I and II,* Cambridge*:* Cambridge University Press, Volume I, page 17.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.

of these specific languages and practices. *Fourth*, the project attempts to establish on-going mutual relations with citizens experimenting with modifying practices of government on the ground.

For Tully public philosophy is one of numerous, in fact, perhaps even infinite possibilities of contributing to a multilogue of reciprocal elucidation. Public philosophy seeks to offer one more option in our intellectual and ethical quest towards engaging critically with the numerous challenges faced by our societies today. Below is how Tully describes what public philosophy is all about. This is the reason why I see the work I am presenting in this essay as a contribution to this particular tradition:

> "The role of public philosophy is to address public affairs. This civic task can be done in many different ways. The type of public philosophy I practice carries on this task, by trying to enter into the dialogues with citizens engaged in struggles against various forms of injustice and oppression. The aim, is to establish pedagogical relationships of reciprocal elucidation between academic research, and the civic activities of fellow citizens. The specific role of this public philosophy, is to throw a critical light on the field of practices in which civic struggles take place, and the practices of civic freedom available to change them."[27]

Through my own critical exploration of Tully's public philosophy, I have been inspired by his reflections on numerous issues for which I hold a deep concern. His thoughts on imperialism; on colonialism; on capitalism; on war; on civil and civic citizenship; and on nonviolence and mutual aid, are constantly challenging my own

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[27] See Tully, J. (2008) *Public Philosophy in a New Key: Volumes I and II,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Volume I, page 3. Tully uses the term 'citizen' "to refer to a person who is subject to a relationship of governance (that is to say, governed) and, simultaneously and primarily, is an active agent in the field of a governance relationship. While this includes the official sense of 'citizen' as a recognized member of a state, it is obviously broader and deeper, and more appropriate and effective for that reason."

critical lens. Tully uses public philosophy in order to shed light on these important issues. The way in which through his approach he is able to get at understandings that other methods seem to obscure, I find incredibly inspiring. However, it is not this inspiration that draws me to study with*in* 15M using public philosophy. The main reason I practice public philosophy in this research, is that in its *raison d'etre* the public philosophy James Tully practices seems in alignment with the philosophical practices of those being 15M. In a sense, it would seem to someone who has dedicated deep attention to Tully's work and at the same time has imbued himself or herself in the 15M climate, that Tully would be welcomed by most individuals being 15M as one more sister in their ever-growing and complex sisterhood.

Methodology and the place of the author in this essay

In a 1972 published conversation between Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault, Deleuze applauds Foucault for organizing the Group for Information on Prisons (GIP). For this project Foucault worked with some prisoners in France, that were making demands for reform within the prison system following the events of May 1968. The aim of the group was to create the necessary conditions that allowed the prisoners themselves to speak. For this reason, he published the prisoners' demands without any commentary of his own. During their 1972 conversation, Deleuze acknowledges the importance of this theoretical step taken by Foucault:

> "In my opinion, you were the first – in your books and in the practical sphere – to teach us something absolutely fundamental: the indignity of speaking for others. We ridiculed representation and said it was finished, but we failed to draw the consequences of this

"theoretical" conversion to appreciate the theoretical fact that only those directly concerned

can speak in a practical way on their own behalf."[28]

For Foucault, it was important to not speak for others and publish the

discourses of the prison inmates without his commentary. He was doing this because

he understood that the discourse in itself is a form of struggle. Allowing the inmates

to "confiscate, at least temporarily, the power to speak on prison conditions – at

present, the exclusive property of prison administrators and their cronies in reform

groups."[29] What Foucault finds revealing of the GIP is the following: The fact that

once prisoners began to speak for themselves, it became apparent that "they possessed

an individual theory of prisons, the penal system, and justice." A discourse that for

Foucault is what "ultimately matters, a discourse against power, the counter-discourse

of prisoners and those we call delinquents – and not a theory about delinquency."[30]

During the conversation between Foucault and Deleuze, Foucault tries to

explain how he thinks the role of the intellectual has changed following the events of

May 1968. For him, prior to 1968, the "intellectual spoke the truth to those who had

yet to see it, in the name of those who were forbidden to speak the truth: he was

conscience, consciousness, and eloquence." Yet, following the 'recent upheaval' (as

he refers to the events of May 1968), the intellectual discovered the following

according to Foucault: that the masses no longer needed intellectuals to gain

knowledge. As Foucault puts it: "they know perfectly well, without illusion; they

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[28] "Intellectuals and power: A conversation between Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze" in Michel
Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, New York: Cornell
University Press (1980), page 209.
[29] Idem. page 214.
[30] Idem. page 209.

know far better than he [the intellectual] and they are certainly capable of expressing themselves."[31]

In the case pertinent to this essay, Foucault's words resonate. It is apparent that those being 15M are clearly capable of expressing themselves. For this reason, the sheer 'indignity of speaking for others' that Foucault clearly understood following May 1968, I have interiorized throughout my engagement with those being 15M. It has become the ethical commitment that runs through the essay. It has become a guiding principle behind the choice of position as author in the text. It has also served as a key determinant in the choice of methodological approaches that I draw inspiration from throughout the exploration. As I write, I find myself in alignment with Foucault's following statement:

> "The intellectual's role is no longer to place himself 'somewhat ahead and to the side' in order to express the stifled truth of the collectivity; rather, it is to struggle against the forms of power that transform him into its object and instrument in the sphere of 'knowledge,' 'truth,' 'consciousness,' and 'discourse.'"[32]

Taking into consideration the role of the intellectual and acknowledging my role as the author of this text, I find it valuable to engage intellectually with these reflections coming from Foucault. This engagement aids me in trying to avoid becoming 'object and instrument' of the very power structures engaged in agonistic struggle with those being 15M. After all, the objective of this essay is to engage in a

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[31] Idem. page 207.

[32] Ibid. Following from this statement, Foucault goes to clarify how the masses are negated their space for discourse: "…there exists a system of power which blocks, prohibits, and invalidates this discourse and this knowledge, a power not only found in the manifest authority of censorship, but one that profoundly and subtly penetrates an entire societal network. Intellectuals are themselves agents of this system of power – the idea of their responsibility for 'consciousness' and discourse forms part of the system."

multilogue with*in* different 15Ms so that different voices being 15M can elucidate reciprocally about 15Ms in the Spanish State. Ultimately, what matters are the counter-discourses of those being 15M and not a theory about 15M. Therefore, as the author of the essay and in order for me to be able to share this space dialogically with those 15M discourses, I think the first step that I must take is to clarify my position within the text so that there is as little room as possible for misunderstanding.

In order to clarify this position I must start by explaining that I understand this project to be primarily a co-composed text, in which 213 anonymous individuals engaged in dialogues of reciprocal elucidation with Pablo Ouziel, are helping us think through and better understand what it might be that we are referring to when speaking of 15Ms. Everything that evolves in this essay is in someway in permanent engagement within these dialogues of reciprocal elucidation. Nevertheless, the final outcome of this text, its shortfalls, limitations and contradictions can only be attributable to me. I cannot offer a collective and shared view of what is 15M because it means so many different things to many different people. What I can offer is a personal account of what I have experienced, recorded and thought through with the support of others. By positioning myself within the text using the first person and first person reflective, I am attempting to clearly transmit that what I am learning is tied to personal experience. I cannot speak for each of the multiplicity of voices that make up the multiple 15Ms.

'Pervasive anonymity' enacted, as the anonymity of a multitude is a key aspect of 15M counter-discourses.[33] For this reason, although as the author I remain in

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[33] See 'What is an Author?' in Foucault, M. (1977) *Language, Counter-memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, New York: Cornell University Press, page 116. Here Foucault says: "We can easily imagine a culture where discourse would circulate without any need for an author. Discourses, whatever their status, form, or value, and regardless of our manner of handling them, would unfold in a pervasive anonymity."

the text with my name, I do so in a multilogue between equals; in alignment with the principle of radical horizontality that most impressed me about 15Ms in the Spanish State. Of course, I am conscious of the fact that unless I do as Foucault did with his GIP prison work – to simply publish the interviews without editing and without my own thoughts – I will always be open to the possibility of receiving criticism for my indignity in speaking for others when writing about 15M. Nevertheless, I have come to the conclusion that I cannot be an interpretation-less relay for the voices of others, without risking an authoritarian move in which I obscure all sorts of editorial choices regarding the dialogues or parts of dialogues being presented. For this reason, it is clear to me that although the spirit of the text will always be dialogical, I will not shy away from inhabiting a space from which authorial choices, concerns, viewpoints, creations, offerings and arguments are presented unabashedly.[34]

In this sense, I acknowledge the role I play in the steering of the conversation, through asking specific questions; through presenting myself to the interviewees as an academic activist; and through framing their answers under certain topics for discussion within the text. I do hope in this process to offer readers a sense of the kinds of things 15M wants us to know, without the reader having to read through over eight hundred pages of transcribed material. And in addition, I hope to add with my interpretations and observations, details useful to the reader that reading the interview transcriptions without a context of moment, place, emotions and surrounding climate might not reveal.

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[34] I would like to thank Matt James and Michelle Bonner for a very valuable dialogue regarding first, the risks in trying to be a relay for the voices of others, and second, the value of hearing the voice and reflections of the interviewer/researcher. This conversation has been helpful to me because it has helped me think through the most constructive and democratic position to take as author within this text.

Throughout the essay, and especially in chapters one, two and three, I speak for myself and about my observations, thoughts and sensations. Every other participant in the research speaks for herself or himself. I see my role as that of a facilitator in the way that facilitators have worked in 15M general assemblies. Being present, but often in silence whilst offering tentative boundaries to keep the discussion flowing. However, as a facilitator I acknowledge the challenging task of introducing issues, defining the order of things to be discussed, and summing up lessons learnt whilst remaining dialogical, horizontal and democratic. I take on the challenge with an explicit commitment to portraying views in a way that I am confident will resonate with interviewees as an accurate portrayal of the issues being addressed. Nevertheless, since this text is written in the spirit of that dialogical trust-building so fundamental to 15M, I am aware of the fact that the true judges of the achievement of the intentions of this text can only be those whom I have interviewed. What I do however hope to transmit clearly right from the start is that I do not think my text nor any other text can claim to be speaking in representation of all 15Ms.

Foucault's imagining of 'a culture where discourse would circulate without any need for an author' strikes me as something 15Ms have been striving towards. It is because of this consciousness of the need to be cautious as an author, that I find myself drawn to 'public philosophy as a critical activity', especially to James Tully's particular approach.[35] After all, one of the guiding concerns inspiring Tully's public philosophy is to think about how to "attend to the strange multiplicity of political voices and activities without distorting or disqualifying them in the very way we

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[35] What I mean by this statement, is that after having transcribed 858 pages of conversation with 15M public philosophers, I have serious doubt about whether the value is in simply publishing the transcripts like Foucault did with the GIP. I wonder whether there can be more value in my authoring an essay. In this sense, the democratic nature of public philosophy allows me to move forward confident that I am being true to my commitment with 15Ms; while at the same time being able to contribute to the advancement of knowledge regarding such phenomena.

approach them."[36] It seems in this sense, that with the help of Tully's approach to

public philosophy I might be able to engage dialogically with citizens struggling

against oppression on the ground, without distorting or disqualifying them in the

process.

In Tully's Public Philosophy, although the author remains in the text he does

so in a dialogical and radically democratic manner. From Tully's viewpoint, political

philosophy is:

> "…the methodological extension and critical clarification of the already reflective and
> problematized character of historically situated practices of practical reasoning. It is therefore
> an engaged 'public' philosophy and every engaged and thoughtful citizen is also a public
> philosopher. Public Philosophy is democratic."[37]

As Public Philosophers and dialogue partners, throughout the research those of

us contributing to the co-composition of this essay have gained insight into how it

might be useful for us to think about 15Ms. Through the exchange of questions and

answers over different features of 15M, and over different ways of thinking about and

being with*in* 15M, we have entered a "kind of open-ended dialogue that brings *insight*

through the activity of reciprocal elucidation itself."[38]

Through my own particular approach to public philosophy, I have draw on

multiple disciplines and traditions in order to explore with a multiplicity of practices

that in their acknowledgment of the core sociality of human beings, attempt to

contribute knowledges of social worlds and processes. I have been particularly drawn

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[36] Tully citing Stanley Cavell, in Cavell, S. (1990) *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pages 101-26.
[37] Tully, J. (2008) *Public Philosophy in a New Key: Volumes I and II,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Volume I, page 28.
[38] Idem., page 15. This reciprocal elucidation for Tully is never ending when there is no definitive answer, which is clearly the case when trying to define what 15Ms are.

to approaches to research that contribute to the relaying of knowledges from the everyday lives of ordinary people, knowledges of social forms, and knowledges of the relationships between individual action and the actions of the larger social group.

Different researchers have inspired the variation of public philosophy I am beginning to work through in this essay. For example, Marilyn Strathern has reminded me of the possibility of creating knowledges through relations.[39] Through Kirsten Hastrup's work I have thought through the value of investigating "how people consciously connect with each other and how they enter into far-reaching and unknowable social relations through their acts."[40] Johannes Fabian and his idea of entering the practiced space has helped me to understand how to seize to be simply an informant and to offer a performative form of knowledge.[41] From David Graeber I was able to study a practical example on how a participant-scholar can attempt to transcend the distinction between these two roles; and how different ethnographic writing traditions can be helpful in my aims to "capture something of the texture and richness and underlying sense of a way of being and doing that could not otherwise be captured in writing."[42]

Kathy Charmaz, speaking from a sociological perspective and advocating for an accessible style of writing that speaks to more publics rather than fewer, also presented me with a much welcomed reminder.[43] Different inspiration came also from the perspective of narrative inquiry (the study of experience as story), from which D Jean Clandinin and Janice Huber presented me with a useful way of understanding my

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[39] Strathern, M. (1993) *The relation. Issues in complexity and scale [Inaugural lecture]*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[40] Hastrup, K. (2005) 'Social Anthropology. Towards a pragmatic enlightenment', in *Social Anthropology*, Volume 13, Number 2, 133-149, page 141.

[41] Fabian, J. (1990) *Power and performance. Ethnographic explorations through proverbial wisdom and theatre in Shaba, Zaire*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

[42] Graeber, D. (2009) *Direct Action: An Ethnography*, Oakland and Edinburg: AK Press, page 14.

[43] Poddephatt, A. (2006) 'Special: An Interview with Kathy Charmaz: On Constructing Grounded Theory, in *Qualitative Sociology Review,* Volume II, Issue 3, December 2006.

relationship with dialogue partners and the transformations we co-experience through our reciprocal elucidation: "Through engaging with participants, narrative inquirers see themselves and participants as each retelling their own stories, and as coming to changed identities and practices through this inquiry process."[44]

Regarding the work of political philosophers that are inspiring the development of my own particular style of public philosophy, the work of Mathias Thaler has helped me to think through how an ethics of interruption and reciprocity might help in our academic-civic dialogical relationships and on-going cycles of reciprocal elucidation.[45] In alignment with Nikolas Kompridis, I have come to question "whether critique can play a political role in the context of democratic politics, where the goal is not to unmask what is, but to make possible what might be."[46] And finally, the work of Boaventura de Sousa Santos has been instrumental in helping me work through epistemological diversity within 15M. Recognizing the diversity of knowledges underlying the practices of different individuals being 15M – 15Ms "ecology of knowledges"[47] –, clearly points to the fact that "a politics of cultural diversity and mutual intelligibility" between 15Ms "calls for a complex procedure of reciprocal and horizontal translation rather than for a general theory."[48]

Working on the crystallization of some of 15Ms' numerous counter-conducts as an intrinsic part of the public philosophy I attempt to practice, "allows for common ground to be identified" in different 15Ms "without erasing the autonomy and

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[44] Clandinin, D.J., & Huber, J. (in press). 'Narrative inquiry'. In B. McGaw, E. Baker, & P. P. Peterson (eds.), *International encyclopedia of education* (3rd ed.). New York: Elsevier.

[45] Thaler M. (2014) 'Discursus Interruptus: Revisiting James Tully's Democratic Conception of Public Philosophy'. *CDS Encounter with James Tully*, University of Westminster June 24th 2014.

[46] Kompridis N. (2014) 'Founding Political Critique in a Post-Political World: Towards a Renewal of Utopian Energies' Forthcoming in, Albena Azmanova and Mihaela Mihai (editors), *Reclaiming Democracy: Judgment, Responsibility and the Right to Politics*. New York: Routledge, 2014.

[47] De Sousa Santos, B. (2004) 'A Critique of Lazy Reason: against the Waste of Experience,' in I. Wallerstein (ed.), *The Modern World-System in the Longue Durée*. Boulder: Paradigm Publishers.

[48] Santos, B.S., Nunes, J.A. and Meneses, M.P. (2007) 'Introduction: Opening Up the Canon of Knowledge and Recognition of Difference, in *Another Knowledge is Possible: Beyond Northern Epistemologies*, Boaventura de Sousa Santos ed., London: Verso, page xxvi.

difference of each of them" (this is best portrayed through chapters one and two of this essay).[49] However, this process requires an ethos of deep listening and intellectual honesty. This is necessary, in order to make sure that what I am writing about in regards to people whose struggles (whose lives) I am trying to shed light on, remains bound to the dialogical relationship that made such writings possible.

An introduction to the complex being '15M'

Before entering the chapters of this essay, I would like to briefly describe the political, economic and social environments in which 15Ms exist. I would also like to present some of the ways in which individuals are being 15M. This might help shed light on some of the reasons behind my choice of methods and style of writing. Since 15Ms appeared, the government, the judicial system and the country's security forces have been actively responding to events on Spanish streets. The ways these institutional responses have evolved reflect the dominant political and philosophical ideas of different institutional actors. At the same time, such responses reveal some of the historical legacies inherited from the country's Francoist dictatorship (and endorsed and reaffirmed through Spain's pacted democratic transition).[50] Since the 15th of May of 2011, these institutions seem to have been operating under crisis management conditions. Media and public opinion, powerful interest groups, and even the European Union (EU) have been pressuring the government to respond. Throughout the process, we have seen the security forces and the judicial system work overtime to address the social conflict brewing on Spanish streets.

For the past four years, the government has continued its rapid implementation of unpopular austerity measures. Since the creation of 15M encampments, multiple

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[49] Ibid.
[50] This issue will be further discussed in chapter three.

movements have sprung up. In addition, the new phenomenon of the party-movement is challenging the *status quo* by aiming to capture power through institutional representation. As citizens continue to organize and act, democratic challenges are arising relevant to the strategies and tactics used for the social control of dissent and the shifting boundaries of legitimate freedom of speech. In Spain there seems to be a shift towards what Arunas Juska and Charles Woolfson have described as "a drift towards 'illiberal democracy' or a trajectory of 'out of and into authoritarian law'".[51] The Spanish population is witnessing dramatic changes in the way in which the state interprets the guiding principles of the country's constitutional text; and the way in which it implements and alters the law of the land.

In the Spanish State, many people being 15M have suffered first-hand the increasing militarization of policing. They have had to deal with increased arbitrary administrative prohibitions and restrictions, and an increase in legal controls. They have experienced an increase in surveillance of their activities by the state. They have been victims of intimidation tactics. They have seen their capacity to mobilize being restricted. In many instances, representatives of the state have violated their rights to free speech, public assembly, arbitrary arrest, and bodily integrity. In addition, different institutional actors have equated the challenge posed by the persistent civil disobedience of 15Ms, with the country's (and indeed the world's) struggle against terrorism.[52]

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[51] Juska, A. and Woolfson, C. (2012) 'Policing political protest in Lithuania', in *Crime Law and Social Change*, Volume 57, page 405. The authors are speaking of Lithuania, however, I think the concept applies also to Spain. Numerous studies today are critically examining the enduring nature of a form of democracy that different people are attempting to label. Examples of current labels include: delegative democracy, incomplete democracy, guarded democracy, low-intensity democracy, violent pluralism, disjunctive democracy and competitive authoritarianism.

[52] These kinds of statements have been frequent. See for example the following news story in which writer and journalist César Vidal makes statements along these lines: Que.es (19/05/2011) *César Vidal relaciona a los manifestantes del 15M con ETA*. See online: http://www.que.es/ultimas-noticias/espana/201105191504-cesar-vidal-relaciona-manifestantes-cont.html.

Prima facie, the different 'soft-line' and 'hard-line' modes of social control being practiced[53] seem to reflect an institutional attempt at foreclosing the space for 15Ms' mobilization; protest; and transformative forms of being (and indeed more generally of all critical 'collective presences').[54] It is important to highlight the fact that the State seems to be harsher with power-with forms of collective organization than with power-over alternatives (a thorough analysis of these different approaches will run through chapters four, five and six of this essay). What is clear, however, is that through different modes of 'disciplining' and 'punishing',[55] there seems to be an institutional drive aimed at redirecting contentious energy toward the formal political processes many on the streets are currently rejecting.[56]

In Spain, the state seems to be holding on to the Schmittean idea that it is he (the sovereign) who decides on the exception; and the state is indeed applying this exception in what people being 15M interpret as the suspension of democracy.[57] Nevertheless, whilst this is taking place, more and more individuals are

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[53] Luis Fernandez suggests that in order to study the social control of dissent, it is useful to differentiate between what he defines as 'hard-line social control' (the use by police of batons, rubber bullets, sound canons, snatch squads, etc.) and 'soft-line social control (the use by institutions of legal regulation, negotiation, monitoring, cultivating fear in the general public, embedded journalism, etc.). I think this dichotomy if used in a loosely enframing manner can help in the process of understanding some of the institutional responses to 15Ms. See Fernandez, L.A. (2005) *Policing protest spaces: Social control in the anti-globalization movement*, Ph.D. dissertation Arizona State University, page 4.

[54] Boaventura de Sousa Santos suggests that what we witnessed on the 15th of May 2011 was not a social movement but a collective presence. He also suggests that political theorists will now need to begin to theorize about such a concept and how it integrates into democratic theories and practices. See Sousa Santos, B. (2012) *Para una teoría jurídica de los indignados*, Facultad de Derecho, Universidad de los Ándes, Feb 1st 2012.

[55] When thinking about these two concepts I am inspired by Michel Foucault's (1979) seminal work, *Discipline and punish: the birth of the prison*, New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group.

[56] Studying the different ways of social control being practiced within the Spanish State; and exploring them genealogically offers an important area of academic research in which much critical work is yet to be carried out. Although this research falls out of the scope of this dissertation, in my exploration of 15M, some of these practices of social control will become apparent. As we study ways of being 15M through chapters one and two, we will get glimpses of the types of oppression citizens acting on the ground are facing. In the appendix to this essay practices of social control enacted by representatives of the State will be further discussed.

[57] See Schmitt, C. (1985) *Political Theology*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press. In pages 5-7, Schmitt writes: "Sovereign is he who decides on the exception... Although he stands outside the normally valid legal system, he nevertheless belongs to it, for it is he who must decide whether the constitution needs to be suspended in its entirety."

disempowering the state by empowering themselves individually and collectively. Howard Zinn suggested in an interview right before his death, that it was absolutely necessary for people to take policy into their own hands; 15Ms are doing this.[58] Nevertheless, in their struggles individuals being 15M do not present reductionists accounts of the state (same applies to this essay), they base their critique on the assumption that the state has many aspects and facets (it is a complex structure and sets of processes). Individuals being 15M highlight that financial power and police power are able to control some aspects or facets of the state and repress 15M (and dissent in general) and impose austerity programs in many repressive ways. Nevertheless, at no point are individuals being 15M speaking of the whole of the state simply as a reductionist instrument of domination. Individuals being 15M that I interviewed clearly presupposed (as does this essay) that the state is complex, multi-aspectival and changeable.[59]

Having said this, it has been four years now since Spanish public squares were occupied by a 'collective presence' constituted by a 'strange multiplicity of culturally diverse voices' shouting "*Basta Ya!"(*Enough!).[60] These voices were challenging the political system of representation with the phrase "*No nos representan!*" (They do not represent us!). They demanded "*democracia real ya!*" (real democracy now!) and shouted "*no somos mercancia en manos de politicos y banqueros*" (we are not merchandise in the hands of politicians and bankers). Since the occupations of May

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[58] This comment comes from a live interview that is no longer available on the Internet. Nevertheless, this statement constitutes one of the foundations of Howard Zinn's thought. For a good example of Zinn's position on this issue see Zinn, H. (2002) *You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train: A Personal History of Our Times*, Boston: Beacon Press.
[59] As the emphasis of this paragraph reveals, there is in this essay no essentialist, functionalist reduction of what the state *is*. It is clearly understood that states are multifaceted, and can be many different things at the same time. It is also understood that the state is not only the government but a much more complex and contradictory bundle of public law, institutions and social functions.
[60] Tully, J. (1995) *Strange multiplicity: Constitutionalism in an age of diversity,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, page 34.

2011, many people in Spain have endured beatings by police, have been evicted from city squares and have been arrested. Nevertheless, their actions have spread throughout local communities. In the process the seeds of social, political and economic democracy that are developing, have been, and are being planted in the hearts and minds of large swathes of the country's population. In addition, many of the practices employed throughout these occupations and their associated constructive programs have become part of the repertoire of practices employed by other popular initiatives that have gained momentum. As the political, social and economic situation has continued to deteriorate and more people have been drawn to the streets 15M practices have been broadly adopted.

Across the country, these networked forces have been organizing and making decisions collectively, through popular assemblies organized in city, town and village squares. People have stopped families from being evicted from repossessed homes. Abandoned public or repossessed buildings have been occupied to host homeless families. Police has been stopped from arresting 'illegal' immigrants in poor neighbourhoods. People have attempted to stop the closing of public hospitals following drastic public spending cuts. Neighbourhood committees have been organized aimed at rebuilding the social fabric destroyed by the last two decades of neoliberal economics. Boycotts have mushroomed. Fiscal disobedience has intensified.[61] Legal persecution of those deemed responsible for the crisis has been initiated; financed through popular initiatives such as 'crowd funding'. And all this has been taking place, while communal libraries; websites; TV channels; radios; magazines; newspapers; vegetable gardens; schools; hospitals; villages; alternative

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[61] Fiscal disobedience has been carried out in many different ways within the 15M climate. A useful document explaining different alternatives for fiscal disobedience is the *Manual De Desobediència Econòmica* (Economic Disobedience Manual) available at:
https://www.autogestio.cat/tags/insubmissi%C3%B3-fiscal

currencies; and assembly based political parties, have been created as cooperative examples of nonviolent mutual aid.

In essence, what has flourished in Spain is that many people have begun to call into question, subject to public discussion, negotiation, and modification (hopefully transformation), the current social, political and economic system. A manifestation of people ourselves taking the initiative to exercise power together and act in concert, to bring about change through a series of complementary methods: self-organisation; civil disobedience; protesting; acting in a wide variety of loosely coordinated ways. Discussing; cooperating; negotiating among diverse members and subgroups; negotiating with the government and the different police forces and media; negotiating with different trade unions, political parties, and social organizations of numerous types; setting up committees; pushing for legal and constitutional reforms; seeking changes to democratic accountability; and building a truly social and economic democracy from the ground up in a nonviolent manner. A clear example of what James Tully presents as the activities of "self-governing people changing the way they are governed."[62]

In engaging within 15Ms, the theories and practices I have observed seem to be in opposition to what paleontologist Peter Ward called the 'Medea Hypothesis'; which states that multicellular life understood as a superorganism is suicidal. Instead, these networked forces with their exemplary mutual aid, seem to be reminding the *demos* of the fact, that if we continue "to respond to the other, on the assumption of the basic war of all against all (Hobbes); violence-prone antagonism (Kant); struggle

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[62] Tully, J. (2012) 'Middle Eastern Legal and Governmental Pluralism: A view of the field from the demos', in *Middle East Law and Governance*, Volume 4, pages 2-3 (2012), page 2.

for existence (Darwin); the security dilemma (statesmen)",[63] and so on, then being a part of the current social contract is not a constructive way forward; and is indeed suicidal.[64]

Over the four years of research following 15M occupations, what has crystalized for me is that culturally diverse voices across Spain have been seriously debating whether and how to come together to deal responsibly with common problems being faced. What throughout these four years has been prominently discussed in activism circles, university departments, political parties and unions, is whether a confluence of social movements, political parties and unions, can help steer the way towards some form of constituent process. A process, by which the idea of what it means to be a person in what is today legally defined as the Spanish State, can be radically re-thought and transformed.

Throughout the interviewing process, what numerous interviewees have expressed, is that what is happening in Spain is that *la cultura de la transición* (the idea of 'What is Spain' constructed during the country's transition to democracy and reinforced until today) has been broken. With this rupture, somehow the idea of the possible and preferable has mutated, transformed and expanded. After dispersing from public squares, the strange multiplicity that is 15M is in constant transformation. In this sense, it is showing its transformative abilities through a series of multilogues and collective actions, aimed at working through and with reoccurring and newly risen agonisms. Through this process, diverse groups of people continue to challenge and

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[63] See Tully, J. (2012) *Deparochializing Political Theory, Western Perspectives on Comparative Political Theory, The Dialogue and Interbeing Approach* (unpublished article).

[64] I had the pleasure of auditing a workshop at the London School of Economics in December 2012, in which Jonathan Schell gave an outstanding presentation on the threats being faced by humanity and the suicidal path we are currently on as a species. Schell passed away not so long ago, but his passion and clarity have marked me forever and serve as incredible sources of inspiration. In this dissertation, as we explore the tearing apart of the social contract holding together the Spanish State, the suicidal aspect of remaining submissive to the system of parliamentary representation currently operating, will become apparent.

resist the dominant norms and institutions of Spanish society. By their exemplar, they are presenting the country's *demos* with the challenge of whether other social, political, economic, environmental and spiritual alternatives are possible and/or actual.

Wendy Brown claims that neoliberal governmentality is "undoing" democratic practices and even democratic imaginaries.[65] Brown suggests, that resistances to neoliberalism are failing because they are manageable within it. I think this is a pessimistic look into what is happening. Although neoliberalism poses a significant threat to the existence of the democracy being enacted within 15Ms; I find myself more aligned with Janine Brodie who suggests that neoliberalism is unleashing a "myriad of alternative prognoses and social imaginaries".[66] Within Spain's 15M climate we are seeing, I think, what Karl Polanyi described as the "spontaneous eruption of all manner of counter-movements";[67] or what Foucault referred to as "counter-conducts".[68] 15M counter-conducts are presented through chapters one and two, yet in chapter four, alternative future-visions stemming from such counter-conducts are presented. This is important because often such movements are dismissed for not providing an alternative to the capitalist state and representative democracy. They are often portrayed in mainstream debate as a critique without an alternative. In contrast, what these future-visions portray are the multiple alternatives being enacted and projected forward.

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[65] Brown, W. (2014) *The Demos Undone: Neoliberalism, Democracy, Citizenship*, Lansdowne Lecture, University of Victoria, Canada.
[66] Brodie, J. (2014) *Neoliberalism: the Anatomy of a Crisis*, Victoria Colloquium on Political, Social and Legal Theory, University of Victoria, January 24, 2014
[67] Polanyi, K. (1944) *The Great Transformation: the political and economic origins of our time*, Boston: Beacon Press.
[68] Foucault, M. (2007) 'What is critique', in: M. Foucault, *The Politics of Truth*, ed. S. Lontringer, Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), page 75.

As Melissa Williams has suggested, "the collective challenges we face do not map onto the democratic institutions we have."[69] For this reason, people are organizing to challenge these institutions while offering alternatives.[70] Through chapters one, two, four and five, readers will be able to get a clear sense of how different *demoi* are organizing within Spain's 15M climate. Through these chapters readers will be able to see how individuals are challenging institutions while constructing alternatives.

The uprisings that began on May 15th 2011 are the most important political and social events in the Spanish State since the end of the dictatorship. 15Ms that came together and formed in 2011 seem to be behaving like constituent powers. I speak of constituent powers in the sense that groups of people have behaved and organized themselves towards the foundation of new political, economic, social, environmental and spiritual orders. They have done this in ways that would invalidate and remove the existing ones. For this reason, I think that 15Ms in the Spanish State are offering us some answers to what happens to us as living agents, when we are able to articulate a different vision of things. 'Being with them', at least for this short little while during the reading of this essay, can hopefully be a useful and pedagogical experience. This 'being-together', is a helpful way forward from which to open up new possibilities for our reciprocal elucidation as academics with fellow citizens.

At the time of my last interview in November of 2013, for those imbued by this 15M climate the struggle seemed to be one about defining what is the political time of the 'now'. For the elites in Madrid, the time was the time of austerity. For the elites in Cataluña it was the time for independence. In the meantime, within different

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[69] Williams, Melissa S. (2012) *Democracy's Global Future,* Unpublished manuscript.
[70] The challenging of institutions and offering of alternatives by different 15Ms, opens a dialogic space between civic citizens and philosophers thinking possibilities beyond neoliberalism in contemporary political thought.

demoi, there was a struggle to determine if the time was for an anonymous decentralized horizontal and radically democratic confrontation; or for the convergence into a sole political party (in the Greek style) to capture political institutions and radically reform them from within.[71] Both strategies were being passionately debated in November of 2013. Writing in July of 2015 a major turn has taken place. It seems as if most people who identify with 15M have set as their primary goal, the capturing of political institutions in order to change them from within (the most prominent example within Spain of this approach, party-movement Podemos, will be presented in chapter five).

'We go ever so slowly because we are going on forever' (*vamos lentos porque vamos lejos*) is one of the most prominent mantras since 15Ms blossomed occupying Spanish city squares.[72] I like this phrase, because if thought about in the context of political and social transformation, in its simplicity, it carries implicitly I think, a move away from old conceptions of revolution and the violent agonistics of our history. Instead, it carves the way (or is the way, if you like), towards a non-violent

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[71] In Greece a coalition of the radical left, known colloquially by its acronym SYRIZA, in 2012 became the second largest party in the Greek parliament and the main opposition party. In the recent 2014 European Parliament election it came first. In 2015 SYRIZA won its first legislative securing 149 out of the 300 seats, 2 seats short of an absolute majority. See Theguardian.com (26/01/2015) *Greece elections: anti-austerity Syriza party sweeps to stunning victory.*

[72] In conversation with James Tully we have explored how *vamos lentos porque vamos lejos*, seems to be in alignment with a number of similar articulations coming from different traditions and places, which seem to be telling us, that it is a mistake to take big steps, as you either become caught up in the power politics, and subalternised within them, or you are victorious, and become the new hegemon. For example Bill Reid says about his famous sculpture, The Sprit of Haida Gwaii canoe: "the canoe goes on forever in the same place." Vandana Shiva suggests we take small steps because they are more powerful since everyone can take these small steps in their everyday life. Among the new neuroscientists and philosophers working in this post-cartesian area of re-embedding the mind back into life, the mantra is "humans lay down the path in walking". We "bring forth the world to consciousness in the very WAY we enact it in every step we take". This derives from the Santiago Theory of Cognition, in which it is argued that every sentient form of life brings forth a world in living. Jim Tully's mantra "life sustains life" derives from this work. Sustaining well-being becomes fundamental and internal to the way of acting. This is what is overlooked in modernization: the conditions that sustain life together are overlooked, treated as externalities, and thus communities and ecosystems are destroyed. But for people being 15M, *vamos lentos porque vamos lejos*, is a reminder of the fact that they have to be the change they want to see; that things done fast, risk reproducing the very structures and injustices they are trying to alter.

agonistics of mutual aid.[73] A paradigm shift – the change in the basic assumptions on how to change our current state of things – is necessary, if we are to transcend the neoliberal dogma that is rapidly accelerating the destruction of life on earth.

A short story that was repeated to me by numerous activists during my research, speaks of a man who walks into a tailors shop and makes the following request: "Please sir, can you make me a suit ever so slowly because I am in a terrible rush". The story represents the idea that we have such urgency today, that we cannot afford to go fast, because we cannot risk getting things wrong. Basically, this story reveals how for people being 15M the way we walk is the basis of all further transformation. This 15M way of seeing social transformation aligns with what Michel Foucault discovered in his late lectures.[74] Because of the fact that for individuals being 15M the way they walk is the basis of all further transformation, walking with them whilst exchanging questions and answers seems like the most appropriate means toward finding answers to the essay's central question:

What is the phenomemon that calls itself 15M

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[73] See Tully, J. (2012) 'Middle Eastern Legal and Governmental Pluralism: A view of the field from the demos'*, in Middle East Law and Governance*, Volume 4, pages 2-3 (2012)*,* page 2. According to Tully underlying the push from a stage of low-intensity democracy towards one of nonviolent cooperative democracy through nonviolent means, one finds the Gandhian premise that true democracy and peace can only be brought about by truly democratic and peaceful means. The people have to be the change they wish to bring about. For a theoretical defense of the Gandhian premise that nonviolence and democracy (not violence and nondemocracy) are the only means to peace and democracy, see Bondurant, J. (1988), *Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian philosophy of conflict*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, Christensen, K. (2010) *Nonviolence, Peace, and Justice*, Peterborough: Broadview Press, Peter Ackerman, and Jack DuVall. *A Force More Powerful,* New York: St. Martin's, and Gene Sharp (2005) *Waging Nonviolent Struggle*, Boston: Porter Sargent.

[74] As an example indicative of Foucault's grasp of the idea that the way we walk is the basis of all further transformation, in *Hermeneutics of the Subject,* he says the following: "…I think we may have to suspect that we find it impossible today to constitute an ethic of the self, even though it may be an urgent, fundamental, and politically indispensable task, if it is true after all that there is no first or final point of resistance to political power other than in the relationship one has to oneself." In Foucault, M. (2005) *The hermeneutics of the subject: lectures at the College de France, 1981-1982*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, page 252.

– Chapter One –

15Ms South of Madrid's Puerta del Sol

Contextualizing chapters one and two of this essay

Chapters one and two are put forth as a way for the reader to get acquainted with individuals being 15M and their struggles on the ground. In this sense, these two chapters are the two chapters in the essay which get closest to what Foucault attempted to do when he organized the Group for Information on Prisons (GIP), as discussed in the methodology section of the introduction. That is, the chapters attempt to publish the discourses of individuals being 15M, without adding much commentary and allowing the conversations to define the organizational structure of the two chapters. In a Foucauldian move, I am seeing the discourse in itself as a form of struggle. Therefore, I offer this space for those being 15M to be able to confiscate temporarily the power to speak about their struggles without an over-imposed frame.

To some this essay might seem more like a work in magical realism in the tradition of García Márquez, than a letter of scientific political advice to a Prince in the style of Machiavelli. However, my intent as author is definetly to speak from within and out of the discipline of political science to which Machiavelli was such a valued contributor. Our only substantial difference being, that his interest was in power-over relations for subjugation and my interest is in power-with relations for collectivized individual liberation. This shift in interest is what guides me as I try to understand the power-with force of the many, instead of focusing on the power-over force of the few. In this sense, when thinking about the power-with force of the many, one needs to be aware of the fact that acknowledging and embracing multiplicity is

key. It is also important to acknowledge the need for power-with scientific methods if we are to get close to what is happening inside of the 15M climate.

In this spirit, chapters one and two of this essay are best understood as chapters in which themes across locales become apparent; and through which individual self-descriptions by participants reveal the themes which are of upmost importance to those being 15M. In this sense, whilst enagaging with interviewees and their narrations of events, throughout these two chapters I will point out different self-descriptions that will be taken up in different chapters further along in the essay.

Through these two chapters, I am paying particular attention to when and how to interrupt; and I am attempting to both facilitate and translate without imposition. In this sense, I am struggling to find the balance between letting people have a voice (describing their own 15M), and offering chapters that are of value to social scientists. For this reason, I ask social scientists reading this text, to be aware of the fact that these are the first steps into approaching events such as 15M, and individuals being 15M, in the manner that James Tully proposes through public philosophy. Throughout the chapters the strange multiplicity in the 15M climate will permeate. Agonisms, differences, convergences, temporality, traditions, and languages will surface. Travelling dialogically through each locality reveals the constitution of different 15Ms. I highlight that I do not think it absolutely necessary to read about 15M in every locality. For those interested in public philosophy, I recommend that every section of these two chapters be read thoroughly.[1] Public philosophy requires such attention to repetition (and slight difference), because through it, certain traits of a

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[1] I also think reading through both chapters in detail can be of use to those thinking about 15M from the perspective of comparative politics. In these chapters comparativist will not be reading through case studies of each locality in which 15M was approached by this research. Nevertheless, they might derive a foundation from which to identify traits of 15M that can be useful for a full-fledged comparative analysis of 15Ms within the Spanish State.

particular way of being in the world are revealed. However, for readers more interested in my own analysis about 15M, reading about a few localities being described in these two chapters (perhaps four or five different ones) will suffice in order to proceed to the following chapters.

Through these two chapters we learn about 15M counter-conducts. We see how different *demoi* are organizing across the Spanish State. We identify individuals and groups that made possible the initial demonstrations that began what is today referred to as 15M. Through their self-descriptions, we get to live with individuals being 15M the creation of the encampments. We observe the relationship between those in the encampments, police, and official governmental institutions. We get to understand the expansion of 15M encampments into neighborhoods. Through this dialogical engagement with individuals being 15M, we are able to learn about what existed in each locality prior to 15M. And finally, we are also able to learn about what remains of 15M following 15M occupations.

In May of 2013, two years after my first 15M general assembly, I set out on my road trip around Spain with *La Pasionaria* (the VW Wesfalia van with which I travelled). The objective of the trip was to learn about what 15M meant to different actors seeing themselves as being 15M and working from within different autonomous communities in the country. In accordance with the Spanish constitution of 1978 (as part of the country's transition from dictatorship to democracy), autonomous communities were created with the aim of guaranteeing the autonomy of the nationalities and regions integrative of the Spanish State.[2] Spain is not a federation; sovereignty resides in the state as a whole and is represented by statewide

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[2] "Organización territorial. El Estado de las Autonomías". *Recursos Educativos*. Instituto Nacional de Tecnologías Educativas y de Formación del Profesorado. Ministerio de Eduación, Cultura y Deporte. Article 2. Cortes Generales (Spanish Parliament) (1978). "Título Preliminar". *Spanish Constitution of*

or central institutions of government. Spain is instead a highly decentralized unitary state that has devolved power to the communities; these communities exercise their right to self-government within the limits set forth in the constitution.[3] Seventeen autonomous communities and two autonomous cities collectively known as "autonomies" comprise the Spanish State. During my trip I visited the autonomous community of Andalucía, the autonomous city of Melilla, the community of Valencia, the community of Madrid, and the autonomous communities of Galicia, Asturias, Basque Country and Catalonia.

In each of the localities that I visited during my research trip, I introduce some of the local voices being 15M. I do this with the intention of giving the reader a sense of their activities, their struggles, and their most important concerns since the occupations of public squares in May of 2011. In chapter one, I present findings from my trip to Andalucia and Valencia. In chapter two, *15Ms from Madrid's Puerta del Sol to the North*, I present findings from Madrid, Galicia, Asturias, and Catalonia. Visits paid to the autonomous city Melilla and to the autonomous community of the Basque country proved educational for me in order to understand 15M dynamics in different regions of the country. Nevertheless, I did not manage to conduct enough interviews in these places as to merit dedicated sections within these two chapters. For this reason, specific information on these two areas will be limited to footnotes within the chapters. The same applies to interviews conducted in the localities of Jaén, Olot, Sabadell, Terrasa, Sant Cugat and Girona. With the above said, opinions by those I interviewed in these localities will be present inside the main body of the essay; within specific discussions of different features of 15M. All together, I visited twenty-

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[3] Ibid.

five cities, and thirteen of them have specific sections dedicated to them in these two chapters.

My interest in visiting different localities in these autonomous communities was to try and better understand the constitution of that which we refer to as 15M.[4] For this reason, in this chapter I take the reader through the different localities that I visited south of Madrid's Puerta del Sol. In this manner, we can begin the process of familiarizing ourselves with some of the views of different actors involved in different 15Ms. The cities included in this chapter are the following: Jerez de la Frontera; Cádiz; Sevilla; Cordoba; Granada; Malaga, and Valencia. Chapter two, *15Ms from Madrid's Puerta del Sol to the North*, continues this dialogical survey through the following cities: Madrid; Santiago de Compostella; A Coruña; Oviedo; Gijón; and Barcelona. The two chapters together, serve to highlight some of the self-descriptions of what participants are doing.[5] These self-descriptions will serve as guiding issues that will be taken up in various ways in subsequent chapters.

Since chapter one and chapter two are entirely based on interviews conducted with individuals being 15M, they focus on events that have occurred prior to and including November 2013 (month when the interviewing process came to an end). A set of questions guided the dialogues I maintained with individuals being 15M. However, conversations quickly became free-flowing spaces in which interviewees and I, interrupted, facilitated, and translated in order to deepen our co-understandings of 15M.

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[4] My choice of places to visit was determined along the trip based on recommendations from interviewees. Interviewees often suggested particular cities to visit, based on the exemplary work of 15Ms in these localities.

[5] The demographic differences of those being interviewed were broad but by enlarge interviewees were white, non-immigrant, of the middle class and of an age ranging from 17-50 years. Men and women were equally represented. The demographic representativeness of the interviewees seems to align with 15M as I perceived it.

One final note before beginning this excursion: These opening remarks I have presented serve as introduction into both chapter one and chapter two. Closing remarks for both chapters will be presented at the end of chapter two. In the closing remarks I will briefly discuss three significant and recurring conflicts that crystalized through my field research. There was constantly a tension between feminists and the encampment; there was a clear tension between radical-anarchists and those coming from different traditions; and there was in all encampments an ongoing discussion regarding violence versus nonviolence. Because of the importance of these issues within 15M, I feel it is important to provide some analysis on each at the end of the two chapters. What I present in these chapters is a survey of 15M agonisms; differences; convergences; temporality; traditions; and languages, within the Spanish State. I am confident that the thick description presented in these two chapters, will allow us a peek into the complex system that is 15M. Nevertheless, as a reader, please feel free to either travel with me through the whole dialogical trip or skip cities you do not find of interest.

Andalucía

Andalucía is the most populous autonomous community in Spain and the second largest area in the country. The autonomous community is officially recognized as a nationality of Spain. At the time of writing the PSOE *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (Spanish Socialist Workers Party) has just won the 2015 regional elections in Andalucia.[6] Speaking in economic terms, Andalucía has been an economically poor region in comparison with the rest of Europe. Its official

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[6] The elections in Andalucia have been the first in Spain following the European elections. In the European elections Podemos (the new party-movement) entered the European parliament. In Andalucia Podemos now has 15 sits in the regional gobernment. See Elpais.es (24/03/2015) *22M Elecciones Andaluzas*. Online: http://elpais.com/tag/elecciones_andaluzas/a/

unemployment stands at 36.3%.[7] Andalucía also boasts the country's most unfair

distribution of wealth and land. A large proportion of the population depends on the

land for survival, and the land is held in the hands of a reduced percentage of the

population.[8]

In Andalucía, there is a long tradition of active worker struggles. The

experiences of the town of Marinaleda and of the SAT *Sindicato Andaluz de*

Trabajadores (Andalucian Workers Union),[9] are representative of more radical and

utopian articulations of such struggles. Numerous 15Ms in Andalucía happened and

are happening in parallel with, and sometimes together with these experiences. In fact,

many active participants in these experiences consider themselves as being 15M. This

being the case, despite the fact that by many of their more public actions they might

be more widely seen as members of the SAT or as part of Marinaleda's cooperatives

or government bodies. For these reasons, inspired by these exemplars of active

nonviolent civil disobedience, and their relationality within the 15M climate, the first

place I decided to visit in Andalucía was Marinaleda a small rural town of 2,700

inhabitants.

Marinaleda has since the 70's been an inspiration for many of Europe's

socialist thinkers, collectivists, cooperativists, and grassroots activists working on and

thinking through other worlds being possible.[10] After having driven 1,050 kilometers

from my hometown of Les Planes d'Hostoles in the mountainous region of Catalonia,

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[7] Elmundo.es (15/04/2014) *Siete regiones españolas, entre las 10 con más paro de la UE*. See online:
http://www.elmundo.es/economia/2014/04/15/534d0df0e2704ec8338b4577.html

[8] In many cases, absentee landlords are living in other places and collecting subsidies. Interview with
anonymous 59.

[9] The SAT stems out of the SOC *Sindicato de Obreros del Campo* (Land workers Union).

[10] To trying to understand 15Ms in Andalucía, I think it is important to paying attention to the land-
workers struggles in that region. It is also important to pay attention to the region's independence
movements. And finally, it is of tremendous value to familiarize oneself with the governance of the
town of Marinaleda. This is one of the focal points of these struggles. From my perspective not paying
attention to these struggles would be akin to trying to study 15Ms in Andalucía, in a laboratory –
instead of doing so in their actual socio-political context.

upon arrival to this small town in arid Andalucía a road sign greeted me with the following message: "*Marinaleda: Una utopia hacia la paz*" (Marinaleda: A utopia towards peace). Since 2011, a group of land-workers, members of the SAT, together with workers of Marinaleda's cooperatives have been receiving a lot of media attention due to their controversial acts of nonviolent civil disobedience. Led by Marinaleda's town mayor, Juan Manuel Sanchez Gordillo – parliamentarian with IU *Izquierda Unida* (United Left) in the Andalucian government –, and Diego Cañamero, Secretary General of the SAT. These workers have since 2011, repeatedly attempted to occupy an estate of over 1,200 acres of land property of the Ministry of Defense. In addition, on different occasions they have entered large supermarket chain stores and taken without paying (in front of the press) first necessity products to distribute to the poor – food, school materials, nappies, etc.[11]

Marinaleda[12] was the first town in Spain in which in 2011 individuals being 15M attempted to write a new constitution for the Spanish State.[13] Whilst visiting the town in 2013, the discussions I participated in centered on numerous issues. Land occupations were proposed. The military build up in the military base of Rota, and the

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[11] Elmundo.es (07/08/2012) *El SAT asalta dos supermercados en Écija y Arcos para llevar comida 'al pueblo.* See online: http://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2012/08/07/andalucia_sevilla/1344335915.html

[12] Marinaleda claims full employment, the community always finds a way to make sure all members have jobs. In the town everyone has a right to housing. The local government subsidizes the construction of your home as part of the towns development plan. You are given a plot of land; the local government pays for the materials and hires the professionals; and you commit to contributing your time to supporting the building of the house. In Marinaleda there is free Internet for the whole town provided by Town Hall. There is a free cinema, free sports complexes with free classes, in every sport and for everyone. Prior to 1991 there was a long period of struggle between, on the one side, the land-workers and inhabitants of Marinaleda, and on the other, the Duque del Infantado (Duke of the Infantado). The Duke was the owner of an estate known as Los Humosos in the village of Écija, with 1,200 acres of farmland. In 1991, the estate was returned to the workers through the mediation of the *Junta de Andalucia* (the Andalucian autonomous government). From this struggle, the Cooperativa Marinaleda S.C.A. was created. This cooperative is today the main economic engine of the town. Interview with *anonymous 1*.

[13] The project for writing a new constitution and beginning a citizen-led constituent process, began in the IV Statewide 15M encounter. The encounter took place in Marinaleda, on the 26th and 27th of November of 2012. See libertaddigital.com (03/02/2012) *Los 'indignados' redactarán su propia Constitución.* See online: http://www.libertaddigital.com/sociedad/2012-01-16/los-indignados-redactaran-su-propia-constitucion-espanola-1276447023/

military base in Morón de la Frontera (both with strong United States military presence) were rejected. Lessons learnt from the 15M square occupations and the subsequent two years of mobilizations were constantly brought up. The need to revisit the pacts of silence of the country's transition to democracy was also discussed. The need to think about the Andalucian nationalist struggle within an internationalist mindset was debated. The importance of active nonviolence and civil disobedience was spoken about. And the need for a convergence of social struggles – in order to walk towards a much more direct form of democracy with minimal representation – was addressed. A general agreement I felt during the conversations I was a part of, is best reflected by something one of the interviewees said to me: "We live in a necrophilic system, in which life does not matter, human beings do not matter. I think what this systems seeks is a system without humans."[14]

From Marinaleda, I travelled with a group of individuals being 15M and members of the SAT to Las Turquillas estate.[15] The Ministry of Defense owns this estate. It is in the town of Osuna, 40 kilometres away from Marinaleda. On the day of my visit, the SAT supported by other organizations and activists was attempting its 6th occupation of this land. On the day I was there, I witnessed hundreds of unemployed land-workers from all over Andalucía struggling with the support of activists from different social organizations and groups. These support organizations included many who considered themselves 15M. At the occupation the workers were defying armed military and Guardia Civil officers. They were doing this, by camping in the property, and planting thousands of watermelons and other fruits and vegetables. This was an action aimed at making visible the need for land to produce for the people, in spite of

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[14] Interview with *anonymous 1*.

[15] Las Turquillas is currently used by the military to house a little over fifty horses. Most of its 1200 acres of arable land are currently abandoned. Interview with *anonymous 59*.

government and military opposition.[16] Following this show of land-worker power-

with force, I felt inspired to begin my incursion into some of the cities of Andalucía in

which 15M encampments took place in 2011.[17]

15Ms in Jerez de la Frontera

In Jerez on May 10th of 2011, around fifty people met in the offices of a

neighbourhood association with a 30-year trajectory of involvement with solidarity

campaigns for the third-world. The people whom had made the call to attend claimed

to be organizing with other groups, in other cities, a nationwide demonstration under

the slogan of *No somos mercancia en manos de politicos ni de baqueros* (We are not

merchandise in the hands of politicans or bankers). According to some of its

participants, there were around fifteen people in the meeting who had long trajectories

in activism in the city. These individuals knew each other. However, there were also

around thirty-five younger people who did not know anyone and who had begun their

activism in online chats discussing this mobilization. This is how one interviewee

described the event:

> "It was incredible, because the young newcomers did not know that this association existed.
>
> They had no clue about the kinds of activism those who had been fighting for years were

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[16] The SAT sees its struggle as being active and nonviolent. It is a struggle "against injustice, unemployment, and government austerity measures." The struggle is in favor of an agrarian reform, and against foreclosures". The SAT also sees itself as a "social union, close to social and political movements dealing with issues related to the environment; to peace; to citizen rights; to women rights; and immigrant rights." The union sees itself working towards an alternative of the 90% of the population against the 10%. "A common front of the 90%. Building from the call made by 15M, the SAT is seeking confluence with others, in order to get out of power, those governing in Spain; currently situated in a space of moral and ethical illegality". Interview with *anonymous 2*.

[17] Whilst at Las Turquillas the number plate on my van was photographed by Guardia Civil officers. The van was parked on public land. As I left the occupation the police stopped but allowed me continue on my drive. After leaving Marinaleda I visited the headquarters of the SAT in the town of *el Coronil*. There I sat with Diego Cañamero. At his desk, talking about Gandhi, with an image of Che Guevara behind him, it was clear that he was a representative loved by those he worked for.

actually doing. Those with an activist trajectory had never seen any of the younger people present."[18]

In Jerez, the DRY *Democracia Real Ya* (Real Democracy Now) demonstration, which in the rest of the Spanish State took place on May 15th of 2011, took place on May 14th instead. This was because it coincided with Jerez Fair Week. May 15th was a Sunday, and it was going to be the busiest day of the fair. For this reason the demonstration took place the day before. Around seventy people attended the first demonstration, and it took place in the fair's compound. It was not until May 18th, following the eviction of Puerta del Sol in Madrid that people decided to demonstrate again. This time the demonstration was in solidarity with Madrid. The meeting took place in the *Plaza del Arenal* (Arenal square):[19]

"Tuesday afternoon at 8pm, with torrential rain, I arrived and there were three of us with pots and pans. I thought the call for attendance had been a failure, but soon people began to arrive individually and in small groups. When the rain stopped, we were around one hundred people. We had a kind of rudimentary assembly, and we decided to come back the following day. On the Wednesday, there were around two hundred people. On that day we decided, in assembly, that the next day we would camp. On the day of the first encampment, there were around three hundred people, and around forty people actually camped. On that Saturday, the day prior to the municipal elections, there were 1200 people in the general assembly."[20]

The encampment in *Plaza del Arenal* lasted until the end of June of 2011. At the time, those being 15M decided in assembly to go and work in the neighbourhoods. Nevertheless, following demonstrations in August, which took place nationwide in

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[18] Interview with *Anonymous 8*.
[19] The *Plaza del Arenal* has traditionally been the meeting point for the city's social movements because the building of the unions is on that square. Interview with *anonymous 3*.
[20] Interview with *anonymous 9*.

response to a change in the constitution,[21] six people who previously had had no contact with those being 15M decided to camp in the same square. This new encampment lasted until April of 2012. Despite the fact that those in the 15M encampment publicly disassociated themselves from this group, the group also chose to refer to itself as 15M. "This group was constituted by an Argentinian, an Italian, some homeless people and a few individuals with psychiatric problems."[22]

In the beginning of the encampment there were no assembly structures. These developed overtime in the square: "There were many people with experience in participating in assemblies. However, they seemed to let those of us without experience experiment."[23] There were some instinctively agreed upon "fundamental principles of democratic participation and horizontality."[24] As a group, the 15M in Jerez said that they were political but not supportive of any political party. They banned smoking marijuana and drinking alcohol in the square. In addition, individuals being 15M decided to negotiate with police (also suffering public spending cuts), issues of public order. The relationship with police was so good for a while, that one interviewee described it in the following manner:

"Those of us being 15M had police protection until the eviction in Caulina. In fact one police officer who used to arrest me in previous nonviolent actions has now become a good friend."[25]

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[21] This change in the constitution, refers to the modification of article 135 of the constitution. This change stemming from EU (European Union) pressure gave priority above all else to the repayment of the country's debt. See BOE *Boletin Oficial del Estado* (Official State Bulletin) https://www.boe.es/diario_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2011-15210
[22] Interview with *anonymous 3*. Numerous interviewees gave me this same description.
[23] Interview with *anonymous 7*.
[24] Interview with *anonymous 9*.
[25] The Eviction in Caulina took place on October of 2011. Members of the housing assembly of the 15M in Jerez tried to stop the eviction, and eight people were arrested. Some of them are facing two to three year prison sentences. An association called ARECA Asociación de Represaliados por el Desahucio de Caulina (Association of those Repressed at Caulina's Eviction) has been created to raise funds for their legal defence. Interview with *anonymous 8*.

The visit to Jerez revealed to me that 15M in the city was understood by many being 15M as a rebellion. One individual described it with the following words: "everything expanded like a web, like ivy, throughout the Spanish State. 15M activated existing social movements like never before; at least since the Spanish transition to democracy. What remains is a 15M spirit."[26] 15M in Jerez was lived by many of its participants as a rejection of the social, political and economic system. As one interviewee suggested: "from 15M we wanted a more participatory democracy and more social and economic rights. We were working on a paradigm shift, and we were anti-neoliberal."[27] Some of those being 15M thought of 15M as social explosion. "Spontaneous and fresh."[28] Generally those being 15M in Jerez agreed on "the need to deeply and radically transform the system."[29] What became apparent through interviewing, was that the decision to camp in *Plaza del Arenal,* offered a qualitative leap in political involvement for many individuals:

> "The night of the 20th of May, when the central electoral board said that the encampments were illegal, I know of many people who had never participated in politics. Yet, many of them, that night slept in the square. I am confident only one day before they would have thought that laws existed to be obeyed, and here they were disobeying a law from the highest body of the Spanish State."[30]

In addition, through the collective experience of living in an encampment in a public square, agonisms that existed in theory in practice where transcended:

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[26] Interview with *anonymous 3*.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Interview with *anonymous 8*.
[29] Interview with *anonymous 9*.
[30] Interview with *anonymous 3*.

"For example, on a very rainy day I suggested that we sleep in the building of the unions. Some people from Madrid were in disagreement because the unions were seen as part of the system we were radically opposing. However, due to the persistence of the rain, what seemed like a question of identity stopped being so from a practical perspective. That event has led to 15M in Jerez using the meeting rooms in the building of the unions whenever the weather requires it."[31]

Someone being 15M in Jerez, suggested to me that "15M started collectively in all cities and then was centralized in Madrid." To him, nevertheless, "15M does not reflect this centrality in its DNA. Its power is clearly distributed in a networked manner."[32] This person identified the abandonment of block ideologies as foundational of 15M: "the idea of left and right stops being political and becomes almost cultural. Especially with that generation that has not witnessed Franco's dictatorship or the civil war."[33] The interviewee also suggested that the dynamics of being political have been altered in Spain: "the mode of being political is no longer what it has traditionally been; at least since the transition to democracy. This new way of being political is given a name, 15M."[34]

In Jerez, some of what existed on the social mobilization front following the square encampments of 2011, and during the interviewing process for this essay included the following: Assemblies of social movements stemming from the anti-globalization movement; which existed before the 15M but which since the eruption of 15M had been reinforced. A 15M assembly which coordinated with all other movements and had become a catalyst of large mobilizations; The assembly also focused on local issues such as the privatization of water. A critical block spearheaded

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[31] Interview with *anonymous 6*.
[32] Interview with *anonymous 5*.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.

by the SAT together with numerous organizations, had been created (the SAT in Jerez

has grown with people being 15M). The housing commission of 15M, which was

doing the critical work of blocking evictions from foreclosed properties. And the

traditional trade unions and political parties, which were both, struggling to articulate

their messages in alignment with the ideas gaining traction in the 15M climate.[35]

When asked about what had changed since the 15M one interviewee said the

following:

> "Before we were embarrassed, but now that we are empowered and we are not afraid.
> We are no longer shy to ask people on the street whether they believe what they hear
> on television. The debate in the square was for this. So that as people we would
> speak; we would debate; we would play games together. We have returned to the
> streets, and now we see our neighbours on the streets and talking politics. This is
> something that we could not see before."[36]

During my time in Jerez, the extent to which 15M had altered the life of many

in the city became apparent. However, on a different note, during the last conversation

prior to my departure an interviewee offered a valuable and constructive critique of

15M. This critique gave me much to think about during the rest of the trip:

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[35] Interview with *anonymous 9*, together with notes taken during assemblies I attended of 15M, and of numerous social movements and unions during my stay in Jerez.

[36] Interview with *anonymous 7*. When I asked this interviewee how I could go about measuring the success of 15M, the response was clear: "You can ask people what they were doing before 15M."

"The critique that we being 15M make of non-horizontal politics is initially convincing.

However, when we put our values into practice, and we see the results of horizontality; those

of us defending its importance have yet to do a serious critique of its shortfalls."[37]

15Ms in Cádiz

On May 15th of 2011, the city of Cádiz had its DRY demonstration. In it,

more than 1,500 people walked from *Plaza de España* (Spain Square) to the sub-

delegation of the civil Government. The spirit was one of togetherness and festivity.

During their walk people repudiated the economic and political situation of the

country. On May 17th of 2011, there was an urgent call made by DRY to meet in

Plaza de San Juan de Dios (where the town hall is located). The call was made to open

up discussion regarding future actions in response to police violence in Madrid's

Puerta del Sol. Around 100 people attended. "People were in the street, sitting,

talking, and organizing. At first there was no organization."[38] On May 18th, another

meeting took place in Plaza San Juan de Dios. This time 150 people attended. During

the meeting, a small group of people decided that they were going to camp in *Plaza

del Palillero.*[39] Although this was not a decision made by DRY, it did support the

encampment and an assembly was called for at *Plaza del Palillero* on the following

day. An interviewee described the encampment on the first night in the following

manner:

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[37] Interview with *anonymous 6*. Shortfalls of ways of being 15M will be addressed in chapter six of the dissertation. Critiques on horizontality coming from within 15M included questions on how to improve horizontal decision mechanisms, to increase ability to respond to pressing problems and to guarantee that those with more public speaking abilities did not steer assemblies to personal rather than collective gain.

[38] Interview with *anonymous 14*.

[39] "In the olden days, people met at this square in order to *palillear* (local slang meaning to speak). Reclaiming the square in such a manner was an amazing coincidence." Interview with *anonymous 19*.

"I ended up in the encampment by chance, when I met a couple of friends who were active in DRY. They told me that a few of them were setting up camp in the *Plaza del Palillero*. There were four of us there and the local police kept driving by. They stopped, and then they continued. By the 20:00 general assembly 300 people were present."[40]

Since the first moments of the encampment in Cádiz, there was conflict between those organizing DRY and those who chose to camp:

"What we finally decided in assembly was that all currents of thought and organizations where legitimate in the assembly, but that everyone was acting individually of their previous or current commitments."[41]

This had a rupturing effect in DRY Cadiz. "A group from DRY Cadiz left the encampment, and another group left DRY and continued in the square."[42] Perceptions of those present during these meetings reflected – as one interviewee put it – a feeling of "realizing that all previous and existing structures of organization and of doing politics had become obsolete."[43]

There was an unquestionable spirit of wanting to change the world in *Plaza del Palillero*. The debate was extensive. There was, however, a strong conflict brewing between those with backgrounds in party politics and a group that had acquired a substantial amount of power in the encampment. Individuals with prior engagement within the city's anarchist and libertarian traditions spearheaded this group. "We called this group *la dictadura de los culos de hierro* (the iron ass dictatorship). This was the case, because it seemed that to them decision-making

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[40] Interview with *anonymous 11*.
[41] Interview with *anonymous 13*. This absolute commitment to horizontality based on everyones free-willing communion, will be discussed in the ever-so-slow hypothesis presented in chapter six.
[42] Interview with *anonymous 15*.
[43] Interview with *anonymous 16*.

power was the right of those who spent the most hours sitting in the square."[44] There was also friction between feminists and the rest of the encampment:[45]

> "I had a bitter experience with the 15M. In the feminist commission, we agreed on a set of important issues. When we tried to raise them in the general assembly, we were not allowed to speak. Some said that feminist issues were not important at that particular moment."[46]

In the encampment, there were also agonisms in regards to the space. People debated vigorously over this. "Was the end of the encampment the encampment itself? Was the end to organize ourselves horizontally? Or was the fundamental goal to achieve some form of reform?"[47] Debate regarding these issues was constant throughout the duration of the encampment. This discussion was also kept alive through online forums. Facebook, Twitter, and other online social media sites were used. In addition, mainstream television commentators were fuelling the debate through their primetime programs. These debates where taking place between large groups of people during the 15M assemblies in Cádiz. During the time the encampment lasted, it regularly counted over 800 people. The largest assembly 15M Cadiz ever had counted 2,000 people. "During this assembly we planned a demonstration. A silent procession for the day of reflection prior to the elections was organized. The event was a huge success."[48] People talking to each other on the streets organized 15M demonstrations in Cadiz:

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[44] Interview with *anonymous 13*.
[45] Frictions with feminists in the encampment centred on the use of inclusive languages and creation of inclusive spaces, in which male participants did not assume patriarchal positions. I will address this issue further in the closing remarks of chapter two.
[46] Interview with *anonymous 14*.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Interview with *anonymous 17*.

"They were demonstrations that belonged to all of us; and thus, they had a lot of power-with force. Not so much because of the demonstrations, but because when people construct demonstrations they can easily construct other things. They can create organizations; cooperatives; and collectives. There is no longer a need to delegate to a saviour with good intentions."[49]

A month after the encampment had began, a decision was made to dismantle it in order to move to the neighbourhoods:

"Eight neighbourhood assemblies were created. Later six disappeared and two remained: San Mateo and Centro/Mentidero. These two assemblies later merged into one called San Mateo. It has been the Christian communities and the people from the neighbourhood that have kept the assembly alive till today."[50]

When the decision was made to go to the neighbourhoods, those who were in *El Palillero* and who had not gone to the neighbourhoods, decided to occupy Valcárcel. This was an abandoned building, which would be used to build a cultural centre:[51]

"Valcarcel was a project in the mind of many activists, and a lot of work had been done regarding how to occupy it, however, the occupation came straight out of the 15M encampment. We decided to do an act of absolute civil disobedience with the support of parties, social movements, and all those being 15M. On the 20th of July, the space was

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[49] Interview with *anonymous 22*. In chapters five and six, this type of power-with approach to social transformation, will be discussed in comparison with power-over alternatives.

[50] Interview with *anonymous 20*.

[51] A building that a Duke had donated to the town. The building had served as a school for many years, becoming a popular cultural space frequented by people of the neighbourhood. Subsequently, the government of the province of Cadiz sold the building to a private company. The aim of the purchase was to construct a luxury hotel. Because of financial difficulties, the building had remained empty for years. Interview with *anonymous 12*.

officially opened. In its first assembly, over one hundred people participated making

collective decisions regarding the future of the space."[52]

During the seven months Valcarcel remained open to the public before a

police eviction,[53] there were all sorts of activities. "A summer school; snorkelling

classes; nonviolent defence courses; and serigraphy classes. In the building there was

a gym, a social library, study rooms, and a dance hall."[54] During the occupation, there

existed a serious conflict between autonomist Marxists (wanting to make the space

into a squat), and those who wanted to make it into a more friendly space opened to

the community. Eventually those looking to make the space more inclusive won the

struggle:

> "With Valcarcel we were able to be radical, yet, at the same time remain inclusive. Intending
> to be inclusive, we even debated whether to refer to the space as being occupied, reclaimed or
> reoccupied."[55]

Following the dismantling of the encampment and the eviction from

Valcárcel, several initiatives still remained very active in the city at the time of my

visit. The encampment had strengthened the collective newspaper *La Levantera*, the

Green tide of education, and the SAT. At the time of writing the SAT was beginning

to look for support in factories. It was already benefiting from the fact that many from

the sectorial tides were joining the union, In the city, at the same time, a collective of

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[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid. Following the police eviction a group of supporters of the occupation decided to attend a talk at the University of Cádiz. The title was 'For Freedom of Speech'. "In the talk we explained why we were there. After finishing we left quietly, but outside the building we were met by police officers in riot gear. Police had entered the university campus without permission. In this state of exception, they began to beat us with their batons".
[54] Ibid.
[55] Interview with *anonymous 21*.

unemployed people was working on creating an unemployed people's cooperative. This cooperative was occupying abandoned land, and turning it into parking by-donation. *Graba tu Pleno* (Record your Plenary Session) was also gaining strength. This was a project, through which activists were organizing to fill the town hall plenary sessions with questions from activists. These questions and subsequent responses from city officials were recorded and later posted online.[56]

15M in Cádiz was described to me in numerous ways. Here are just a few: Someone described it as "a subconsciously revolutionary and chemically perfect event that goes beyond the political into the realm of spirituality."[57] Someone else felt it was the moment in which "the dream of friendly capitalism came to an end."[58] A third individual spoke of 15M as a "collective moment during which we reminded ourselves of the fact that together we can change things."[59] A forth interviewee described it as a moment of "spontaneous amorousness that has become counter cultural."[60] A fifth thought of 15M as "an important step in a change of paradigm."[61] Finally one individual being 15M referred to 15M as a kind of "mushroom growing out of manure and invading the forest."[62] A mushroom that "for some is poisonous and for others is nutritious; and which has come to be in order to disappear by diluting itself with others."[63]

The sentiment which most resonated in Cadiz in regards to 15M legacies, was best expressed by one of the interviews with the following words:

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[56] Activists from *Graba tu Pleno* are at the time of writing working on occupying the plenary session. Their intent is to occupy and then conduct an assembly inside Town Hall without politicians. Information shared by *anonymous 23*. The information regarding other activities, groups and organizations comes from interviews with *anonymous 12*, *18*, and *15*. It also comes from notes taken during my visit in Cadiz to numerous assemblies and informal group discussions.

[57] Interview with *anonymous 11*.

[58] Interview with *anonymous 14*.

[59] Interview with *anonymous 19*.

[60] Interview with *anonymous 18*.

[61] Interview with *anonymous 15*.

[62] Interview with *anonymous 10*.

[63] Ibid.

"We must learn to leave our egos behind and understand that being horizontal in our processes does not happen in one day. We must listen a lot, have a small mouth like an ant and big ears like an elephant if we want a nonviolent revolution to be successful."[64]

15Ms in Sevilla

In April of 2011, twelve people met in Sevilla's *Puente de la Barqueta.* The aim of the meeting was to discuss in person and for the first time, the creation of DRY Sevilla. This meeting had been discussed in the online forums of the DRY Facebook page. As in many other cities around the country, the time had come, to meet face-to-face and organize the city's May 15th demonstration. "We were a group of students and people in their mid thirties."[65] After initial introductions, the group agreed to create a local Facebook page and a Twitter account. They then began to put together a work plan. "We met with other collectives to gain their collaboration."[66] One of the main characteristics of DRY, not just in Sevilla but across Spain, was that most of the people involved were not individuals with a long trajectory in social activism. Nevertheless, they managed to create an informal organization through the Internet:

"There was a statewide coordinating platform with around 500 people in each group. There was a link to each local node. The local node was a rotatory position. In the Sevilla group, we were eventually fifty people before the May 15th demonstration."[67]

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[64] Interview with *anonymous 12.*

[65] Interview with *anonymous 30.*

[66] The group did not contact with those collectives that had traditionally been the organizers of large demonstrations in the city. Instead it opted to contact collectives from the university and a platform of those affected by the crisis. This platform grouped neighbourhood associations and other collectives. Interview with *anonymous 37.*

[67] Ibid.

The call for the May 15th demonstration asked people to meet at the city's *Plaza de España* (Spain Square):

> "In our Facebook page we had over 1,000 people saying that they would attend. We went to the government delegation and told them we were expecting around 3,000 people. The government told the police we would be around 300 people. When we were about to begin the rally, a police officer came to me (as I was coordinating security), and told me that the police only had two cars and four police officers for the 7,000 people already there. There were clearly more people joining."[68]

The groups and organizations that made the call for the demonstration meant very little to most people in Sevilla. On that first day of what would later be referred to as 15M, long time activists in Sevilla were caught by surprise. "What called my attention was that the crowd I saw on that day was not the crowd I was used to seeing in other demonstrations."[69] Those coming from traditional struggles were clearly impressed with those organizing. Here is just one example of how this was the case:

> "I met with some of the organizers. I was surprised at their theoretical knowledge and lack of practical experience. They were middle-class; highly educated; and they clearly had the freshness that we as older and more experienced militants were lacking."[70]

On May 18th of 2011, following events in Madrid and as a form of continuing their protest, people decided to camp in *Las Setas de la Encarnación* square. From day one, friction began to build between those from DRY that had organized the initial demonstration and the assemblies that began to form in the square. "Conflicts

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[68] Interview with *anonymous 30*.
[69] Interview with *anonymous 26*.
[70] Interview with *anonymous 27*.

arose regarding leaderships, organization, and the way in which power should materialize."[71] These conflicts generated a lot of mistrust. "People held to the idea of absolute horizontality because of subterranean conflicts between factions. This affected the political effectiveness of the encampment."[72] Tension also mounted between the encampment in Sevilla and the encampment in Madrid's Puerta del Sol, in regards to a minimums consensus:[73]

> "If you look at 15M as a web, you identify certain nodes with a lot of power. This is the weakness of organizing in a distributed manner. In that first attempt at a minimum consensus it became apparent that the power resided in the Twitter account of Puerta del Sol assembly. I think in Sevilla, 15M lost half of the people in that first conflict because of the imposition many felt coming from Madrid."[74]

Despite these early agonisms, the encampment in *las Setas* was a huge success, in that it provided a space in which many different kinds of people could participate. By the second day, groups had organized for cleaning; recycling bins had been placed in strategic places; there was a people's library; a communications commission; and a mediation commission that was created in order to avoid having to call the police if conflicts arose. "The first impression was to say to oneself, look how as people who do not know each other, we can organize ourselves. We can create a new world by ourselves and function perfectly."[75] The collective intent on working

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[71] Interview with *anonymous 33*.
[72] Interview with *anonymous 39*.
[73] This was a document that was circulated around the encampments across Spain. The document suggested a set of points all assemblies should agree upon; in order to converge into a sole set of 15M political demands. Interview with *anonymous 26*.
[74] Interview with *anonymous 39*. In this example we see the tensions that exist between those trying to practice power-with politics and those trying to control through power-over means. The difference between this two approached will be made much clearer in chapter six.
[75] Ibid.

together towards change, made it easy for people to accept civility requests coming

from others:

> "On the second night of the encampment my friend and I were drinking a beer and someone
> came to tell us not to drink in the square. At first we got angry with this person, wondering
> who they thought they were. However, upon reflection, we realized that all of us collectively
> drinking in the square was not the political image we wanted to portray. We wanted to portray
> the idea of something serious, nonviolent and civic."[76]

 In *Las Setas* "you could find a grandmother that would contribute 30 euros for

buying food without being politicized, sitting next to a long time syndicalist on one

side and a computer hacker on the other."[77] *Las Setas* offered the opportunity to those

fighting their own struggles in different social movements to finally come together.

"The old guard found itself diluted in 15M."[78] According to numerous people I

interviewed, in the square in Sevilla there was a sense of two souls existing in the

same space. As one of the interviewees put it:

> "There was a more citizenship, interclass viewpoint that wanted 15M to remain indefinitely in
> *Las Setas*, and a more popular working-class perspective that saw the need to decentralize
> 15M and move to neighbourhoods in an attempt to get closer to the social dramas."[79]

Nevertheless, an interesting issue that was highlighted by numerous of the

interviewees, has to do with the convergence that slowly gained traction between

existing movements and the 15M encampment:

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[76] Interview with *anonymous 25*.
[77] Interview with *anonymous 26*.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Interview with *anonymous 41*.

"From day one, 15M demonstrations take place on a regular basis. At first you notice that the smaller more combative unions like UGT [*Unión General de Trabajadores* (General Workers Union)] and CNT [*Confederación Nacional del Trabajo* (National Confederation of Work), continue to have their demonstrations on separate days. Nevertheless, as time passes, one notices that events begin to converge and everyone starts to demonstrate on the same day and at the same time."[80]

The 15M encampment in *Las Setas* served as a kind of loudspeaker of practices. Amongst numerous others, "there were workshops on participatory budgeting; workshops on time banks; workshops on participatory practices; workshops on occupations; and workshops on constituent processes."[81] Eventually in the encampment, an assembly for neighbourhoods was created and demonstrations around the different working class neighbourhoods were organized.[82] This was the precursor to the dismantling of the encampment, and the move to the neighbourhoods through the creation of neighbourhood assemblies. The encampment lasted for one month and a half, and then, the neighbourhood assemblies continued to build on the work started in the square. In addition to the creation of 15M neighbourhood assemblies, many of those being 15M moved into area specific issues:

"Everyone has channelled the 15M spirit into their area and method of work. We seem to have assimilated it and expressed it in our own spaces. If you are a doctor you have perhaps gone into the white tide. If you are an educator you have perhaps moved into the green tide. The 15M is no longer visible, but that is because we have introduced ourselves into the system. We continue to work with the same imaginary we collectively created in the encampment.

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[80] Interview with *anonymous 43*. Text in square brackets is my addition.
[81] Interview with *anonymous 25*.
[82] Interview with *anonymous 40*.

There are many 15M judges; 15M prosecutors; and many people who can no longer be fooled because of the collective reflection we underwent in that square."[83]

Up until November 2013, what had materialized in Sevilla around the 15M climate included the following: The *Asamblea Ciudadana Constituyente* (Citizens Constituent Assembly). This assembly "proposes that unless we have the constituent process that was missing from the transition in 1978, we will not get out of the political and economic mess we find ourselves in"[84]. The *Corralas* coming out of 15M were still active.[85] "Originally the project came out of the inter-commission on housing of 15M. From the *Corralas* project, 400 individual occupations have developed."[86] Because of the work of the *Corralas*, at the time of interviewing occupations in Sevilla were being referred to by many as reallocations.[87] In addition to the initiatives mentioned above, on the institutional front pressed by individuals being 15M, the Participation council of the Andalucian Government was preparing a bill on citizen participation. This was being prepared with the advice of individuals being 15M and members of social movements and organizations.[88] Regarding the payment of debt, debt auditing, which had been gaining traction during 2012-2013 was being worked on. This work was being done transversally between 15M assemblies and other neighbourhood groups.[89] In addition, in 15M circles there was much talk now on

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[83] Interview with *anonymous 31*.
[84] Interview with *anonymous 27*.
[85] "The *Corrala Utopía* was occupied on the first anniversary of the 15M. Twelve families coming from 15M information points on housing occupied the building. These families worked for three months preparing the occupation. People from 15M with backgrounds in the okupa movement helped them open it up. These activists disconnected alarms; changed locks; and activated water and electricity." Interview with *anonymous 36*.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Interview with *anonymous 32*.
[88] Interview with *anonymous 37*.
[89] Interview with *anonymous 39*.

whether the 15M climate should channel energy towards the creation of new political parties.[90]

15M, for many being 15M in Sevilla has changed the old paradigm of thinking politically from either the left or right. The dividing line is now between "on the one side, the old ways of doing politics with professional politicians that hold on to their seats for 20 years, and on the other, citizens with profound social convictions."[91] An interviewee described 15M as "the first non-mediated public sphere since that short parenthesis of the transition to democracy."[92] This was a moment during which, according to the interviewee, neighbourhood associations organized and democratically and dialogically deliberated. In many of the interviews, it was expressed to me that the 15M was serving as a "vaccination against fascism."[93] One of the people I interviewed, echoing something that I found many referring to during our dialogues, suggested that "at core 15M was radically democratic in a way similar to libertarian thought and practice."[94] One individual suggested that 15M was the "opposite to a closed ideology."[95] Another, described it as "a methodology that includes civic nonviolence, democracy and assemblies."[96]

Obviously 15M means many things to many different people in Sevilla. Here are just some examples: Some see it as a "social climate."[97] Others refer to 15M as something "intangible, like an atmosphere or an ecosystem";[98] or "a sentiment."[99] One interviewee echoing the idea of a respected 15M hacker, suggested that it might be

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[90] Interview with *anonymous 29*. Developments regarding the issue of new political parties will be further addressed in Chapter five.

[91] Interview with *anonymous 27*.

[92] Interview with *anonymous 33*. Chapter three of this dissertation will excavate genealogies of 15M, revealing work from past exemplars (as understood by individuals being 15M).

[93] Interview with *anonymous 25*.

[94] Interview with *anonymous 27*.

[95] Interview with *anonymous 34*.

[96] Interview with *anonymous 25*.

[97] Interview with *anonymous 28*.

[98] Interview with *anonymous 37*.

[99] Interview with *anonymous 30*.

useful to think of "15M as a mass political synchronization; instead of thinking of 15M as a mass political union."[100] One activist saw 15M as "a discursive innovation."[101] Another described it as "pre-political."[102] Another still, was not sure if 15M was reformist or revolutionary. Nevertheless, he suggested that perhaps nobody could actually really know.[103]

Those interviewees who ventured at a response to the question of whether 15M was revolutionary or reformist, responded in multiple ways in regards to their experiences coming from Sevilla. These are just some examples: One person being 15M suggested "15M proposed a serious integral reform."[104] A second individual suggested that 15M was a form of "radical pacifism; a very radical nonviolence through which civil disobedience was being radicalized."[105] A third interviewee, thought that 15M was "revolutionary through reform."[106] A fourth, was inclined to think of 15M as a "pre-revolutionary space."[107] A fifth, suggested that 15M was a "cultural revolution."[108] A sixth, regarded 15M as "*re*evolutionary." That person understood, "a revolutionary transformation as an evolution; a metamorphosis."[109] Finally, one individual being 15M, told me that he understood 15M as "a transformation in knowledges."[110]

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[100] Ibid.
[101] Interview with *anonymous 34.*
[102] Interview with *anonymous 44.*
[103] Interview with *anonymous 28.*
[104] Interview with *anonymous 36.*
[105] Interview with *anonymous 34.*
[106] Interview with *anonymous 38.*
[107] Interview with *anonymous 27.*
[108] Interview with *anonymous 32.*
[109] Interview with *anonymous 42.*
[110] Interview with *anonymous 37.*

<u>15Ms in Cordoba</u>

In November of 2010, one of the interviewees from Cordoba joined DRY's Facebook page. "DRY's manifesto was already debated; individuals and groups were already signing up in support of the project; and discussions were already taking place regarding when to go out to the street."[111] In February of 2011 *Juventudes sin Futuro* (Youth without Future) attempted a demonstration inspired by events in Tunisia. A lot of people came out to the streets. It was agreed then – in DRY's forum through vote – that a demonstration bringing together people without divisions should be organized for May 15th of 2011. One month prior, those from Cordoba who had joined DRY in order to cooperate in the organization of the city's May demonstration, knew there was consensus on two issues. *First*, there was only one objective, to mobilize people for the 15th of May. *Second*, there was an absolute rejection to all divisions generated by being on the left or the right.

> "I became moderator of the forum in the state-wide democraciarealya.es website. I worked together with a woman form Vigo and another one from Lanzarote. If it had been a leftist project I would not have collaborated."[112]

In order to move the mobilization from Facebook to the street, initial organizers posted a message on the DRY website. The message asked all those interested in coordinating in their city, to contact the moderator of the site. In this way the Cordoba group was created:

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[111] Interview with *anonymous 56*.
[112] Interview with *anonymous 58*.

"There was a communiqué; a manifesto; a procedures manual; and a rudimentary strategy to follow. With this in hand, those of us coordinating Cordoba met face-to-face for the first time. We met in *Bulevar del Gran Capitán* (where the encampment eventually took place). Our first meeting was on April 15th 2011."[113]

Following their first face-to-face encounter, those involved in DRY Cordoba created their own Facebook group and began local work:

"There were six of us. We contacted *Estado del Malestar* (*Badfare State*)[114] in Cordoba to ask them if they would coordinate the demonstration. Two members of *Estado del Malestar* decided to collaborate as individuals. We also contacted Christian base movements, agrarian unions and many neighbourhood associations. At first these organizations did not believe us. Only a few agreed to collaborate. In essence, that small group of six, coordinated everything, and paid for the printing of posters from our own pockets."[115]

A few days before the May 15th demonstration, DRY coordinated press conferences across the country. These were synchronized in all the cities that had been preparing for the event. "From that moment onwards, the media began to pay more attention to us. They had seen our ability to coordinate."[116] In this city, organizers expected 500 people on the street. This is what was communicated to the local government delegation. Instead, 5,000 people turned up.[117] In Cordoba, nobody camped on that first day. At first, DRY was not supporting the encampment. "At one point a communiqué came out from DRY's state-wide coordinating group. The note said that DRY did not coordinate the encampments, but was supportive of their

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[113] Ibid.
[114] Playing with the idea of the Welfare State they call themselves the Badfare State to denounce the current state of Spain.
[115] Interview with *anonymous 52*.
[116] Interview with *anonymous 56*.
[117] Ibid.

efforts."[118] Following this decision, in Cordoba as in most other cities, tension began to mount between those organizing DRY and those who had decided to camp. At that moment, the DRY manifesto was rejected and people in the square decided in assembly to write a new one.

Despite existing frictions, the initial days of encampment and demonstrations that were organized "had the magic of offering anyone a space to speak and be listened to. They offered the possibility of getting involved based on individual possibilities."[119] Those who were there seem to agree on the fact that those days were amazing. "People working collectively; music on the streets; no flags; many children; a beautiful atmosphere. It made one want to be a part of this that was being born."[120] People from all walks of life joined in, in a collective spirit of consciousness. The young girl who sleeping there the first nights realized "the importance of cardboard for those sleeping on the street."[121] The policeman who whilst doing his job still had the courage to say to those in the encampment: "I am so proud of you. I am in charge today, so rest assured that tonight all the riot gear is staying at the police stations."[122] The old trade unionist, who acknowledged that this was the first horizontal political space she had ever been a part off.[123]

Following one month of encampment, the idea of moving to the neighbourhoods began to be debated in the square. A neighbourhoods commission was created:

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[118] Interview with *anonymous 58.*
[119] Interview with *anonymous 47.*
[120] Interview with *anonymous 47.*
[121] Interview with *anonymous 54.*
[122] Interview with *anonymous 56.*
[123] Interview with *anonymous 53.*

"Initially we did not do this by going back to our neighbourhoods and connecting with existing assemblies. We tried to create new ones. Some assemblies were born; *Santuario*, in the southern part of the city; and another one in the north of the city. Nevertheless, soon they diluted and we continued to meet in Bulevar. Eventually, time did come to abandon the encampment. Then real neighbourhood assemblies were born: *Axerquia* in the North, *Poniente* in the South, *Lepanto*, and then Bulevar. Bulevar remained the assembly for the centre of town."[124]

Since the encampment came to an end, and by the time of my interviewing in the city numerous groups had flourished. Up until the date of my last interview in Novemeber 2013, the city had individuals mapping all abandoned houses in preparation for future occupations.[125] The *Yayoflautas*, the old age pensioners that consider themselves children of 15M had carried out numerous silent actions around the city.[126] *YoNoPago* (I do not pay) had conducted actions of not paying public transportation wearing masks with faces of local corrupt politicians.[127] *Stop Desahucios* (Stop Evictions) had regularly occupied bank branches in order to demand mortgage related issued to be resolved.[128] And most of the dialogues within the 15M climate, were centered around creating new political parties that could act as open forums for citizens.[129] What seemed to be clear in the minds of those I interviewed in Cordoba, is best transmitted by this statement made by one of the interviewees:

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[124] Interview with *anonymous 50*.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Interview with *anonymous 49*.
[127] Interview with *anonymous 50*.
[128] Interview with *anonymous 48*.
[129] Interview with *anonymous 46*.

"Opposing leaderships is counter-productive at this moment. Nevertheless, leaderships need to be representative, constructed from below, and multiple. We are not too interested in taking power from those in government, because we are more concerned with constructing power from below."[130]

Opinions from those I interviewed in Cordoba regarding 15M were wide-ranging. Here are just a few examples. One individual suggested, "15M did not exist and does not exist."[131] The same individual suggested that the label 15M was given to a confluence of viewpoints that cannot be contained under such a label. A second person described 15M as a new commons. In this new commons, according to the interviewee nobody managed and everybody knew what to do.[132] A third interviewee suggested it was a constructive resistance.[133] A fourth claimed it was a methodology of collective listening.[134] A fifth saw 15M as a new human spirit. This person cited the following slogan that she had seen while she participated in 15M marches to Madrid: "The revolution was in our hearts and now is circulating freely through our streets."[135] A sixth individual suggested 15M was a diagnosis of the problems our societies face.[136] A seventh thought of 15M as being the 21st century that had been waiting to flourish and had finally done so.[137] Finally, an eighth individual suggested that 15M was a "plural utopia, unlike the closed utopias social movements have strived for in the past."[138]

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[130] Interview with *anonymous 50.*
[131] Interview with *anonymous 45.*
[132] Interview with *anonymous 47.*
[133] Interview with *anonymous 46.*
[134] Interview with *anonymous 51.*
[135] Interview with *anonymous 55.*
[136] Interview with *anonymous 57.*
[137] Interview with *anonymous 53.*
[138] Interview with *anonymous 49.*

A large percentage of the people being 15M in Cordoba that I interviewed expressed concern about the difficulty of articulating a united Spanish resistance. According to them, this was the case because of the different national conflicts brewing in the country. The general view was that every neighbourhood, and every city, needed to have its own processes. Nevertheless, most agreed that ideally some form of communion should exist between localities. As one interviewee suggested, "15M taught us to get together around projects not ideas."[139] In Cordoba, there seems to be no naivety regarding the arduous task ahead faced by anyone attempting to change the political, economic, and social system in which we live. As another interviewee pointed out prior to my departure: "We go ever so slowly because we are going on forever. Nevertheless, this slowness is hard work, and we are going to receive a lot of hits."[140]

15Ms in Granada

Granada has a long tradition of activism. Yet, its social movements prior to 15M, were characterized by "their little flexibility; as being old fashioned in their ways; and as being stuck in their own Ghettos without working with each other."[141] 15M changed this reality. Before May 15th 2011, there were three interesting initiatives that were quite active in the city. *First*, a group of activists was fighting against a "civic ordinance that made it illegal to eat or drink in public squares; made it

[139] Interview with *anonymous 57.*

[140] Interview with *anonymous 47*; on my way from Cordoba to Granada I stopped in the city of Jaen. There I met with members of the SAT. We discussed some of the occupations they are currently working on. I learnt about *La Rueda* (The Wheel) repossesed by bank BBVA *Banco Bilbao Vizcaya* Argentaria (Bilbao Vizcaya Argentaria Bank), with 1500 acres. I was told about another property owned by the Environmental Ministry with 1200 acres. We also discussed *el Chantre,* a estate, which the SAT reclaimed in 1995, and which comprises 1200 acres. Whilst in Jaen, I was told of the neighbours of the town of Jodas, a town with 14000 inhabitants that accumulates fines of over 100000 euros from these occupations. I was also told of the great help the SAT has received since the 15M encampments. The encampments have served to make visible the SAT's struggle. Interview with *anonymous 59.*

[141] Interview with *anonymous 65.*

illegal to water one's plants on the street; and also allowed for people to be fined for congregating in small groups in public spaces."[142] *Second*, an independent party was being created with the aim of mobilizing the electorate towards voting blank. "When 15M happened we were preparing this political project and it became clear to me that people did not want a new political party. People wanted 15M."[143] *Third*, a Participation School had been created in one of the working class neighbourhoods. In it people were being reminded of the fact that struggling together individuals could obtain collective results. This school experience coincided with 15M. In this sense, a group of participants from the neighbourhood created banners and attended the first DRY demonstration. "The call for the demonstration stated that we should not promote particular groups, so on our banners we just wrote our desires."[144]

On May 15th, 8,000 people attended the DRY demonstration in Granada. It was conducted in a "fun spirit, it felt refreshing, and there was great popular music."[145] At the end of the day, small groups congregated in the *Plaza del Carmen* (Carmen Square) and began to make decisions in assembly. At that moment DRY had already disassociated itself from this action. "DRY was more in favour of reforming and expanding democracy through new technologies and referendums. What was happening in the square was a grassroots assembly-based initiative."[146] Around fifty people were sitting in small groups. In circles, quietly discussing the events of the day and deciding whether to camp in solidarity with Madrid. Then the police arrived and asked them to leave:

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[142] Interview with *anonymous 71*.
[143] Interview with *anonymous 69*.
[144] Interview with *anonymous 4*.
[145] Interview with *anonymous 72*.
[146] Interview with *anonymous 62*.

"We were in assembly and two people that were lawyers were asked through consensus to be spokespeople for the group. The police asked what we were doing and the spokespeople told them we were in assembly. The police then said that we had to abandon the square; the spokespeople responded by saying that we had to make the decision in assembly. The police was told they would have to wait. This same conversation happened four times, intermittently, whilst the assembly continued. Eventually we were evicted. Despite such an ending, our collective behaviour showed our ability to think communally."[147]

Following the eviction on the night of May 15th, the next day *Plaza del Carmen* counted over 1,000 people supporting the encampment. During the following twenty-two days, people constructed a mini-community in that square. "The community had a kindergarten; an IT (Information Technology) section; lawyers ready to support actions of civil disobedience; workshops; and meetings on numerous social issues."[148] During that time hostility between the encampment and the administration kept mounting. Those in the square disobeyed, and the government antagonized. "During the encampment, an occupied social centre was evicted and this generated a lot of anger against the administration."[149]

Friction also existed between different commissions, and between individuals within commissions. One example was "the university commission within the encampment. Eventually this commission had to dissolve, because it was taken over by people from CCOO *Comisiones Obreras* (Workers Commissions) and by members of the CSE *Coordinadora Syndical Estudiantil* (Student Unions Coordinator)."[150] A second example was the never-ending and heated debates regarding inclusion of unions within 15M. "Some wanted to include them, and others refused because they

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[147] Interview with *anonymous 67*.
[148] Interview with *anonymous 63*.
[149] Interview with *anonymous 60*.
[150] Interview with *anonymous 64*.

did not want the unions to takeover."[151] A third example came in the form of

patriarchy. This was visible in the square, in how "women, immigrants, and

neighbourhoods were excluded but always within a dialogue of inclusion."[152]

People camped in *Plaza del Carmen* were mainly precarious workers or

students. Everyone fed up with one thing or another, and everyone was eager to build

strength with each other. Individuals were concerned with "electoral laws; labour

issues; citizen participation; women rights; or simply corruption."[153] As time passed,

however, with "workloads increasing and pressure mounting many people disengaged

and left the encampment."[154] Finally, the decision was made to move to the

neighbourhoods. "The squares had served to debate problems and discuss tools, and

now the work was to be done within the communities."[155] A lot of individuals had left

aside work in their own groups and collectives in order to focus on 15M. Now "it was

times to disperse, expand our specific activities, and develop new ones. Things like

food banks; resistance boxes; and neighbour-to-neighbour networks of mutual aid."[156]

Following 15M encampments, what remained in Granada during the time of

my visit in terms of active projects within a 15M climate, included the following:

There was a group of *Stop Desahucios* like in most cities in Spain. Nevertheless, in

Granada it had the peculiarity of having began as PAH *Plataforma de Afectados por

la Hipoteca* (Platform of those Affected by Mortgages).[157] There existed in the city a

group called *Stop Represión*. It was created with the intention of giving legal and

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[151] Interview with *anonymous 71*.
[152] Interview with *anonymous 65*.
[153] Interview with *anonymous 66*.
[154] Ibid.
[155] Interview with *anonymous 67*.
[156] Interview with *anonymous 68*.
[157] This group began as PAH and changed to *Stop Desahucios*. At the time the PAH was only supporting people being evicted from a mortgaged home. This group wanted also to protect those renting properties. This group is also a part of the *Movimiento Andaluz por el Derecho a la Vivienda* (Andalucian Movement for a Right for Housing), Interview with *anonymous 60*.

financial support to those being fined or arrested in demonstrations and acts of civil

disobedience.[158] In the neighbourhood of the *Realejo*, the 15M assembly had marked

abandoned buildings in preparation for future occupations.[159] In the neighbourhood of

El Zaidín, the 15M assembly had joined other neighbourhood assemblies and

occupied the neighbourhood's library, *Las Palomas* (The Pigeons). This was done

after the government closed the library. Together they created the Platform against the

closure of *Las Paloma.* "95% of the people in the platform were women and its

constitution spanned three generations of users of the library; grandmothers; mothers

and daughters."[160] *La Hortiga* (The Nettle) an agro-organic cooperative, which existed

prior to 15M, had gained a lot of strength since May of 2011. In *la Hortiga,* 130

members were sharing food, which was grown collectively.[161] In addition, following

the encampment, the city's unemployed collective had conducted a lock-in

demanding a space for a food bank. The Archbishop of the city had loaned them a

space and the food bank was operative during my visit.[162] Finally, *La Casa del Aire*

(Air House), which had been fighting speculation in the neighbourhood of *Albaicín*

since 2004, had continued its fight with the support of numerous individuals being

15M.[163]

People identifying with this 15M climate have learnt numerous things from

the encampment in Granada, and the projects and groups that have followed. Below

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[158] In Granada activists have over 50000 euros in fines. Some people are facing jail sentences for picketing. There is one individual with twelve administrative fines; and people are being fined without even being present at the demonstrations. People in the group know blacklists exist. Right now, the group is collaborating with the group of jurists *Grupo 17 de Marzo* from Sevilla, in order to coordinate an Andalucian strategy against police repression. Interview with *anonymous 66*.

[159] Interview with *anonymous 65*.

[160] Interview with *anonymous 61*.

[161] *La Hortiga* has vegetable gardens in the town of Durcal 50 Km away from Granada. This is land that had been abandoned, and was loaned to them by the community. Members make all their decisions through consensus, and are currently working within a space of alegallity. Police officers are frequently harassing them. Interview with *anonymous 72*.

[162] Interview with *anonymous 71*.

[163] Interview with *anonymous 73*.

are some examples: One interviewee suggested that she had learnt to "*estar y ser al mismo tiempo.*"[164] A second individual suggested he had learnt to "co-create with others without the need for leadership; simply by consensus and rotation."[165] A third participant, explained how "15M was a beautiful laboratory of the commons. From this laboratory one learns to think together; decide together; and act together."[166] A fourth person explained, that for him the biggest lesson from 15M has been "realizing that if you have a good political project there might be somebody out there willing to cooperate with you in its development."[167] Finally, a fifth individual, was adamant in pointing out what one could learn from feminists in 15M:

> "I think one of the things which destabilizes our efforts, is the lack of a loving dialogue between ourselves. This is something that feminists in general, and feminists being 15M in particular, have really shown me. To some, it might seem a little cheesy to speak of political transformation in this manner. Nevertheless, to me, it seems that we must work towards the creation of communal spaces of trust and love, and then we can change things together."[168]

15Ms in Malaga

In Malaga the DRY demonstration of May 15th 2011, was initially organized by a group of people from the province who did not live in the city. These people had asked for logistical support from *La Casa Invisible* (The Invisible House).[169] From

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[164] The literal translation would be 'being and being at the same time', referring to being present and also being as a living creature. Interview with *anonymous 67*.

[165] Interview with *anonymous 69*.

[166] Interview with *anonymous 67*.

[167] Interview with *anonymous 60*.

[168] Interview with *anonymous 67*. The creation of these kinds of spaces will be discussed in detail in the last section of chapter six.

[169] *La Casa Invisible* is what is referred to as an Okupa 2.0. That is, a second generation occupied social centre. Such centers attempt to negotiate with the government in order to legalize their space. The building, an old palace, inside the old quarters of the city, was first occupied in 2007. In 2006, during Malaga's film festival, an old cinema is occupied for 24 hours. An alternative festival is organized. The occupation is a huge success. It becomes apparent to many individuals and collectives

that moment onwards, a group of about twenty people begins to hold weekly meetings in *la Casa Invisible*:

> "We did not know anyone. We began those meetings from zero, without knowing each others' faces. People were very new to this. They had never done anything collectively, and the initial group was very young. There were some people that were in their forties, but nobody had been a militant in any political project."[170]

As May 15th approached more people kept joining the meetings. In addition, the group knew that people were meeting in other cities. There was a sense that the demonstrations could be successful:

> "The Geração à Rasca (Desperate Generation) demonstrations had taken place in Lisbon. 15,000 people had attended. Because of this it seemed plausible that the DRY demonstration could be a success. This said, nobody expected what actually happened."[171]

On May 16th, following the eviction of Madrid's Puerta del Sol, in Malaga people mobilized in repudiation of the police violence and in support of the encampment. People used social media sites. That evening five people got together in *Plaza de la Constitución* (Constitution Square). By the end of the evening, there were about twenty people who collectively decided to camp in the same place the following

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that culture vertebrates many of the social struggles taking place in the city. Activists who had been in a previous occupation spearheaded the occupation of the cinema. This previous occupation was called *La Casa Iniciativas* (Initiatives House). This occupation had lasted for ten years. Following the cinema occupation *La Casa Invisible* is occupied. *La Casa Invisible,* together with other collectives from Pamplona, Barcelona, Tarrasa and Madrid, is part of a project called *La Fundación de los Comúnes* (The Foundation of the Commons). Interview with *anonymous 75*.

[170] Interview with *anonymous 75*.
[171] Interview with *anonymous 76*.

day. These people did not know each other before then.[172] That night they debated about the need to have a minimums consensus:

> "We were all standing and talking about a minimums consensus, and I was thinking, are we crazy? Do we think we are going to change capitalism from this square in Malaga? Here? Tonight? But then that is it, that is what is Utopia."[173]

On May 17th, everyone turned up in the square with camping gear. People brought sound systems and computer equipment. The encampment began to go up. That evening, police officers turned up at the square asking everyone to leave. As people refused, the police returned with a street cleaning crew. They said that people had to move because the square needed to be cleaned. The group refused to move, but eventually they were hosed down and spent the whole night walking around the square. The group went round in circles, with all their belonging in their hands, because the police said it was illegal to camp:

> "The guy with the hose was saying to us:'I am not going to hose, I am with you guys not with the police'. But he had a police officer telling him he had to hose. May 16th of 2011 is the craziest day in the last thirty years of Spanish history."[174]

On May 18th, activists from *La Casa Invisible* and other collectives decided to hold an assembly in the patio of their building. The assembly was called in order to decide how to proceed. There were over 200 people there, but someone walked in,

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[172] Interview with *anonymous 55*.
[173] Interview with *anonymous 77*. The empowerment of making decisions in concert is discussed in more detail in chapter six.
[174] Interview with *anonymous 55*.

and let everyone know that there was a bigger assembly happening in *Plaza de la Constitución*:

> "We went to the square and realized that people there were really well organized. From that moment onwards we just gave them infrastructure support. Things like generators; projectors; screens; cabling; and brooms. On the busiest days of the encampment we closed *La Casa Invisible* and put up a sign that read: 'We are out camping.'"[175]

The encampment was described to me by many of its inhabitants as a place of hectic work; lack of sleep; and never-ending dialogues. As one interviewee put it, "the encampment was beyond political, it was human",[176] every day was an adventure. There was excitement. There was tension. And there were lots of tender moments:

> "We stayed away from our homes for one month and a half. People near the square would let us shower in their homes. One man came to the encampment to donate 1,000 euros. We had decided in assembly that we did not accept money, and therefore, we went together to the supermarket and he bought food for the kitchen."[177]

In *Plaza de la Constitución* nobody gave orders and everyone knew what to do.[178] According to those I interviewed, the first month of the encampment everything was magical. Then things began to deteriorate. As one interviewee describes it:

> "I was working at the kitchen and the solidarity at the beginning made it an amazing experience. Then we began to have shortages of food, and that generated tensions. Then neo-Nazi groups began to come and create trouble. One night they burned down our kitchen."[179]

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[175] Interview with *anonymous 75*.
[176] Interview with *anonymous 77*.
[177] Interview with *anonymous 82*.
[178] Interview with *anonymous 79*.

A second person explained how homeless people began to join the encampment. According to this person some began to reject homeless people, whilst others defended them. "With the rejection of the marginal, the divisions began to grow in the encampment."[180] A third individual described how following from this, people from different collectives boycotted the encampment. According to this interviewee, their intention was to generate dissolution of the encampment and a move to the neighbourhoods:

> "Rumours were going around that people from *La Invisible* had met with the Mayor's office. At the same time, people from IU and other groups started attending the general assembly in large numbers. Until then, decisions in our assemblies were reached by consensus. Then with all these new arrivals the decision was made to change our decision making to vote. Following this move, the decision was made to move to the neighbourhoods."[181]

After one month and a half of encampment, the decision was made to move to the neighbourhoods. Numerous participants in the encampment had gone on the 15M March to Madrid as the dismantling took place.[182] An unforgettable experience for many had come to an end and something new was to be born. When I spoke to them, many interviewees remembered the square with a smile. One said to me: "I remember the square under the sun's glowing golden rays."[183] Another told me: "I get indignant when I see the square without tents. The square is our home."[184]

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[179] Interview with *anonymous 80*.
[180] Interview with *anonymous 55*.
[181] Interview with *anonymous 78*.
[182] Interview with *anonymous 55*.
[183] Interview with *anonymous 80*.
[184] Interview with *anonymous 77*.

Following the encampment there was an explosion in activity. Neighbourhood

assemblies began, and numerous collectives were born. The PAH, which beforehand

had only two people, became very popular and many more joined.[185] The PRC *Plan de*

Rescate Ciudadano (Citizen Rescue Plan) was created, to bring together different

struggles.[186] Three *Corralas* were occupied to host homeless families.[187] The *Banco*

Bueno (Good Bank) occupied the branch of an old savings bank, and created a self-

managed canteen offering food to poor families.[188] The green tide defending public

education, and the white tide defending the country's public health system gained a

lot of strength in the city.[189] The feminist movement has grown in Malaga: "feminist

movements have been very active in Madrid, Barcelona and the north of Spain. Here

they had not yet articulated."[190] In addition, following the end of the encampment in

Plaza de la Constitución, people camped outside a CIE *Centro de Internamiento de*

Extranjeros (Foreigners Internment Centre). This encampment demanded that the

government grant asylum to an immigrant that had been detained. Eventually, a

solution was found to release him. Mounting pressure on the street made it

necessary.[191]

When I left Malaga different groups from within the 15M climate were

working on creating a popular plenary. These sessions would run parallel to those of

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[185] Helping over 2000 families in the city, most collectives and groups seem to support the PAH and contribute in its activities. "We have discovered that stopping evictions generates a powerful collective energy." Interview with *anonymous 78*.

[186] People get exhausted from their own particular struggles. The PRC with a few clear points, like housing for all, basic salary for everyone, and a constituent process, brings together those fighting on these separate, yet related issues. Interview with *anonymous 75*.

[187] The *Corralas* in Malaga are all new buildings. Banks own two of the *Corralas*, and one is owned by what was once a powerful construction company. Interview with *anonymous 77*.

[188] Interview with *anonymous 79*.

[189] Interview with *anonymous 75*.

[190] Interview with *anonymous 76*.

[191] A paramilitary group and the government of his country wanted the person dead. Yet, the Spanish government refused to grant him asylum. Finally his girlfriend (a Spanish citizen) was allowed to enter the CIE to marry him. He was then released. There is a large movement organized in Spain demanding the closing of CIE's across the country. Interview with *anonymous 80*.

Town Hall. In addition, numerous collectives were discussing how to enter

institutions in order to "change the system from within."[192] For many people in

Malaga, 15M has changed their socio-political reality. The examples below give a

sense of how individuals in Malaga understand 15M. One individual suggested to me

that 15M "radicalized politics."[193] A second suggested that 15M had "regenerated

politics with its unlimited potential."[194] A third described it as "revolutionary in its

way of operating despite its reformist short-term goals."[195] A fourth claimed that it

was "a great methodology to contextualize, analyse and critique ones own

ideology."[196] A sixth suggested that when thinking about 15M, "one has to realize that

it has changed so many things that the only thing it has not changed is the power of

elites."[197] A seventh saw 15M "as an open-ended discussion."[198] An eighth told me,

referring to my research project that my interviews were 15M.[199] Finally, a ninth

interviewee suggested, "15M is a cooperative and collaborative network without a

clear centre and with numerous aggregation nodes that do the work and coordinate

with each other."[200]

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[192] Interview with *anonymous 75*. Attempts at changing the 'system' from within will be discussed in chaper six.
[193] Interview with *anonymous 80*.
[194] Interview with *anonymous 77*.
[195] Interview with *anonymous 76*.
[196] Interview with *anonymous 78*.
[197] Interview with *anonymous 79*.
[198] Interview with *anonymous 81*.
[199] Interview with *anonymous 75*.
[200] Interview with *anonymous 82*; Malaga was my last destination in Andalucía. From there I was heading to the Community of Valencia. Before that, however, there were two places I needed to visit. One was the occupied village of *San Pedro* (Saint Peter) in the natural park of *Cabo de Gata* (Cape of Queen), near the city of Almeria. The other was the autonomous city of Melilla, the place from which General Franco set out in 1936 to takeover power of the Spanish State. In *San Pedro* my wife and I experienced the liberating beauty of a nudist community where people lived in caves facing the Mediterranean Sea. Living naked; sharing in community; eating together; keeping beautiful gardens; and living in peace. In Melilla, I discovered the crude reality of a border-fence town separating Europe from Africa. Statues of Franco on the streets; Guardia Civil officers everywhere; helicopters patrolling the coastline; and thousands of Africans watching from the hills of Morocco, waiting for their chance to climb the fence (in hope of a better life). Someone in a 15M assembly in one of the towns in Andalucía that I visited, had mentioned that I should visit Melilla in order to see the shadows the 15M is indignant of. An interviewee during my visit to Melilla described it as follows: "The police are

Valencia

The *Comunidad Valenciana* (Community of Valencia) was constituted as an autonomous community of Spain in 1982. On that date its status of autonomy was approved. In 2006 its status was reformed; and since then, the Community of Valencia is defined as a historic nationality of Spain.[201] The community is highly industrialized, and has strong tourism and agricultural economies. All these together make it the fourth largest economy in Spain. It generates 9.6% of the country's gross domestic product.[202] Valencia is the second region in Spain with the largest percentage of non-nationalized immigrants. 17.1% of the population holds only a foreign nationality.[203] It is also the most indebted region in Spain. At the time of writing in early 2015, the PP *Partido Popular* (Popular Party) governs in the Community of Valencia. It has seven of its parliamentary members indicted for corruption.[204] Valencia; Alicante; Elche; and Castellón de la Plana, are the most important cities in the Community. I only visited the city of Valencia because 15M activities in the Community mainly flourished in its capital city.

15Ms in Valencia

In this city preparations for the DRY demonstration of May 15th 2011, took place with more time than what had been the case with previous demonstrations. In addition, in this demonstration, a lot more contact than was usually experienced

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breaking the legs and arms of those who jump the fence or swim into Spain. Police officers are then illegally sending them back to the other side. The police know that on the other side they have no chance. Morocco does not want them. They are coming from other countries in Africa. Many running from poverty, starvation, and war." Interview with *anonymous 83*.

[201] Cortes Valencianas (10/4/2006). Generalidad Valenciana (ed.): *Estatuto de Autonomía de la Comunidad Valenciana* (2006)

[202] 'Estructura porcentual del PIB a precios de mercado', *Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Contabilidad Regional de España (principales resultados)* (2009)

[203] 'Población por nacionalidad, comunidades y provincias, sexo y edad', *Explotación estadística del censo según el Instituto Nacional de Estadística de España*.

[204] Pérez, Iván (08 de abril de 2011). 'Génova aprueba la lista de Camps con nueve implicados por corrupción'. *El Mundo*.

happened between groups and collectives. The first demonstration was a huge

success. 20,000 people walked together through the city's streets.[205] The subsequent

encampment in Valencia's *Plaza del Ayuntamiento* (Town Hall Square) following the

eviction of Madrid's Puerta del Sol, became one of the strongest 15M nodes in the

country:

> "It was amazing. The first thing that comes to mind was the explosive excitement and
>
> incredulity. Numbers in the encampment grew exponentially day-by-day. Perhaps in the first
>
> assembly we were 30 people. The following day we were 100. Then we were 500; then 2,000;
>
> then 5,000; until we were 10,000 people in the Square conducting a general assembly."[206]

The packed general assemblies in Town Hall square, more than an exercise in

democracy were about generating community. "The loudspeakers did not reach

everyone. Despite this, the openness of these mass assemblies gave everyone a sense

of togetherness."[207] The square even had assemblies for little kids. "Although only in a

playful manner, these gave children an approximation into democratic practices."[208] It

is true that some more seasoned activists had a slight aversion to these 'theatrical'

representations of what an assembly is all about. Yet, they were soon reminded by

their colleagues of the fact that this was their chance to let their ideas be known by

broader spectrums of society.[209]

In Valencia, anti-capitalist and anti-system traditions seemed to play a more

prominent role in 15M than they did in other cities. "In other cities the reformist line

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[205] http://15mpedia.org
[206] Interview with *anonymous 84*.
[207] Interview with *anonymous 87*.
[208] Interview with *anonymous 88*.
[209] Interview with *anonymous 85*.

within 15M seemed to have broader acceptance than it did in this city."[210]

Nevertheless, the multiplicity of types of militancy and activism that were present and

the confluence of these in one collective space was exciting and surprising to many

who were present. As one interviewee described it:

> "The multiplicity of ideas and practices was fascinating. One has to acknowledge that at least
> until May 22nd (following the municipal elections), the square was filled with right-wing
> conservatives; congregating with left-wing libertarians; and in between them every other
> ideology one can imagine."[211]

The encampment in Valencia had an Action Commission whose sole purpose

was to propose actions for the following day. "We had about seven assemblies every

day and many great initiatives came out of them."[212] For example, on the day of

reflection prior to the municipal elections they organized a funeral for democracy.

"We made a coffin, we dressed in black, and organized a procession to the doorsteps

of Town Hall. The coffin ended up confiscated and was buried inside Town Hall."[213]

The encampment also organized an occupation of the local television station *Canal 9*:

> "This action was actually a fiasco. Some people being 15M were arrested and the security
> guard at the station lied saying he had been attacked. This generated tension in the
> encampment, and some people decided to write a press release disassociating 15M form the
> action."[214]

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[210] Interview with *anonymous 89*.
[211] Interview with *anonymous 84*.
[212] Interview with *anonymous 89*.
[213] Ibid.
[214] Interview with *anonymous 86*.

In the square, there were clear agonisms between different ways of understanding the struggle. Nevertheless, there were spaces of confluence. When someone suggested an action on very short notice, on many occasions consensus was reached and the action supported. For example, when the new mayor took possession of her post, a decision was made to demonstrate in front of town hall. Everyone attended:

> "That day the police came out in riot gear. They looked like they were drugged. One of them we referred to as Ronald McDonald because of the smile he could not wipe off his face. The police were insulting us. They were telling us that it did not matter if we called ourselves real democracy now. For them there was only one democracy and it was theirs. That time we held together despite the fact that the situation was very tense."[215]

One interviewee described the square as a *demoplaza* (demosquare). "A space where different ideologies; different generations; and different social classes got together to discuss the future of democracy in the Spanish State."[216] In the encampment, there was even a spiritual commission for a little while. This commission "was eventually transformed into an alternative therapies group. People considered it too New Age but spirituality was present in the square."[217]

As in the rest of squares across Spain the time came to dismantle and move to the neighbourhoods. What was left at the time of my visit was a 15M spirit that was present in numerous collectives and initiatives. Multiple collectives were very active.

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[215] Interview with *anonymous 87*. The different understandings of democracy held by the State and 15M are made clearer through chapters four and six.

[216] Interview with *anonymous 90*.

[217] Interview with *anonymous 91*. The spiritual element in the way of being 15M is further discussed in chapter six.

There were four remaining 15M neighbourhood assemblies: Cabanyal; Zaidía; Patraix; and Russafa.[218]

In Valencia, because of the "Spanish symbolism associated to 15M, numerous independence inclined neighbourhoods rejected 15M assemblies."[219] Nevertheless, it seemed to be the case, that since 15M encampments there was more proximity between different collectives and groups. A good example of this was the occupation in November of 2012, of the abandoned Faculty of Agriculture at the University of Valencia. This occupation was carried out on November 12th, in preparation for the general strike of November 14th. This is how one interviewee described it:

> "We thought they would evict us before the general strike. Yet, we managed to resist for one whole month. The idea was to catalyse the general strike. After the strike, it became a makeshift headquarters of social movements in Valencia; we called it *Calavaga*."[220]

Following from the occupation of the city square in 2011, and at the time of my interviewing in 2013, there had been an upsurge in 'okupa' (squatter) activity. "*L'Horta (The Vegetable Garden)*, an occupied social space that was lost in 2007, was recuperated as a space of confluence between leftist independence movements and the youth of *Izquierda Unida*."[221] Also on February 23rd of 2013, *Totes Juntes* (All Together), a new confluence of social movements and NGOs (Non-governmental Organizations) organized a demonstration against what they called a *coup d'état* by financial markets. The demonstration was a huge success, and at the time of

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[218] Interview with *anonymous 92*.
[219] Interview with *anonymous 86*.
[220] Interview with *anonymous 89*. *Calavaga* in Valencian language means home of the Strike
[221] Interview with *anonymous 85*.

interviewing the space remained open as a place for groups coordinating collective actions.[222]

When I visited Valencia in July of 2013, existing initiatives in the city included the following: The national campaign for closing the CIEs; which in this city is very powerful.[223] *Stop Desahucios*; which in the city on a daily basis gives support to over 250 new families facing eviction.[224] There was a group called *Ciudadanía Activa* (Active Citizenry) supported by numerous groups. This group was working on generating confluence towards an electoral proposal.[225] There was a work group called *Plataforma por la Libertad y contra la Represión* (Platform pro Liberty and Against Repression), which was integrated by members of different collectives. This platform offered support to those who had faced police repression, or were being fined for demonstrating or for acts of civil disobedience.[226] There was a group called *Coordinación Constituyentes de Valencia* (Valencia's Constituents Coordination). This coordinating committee was working towards promoting a new constituent process.[227] Finally, there was a group called *Plataforma Salvem Cabanyal* (Platform to Save Cabanyal). This platform was bringing together members of the 15M assembly of that neighbourhood and members of other collectives, in order to save the neighbourhood from speculators.[228]

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[222] Interview with *anonymous 92*. The 23rd of February is an important date in Valencia. In 1982, on that date, there was a failed coup in Spain. In this city tanks roamed the streets.

[223] The *Sindicato Unificado de Policia* (Unified Police Union) has stated that CIEs are like Guantanamo. Officers are being forced to carry out illegal actions. Interview with *anonymous 84*.

[224] Interview with *anonymous 85*.

[225] Interview with *anonymous 88*.

[226] Interview with *anonymous 86*. This group was created following the incidents at the *Luis Vives* institute. During the incidents teenagers were brutally attacked by police, as an education strike was taking place. In that strike 250 people received sanctions and nine were arrested. Many of these were underage.

[227] Interview with *anonymous 84*.

[228] Interview with *anonymous 87*. This neighbourhood is right next to the beach. Because of this, people are being evicted so that new construction can take place. There have been numerous police attacks on protestors stopping evictions in this neighbourhood.

15M for people in Valencia, was clearly key in rejuvenating the spirit of social struggle in the city. Of course, as in other cities, 15M meant different things to different individuals being 15M. Below are a few examples of what people had to say in regards to 15M. For one individual "it was an aspiration towards real change that we could control."[229] For a second interviewee, it was "something socio-spiritual."[230] For a third, it was "a space that opened up because old spaces and methods were no longer working."[231] For a fifth, "it was a lot of work that required facing agonisms between different interests and ideologies."[232] And for a sixth, "it was the realization that although previously social movements might have been going slowly because they were going far, they might have been going in circles."[233]

Valencia has been one of the cities in Spain, in which police brutality since the encampments of 15M has been most prominent. Nevertheless, as I prepared to leave the city to begin my trip to Madrid, one interviewee left me with the following thought:

> "We must continue to try and move the police to our side. I have spoken to a lot of officers, and although they follow orders and hit us with their batons it is not something they are proud of. In fact, a lot of them go back home after work and it is their children telling them that it could have been them being beaten on the street. Many are suffering depression because of the job they are having to carry out."[234]

Following my visit to Valencia I made my way to Madrid. This city starts chapter two. As a reader you can either chose to continue with me along this

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[229] Interview with *anonymous 88.*
[230] Interview with *anonymous 91.*
[231] Interview with *anonymous 92.*
[232] Interview with *anonymous 85.*
[233] Interview with *anonymous 84.*
[234] Interview with *anonymous 91.*

dialogical trip across Spain or you can skip cities and move on to chapter three. As stated in the opening remarks of chapters one and two (at the beginning of chapter one), chapter two begins with Madrid and continues travelling to the Northern regions of the Spanish State. Following the survey of Northern cities, I will present some closing remarks addressing the dialogues of reciprocal elucidation maintained through both chapter one and chapter two, and will refer to three recurring and significant conflicts present in all the cities where interviews were conducted.

– Chapter Two –

15Ms from Madrid's Puerta del Sol to the North

Madrid

The *Comunidad de Madrid* (Madrid Community) is part of the historical region of Castilla. In this sense, Madrid in its statutes of autonomy recognizes itself as Castilian.[1] Madrid's population is of 6,448,270 inhabitants.[2] Unemployment for the second semester of 2014 stood at 19%.[3] At the time of writing in early 2015, the community is governed by the PP with an absolute majority. The capital city of the community, Madrid, is also the capital city of Spain. 15M activity in the community mainly happened within Madrid city's metropolitan areas. Madrid city was the only city that I visited in the community.

<u>15Ms in Madrid</u>

Following the national DRY demonstration of May 15th (in the early hours of May 16[th)], in Madrid's *Puerta del Sol* forty people decided spontaneously to camp. "Many of us did not know each other but being antagonized by police, we quickly established some bonds. Riot police eventually dispersed us and nineteen of us were actually arrested."[4] The following day, 10,000 people took to the streets. Encampments were set up in squares across the country in solidarity with *Puerta del Sol*. At that time, Spanish expats also set up solidarity camps in numerous other countries.[5]

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[1] Organic Law 3/1983, of February 25th, of the *Estatuto de Autonomía de la Comunidad de Madrid*.
[2] 'Población por Comunidades', *Instituto Nacional de Estadística* (January 2013).
[3] Instituto Nacional de Estadística (España), ed. (24/07/2014) *Encuesta de Población Activa (EPA) Segundo trimestre de 2014*
[4] Interview with *Anonymous 106.*
[5] Interview with *Anonymous 114.*

"Numerous commentators have described the encampments as an act stemming from political naivety. Nevertheless, the naivety, at most, can only be said to apply to the first fifteen minutes. That is to the initial action by forty people deciding to camp. The mass support for the encampment; the establishment of encampments in other cities; and their continuity all evolved in defiance to police brutality. It was a conscious act of disobedience against an unjust system of government. It is not naivety but a challenge that brings 15M to life."[6]

Once the encampment was established, at a General Assembly in *Puerta del Sol,* it was decided that the camp would remain at least until the country's municipal elections of May 22[nd.7]. Despite the electoral board of Madrid banning the gathering, the camp remained. Quickly, different hashtags began to appear in social medial sites in support of the action:

"From minute one of the encampment a table with hackers had already been set up. By the time of the Electoral Board's decision to ban the gathering, the Internet was covered with hashtags such as #15M; #spanishrevolution; #democraciarealya; #nonosvamos; and #juntaelectoralfacts."[8]

In Madrid the encampment "quickly showed the rhizomatic nature of that which we now call 15M. Through it unknown actors quickly gained popularity."[9] In the city the square occupation "had in its biology a clear rejection of leaderships. Yet, during the first week, eighteen spokespeople were named and speculation began to mount about where the decisions for these choices were coming from."[10] Nevertheless, at the beginning there was a lot of trust, respect, and care towards the

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[6] Interview with *Anonymous 121.*
[7] Interview with *Anonymous 95.*
[8] Interview with *Anonymous 120.*
[9] Interview with *Anonymous 102.*
[10] Interview with *Anonymous 108.*

other. People were constructing a new city together and from the heart of Madrid. At the encampment "you were always exhausted but you had someone to hand you some water, a smile, or a kiss."[11]

During the encampment, a code of ethics was agreed upon. This code said that people "spoke as individuals and not as representatives of organizations. We did not know what we were co-creating, but we all seemed to feel that it was worthwhile attempting it without representation."[12] Even following the overwhelming rise of the right-wing PP *Partido Popular* (Popular Party) in the municipal elections, at the encampment there was no sense of disappointment. "We were no longer in front of the television set, we were doing something else. Between the television and us a constructive space had been pried open."[13]

At the encampment, people reignited their excitement for democracy. Work on the learning of unknown vocabularies was a constant.[14] "I think our general idea at the time was to take those in power out of power so that we could 'all' be in power together."[15] In Madrid, the phrase *vamos lentos porque vamos lejos* (We go ever so slow because we are going on forever) was prominently defended. It was understood "as medicine against short-term visions promoted by political parties, economists and the corporate media."[16] The construction of a power-with society had to be done one step at a time. At the square, although the dialogue was very generic, construction of alternatives was very concrete. "Setting out from concretes had the strength of opening up non-ideological spaces."[17]

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[11] Interview with *Anonymous 101.*
[12] Interview with *Anonymous 102.*
[13] Interview with *Anonymous 111.*
[14] Interview with *Anonymous 102.*
[15] Interview with *Anonymous 113.*
[16] Interview with *Anonymous 102.*
[17] Interview with *Anonymous 111.*

From *Puerta del Sol*, solidarity with other squares was a given. People would be in an assembly, and as new occupations were announced symbols began to appear in their support. Both regarding occupations in other countries and occupations in other Spanish cities. "The fact that we were not there alone had a lot to do with what we were doing. When the time came to dismantle the camp, one of the arguments made against this was that if we dismantled all other encampments would fall."[18]

There was a conversation going on between squares. Yet, individuals from Madrid's encampment were aware of the fact that this multi-square multilogue was not always fully transparent and clear. "Like in any dialogue, there were intermittences and misunderstandings. Sometimes one square would speak and another one would not listen; or did not hear; or simply would not respond."[19] Inhabitants in Puerta del Sol understood this reality. There was also a clear awareness about which occupations were growing engaged in indirect resonance games with Madrid, and which were coming out of a much more direct interaction. "When a group of individuals being 15M injects itself in Occupy Wall Street, there is a direct resonance. In 15M circles we were fully conscious of this".[20]

In Madrid, the excitement of the camp was also intertwined with numerous critiques coming from voices from within. For example, individuals involved in longstanding struggles in regards to the country's historical memory felt that 15M behaved like an orphan with no past. One interviewee described this in the following manner:

> "As a collective we were quite immemorial. For example, for two years, victims of the
>
> dictatorship had been meeting at Puerta del Sol every Thursday to do a round of the square.

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[18] Interview with *Anonymous 119.*
[19] Interview with *Anonymous 111.*
[20] Interview with *Anonymous 103.*

> Following from this, they tried to negotiate with us to continue their weekly rounds during the time of the encampment. There was no way of reaching consensus on opening the space for them to carry on with their act of remembrance."[21]

As another example, an interviewee active as 15M (but also having a strong past in immigration struggles) felt that 15M had "a worrisome absence of immigrant participants; in a political and economic juncture marked by immigration."[22] Numerous interviewees also questioned the way in which feminist concerns were handled in general assemblies.[23] In addition, at one point, some participants felt that they were being forced to dissolve the square by established organizations. "It seemed as though there was no space for the kinds of politics being enacted."[24]

On June 12th 2011, the decision was made to dismantle the encampment. The message at the time coming from Puerta del Sol was clear: "*No nos vamos nos expandimos*" (We do not disappear, we expand).[25] On that day, popular assemblies were created which together would constitute *Asamblea Popular de Madrid* (Madrid Popular Assembly). One interviewee describes it in the following manner: "When we left *Puerta del Sol*, there were around 150 assemblies with around 60,000 people, meeting in different neighbourhoods and localities in Madrid; in an interlinked manner."[26]

From the end of the encampment onwards, the 15M climate has been very present in Madrid politics. By November 2013, when my interviewing came to an end, there was a clear feeling about the fact as one interviewee put it, that "it would be

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[21] Interview with *Anonymous 93.*
[22] Interview with *Anonymous 102.*
[23] Interviews with *Anonymous 114, anonymous 97* and anonymous *104*
[24] Interview with *Anonymous 105.*
[25] Interview with *Anonymous 94.*
[26] Interview with *Anonymous 66.*

impossible to practice pre-15M politics and be well received by the city's social movements and collectives."[27] The political space had been transformed:

> "15M has reignited the neighbourhoods. Now demonstrations and other political actions are taking place in the neighbourhoods and not the centre of Madrid. This is something that many activists and collectives of activists have been attempting to inspire for years."[28]

Following the encampment, in numerous of Madrid's villages and neighbourhoods people began collective activity. Some began "to record their plenary sessions. Groups started community libraries. People got together and self-organized demonstrations. Individuals created alternative political parties; and in addition, publicly mocked their corrupt politicians. Self-organizing and self-managing the collection and distribution of food for those most in need became widespread in many communities."[29] Since 15Ms expanded from the encampment in *Puerta del Sol*, and at the time of interviewing at the end of 2013, many 15M assemblies had merged with other neighbourhood assemblies and neighbourhood collectives. Such was the case of the 15M assembly of Chanverrí. This assembly came together with other assemblies and collectives to create *Chamberri Se Puede* (Chamberrí We Can).[30]

Following the exit from *Puerta del Sol*, contagion of 15M practices rapidly spread. "In every collective or group, assembly based democracy, search for consensuses, and rotation of spokespeople has become commonplace."[31] 15Ms nonviolent praxes "have had really constructive consequences on assembly dynamics

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[27] Interview with *Anonymous 112.*
[28] Interview with *Anonymous 96.*
[29] Ibid.
[30] Interview with *Anonymous 98.*
[31] Ibid.

of many collectives. They are helping assemblies become much more inclusive."[32]

Nevertheless, not all for 15M was forward momentum after leaving the encampment.

"Numerous 15M assemblies dwindled fast and ended up merging with others simply

in order to continue to exist."[33]

At the time of interviewing, Madrid found itself with the highest number of

occupied social spaces in its history.[34] Occupations like the occupied social centre of

La Morada (The Dwelling), existing with radically democratic practices in its creative

ethos whilst "networking within a territorial web of occupied social spaces."[35] In the

city, when I was meeting individuals being 15M, it was also evident that the *Marea*

Blanca (White Tide) in defence of the public health system had been imbued by this

15M climate. "Unions, doctors and nurses have adopted 15M practices. In the White

Tide, users of the health system have also joined and co-created demonstrations and

other actions."[36]

What I witnessed during this stage of the research trip was that certain

characteristics of the way of being political which 15Ms have popularized could be

seen in numerous spaces. This expansion had already become apparent to many

individuals being 15M by the end of the summer of 2011. That summer, at an

assembly for secondary school teachers held in a CCOO building, "CCOO unionists

tried to steer the event. Yet, people where speaking as individuals and demanding a

15M like assembly space."[37] Two years later, 15M practices had spread broadly. At

the time of interviewing, interviewees were clearly identifying individuals being 15M

in other struggles. 15M individuals were in the fight against the privatization of

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[32] Interview with *Anonymous 122.*
[33] Interview with *Anonymous 108.*
[34] Interview with *Anonymous 120.*
[35] Interview with *Anonymous 98.*
[36] Interview with *Anonymous 111.*
[37] Interview with *Anonymous 108.*

water.[38] They played important roles in the struggle against new abortion laws.[39] They had become very active in the PAH; which one individual described as "the ministry of housing of this 15M climate."[40] In addition, individuals being 15M were found in the struggle against police repression.[41] Finally, they played very active roles in the struggle against fascist organizations.[42] The struggle against fascism has historically been important in the Spanish State because of the country's last civil war and its following four decades of dictatorship.

It is important to acknowledge that at the time of interviewing, many new collectives had been born. These new initiatives had "taken over many of the spaces that were occupied by self-labelled 15M projects."[43] It is equally important to mention, that by the time of my visit to Madrid excitement brought forth by the encampment had waned. One interviewee described this in the following manner: "We have realized that our lives are more precarious, that we feel more insecure, and that nobody is protecting us. We have come to feel as though we are drowning."[44] Within this shifting space, the 15M climate was still present during my visit. Nevertheless, a clear shift, "a climate change" if you like, was taking place.[45] "What I have noticed in the last couple of months," one interviewee explained to me, "is that 15M individuals with influential Twitter and Facebook accounts seem to be wanting

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[38] Interview with *Anonymous 102.*
[39] Ibid. This bill was finally dropt.
[40] Interview with *Anonymous 110.*
[41] Interview with *Anonymous 117.*
[42] Interview with *Anonymous 116.*
[43] Interview with *Anonymous 98.*
[44] Interview with *Anonymous 101.* Chapter six of the dissertation addresses the issue of urgency as being about point of view rather than about method.
[45] Interview with *Anonymous 111.*

to kill 15M. They are saying that it was positive but that now we need something different."[46]

By the time of my departure from Madrid, many being 15M were seriously debating different strategies to enter electoral politics. There was a sense of the need to unblock what many were seeing as a deadlocked institutional political system. One interviewee suggested "15M is in a moment of withdrawal. This in a sense being marked by the formal institutional electoral system; with the European elections and the municipal elections coming up."[47] A second interviewee emphasized that "although on many occasions the street in politics is crucial and can be necessary in many struggles, it is never sufficient on its own."[48] A third, suggested "15M had claimed many spaces but seemed scared to claim parliament."[49] And a fourth, was hopeful that 15M would be able to eliminate the gap that separated institutions from the street:

> "That dichotomy between institution and street, that hierarchical distance, will hopefully be erased by 15M. In the same way that DRY was able to eliminate the dichotomy between right and left in the demonstrations of May 2011."[50]

Opinions of what 15Ms are by those being 15M in Madrid were multiple. One interview described 15M as "a collective fright that opened up a great conversation."[51] A second suggested that 15M "was not an answer but a question." He then added, that

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[46] Interview with *Anonymous 113*. Here one can see the early stages of the agonism brewing between those thinking about power-with, versus those thinking in terms of power-over. This agonism will be discussed further in chapter five and chapter six.

[47] Interview with *Anonymous 120*. How power-over benefits from the temporality of representative elections is discussed in chapter five.

[48] Interview with *Anonymous 109*.

[49] Interview with *Anonymous 102*.

[50] Interview with *Anonymous 112*.

[51] Interview with *Anonymous 93*.

it worked "as an empty reference in which any individual could hang his or her undefined complaints." The same interviewee finally suggested "15M's wisdom was its ignorance. In the sense that there were things 15M did because 15M did not know they were impossible."[52] A third interviewee, suggested "15M was a space from which we were thinking ourselves by ourselves."[53] A fourth, saw 15M as "something organic that adapts itself like an amoeba to that which it needs."[54] A fifth, described 15M as "a space of collective aggregation practicing a kind of democracy-affirming disobedience." This same interviewee, saw in 15M "the appearance of a multiple, multiform subject that carries multiplicity in its DNA."[55]

During my stay in the city individuals being 15M shared further opinions regarding 15M with me. These included the following reflections: One individual suggested that 15M was "a web-system that was behaving as a constituent power."[56] A second saw 15M as "a destituent rupture."[57] A third described it as "an intuitive impugnation of the regime of 78."[58] And a fourth, emphasized the fact that "although 15M extended and amplified counter-conducts in Madrid, it did so always with inherited and reappearing genes."[59]

Galicia

The Atonomous community of Galicia carries the official status of a historic nationality. According to the Statute of Autonomy of Galicia signed in 1981, Galicia

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[52] Interview with *Anonymous 99.*
[53] Interview with *Anonymous 102.*
[54] Interview with *Anonymous 101.*
[55] Interview with *Anonymous 121.*
[56] Interview with *Anonymous 122.*
[57] Interview with *Anonymous 120.* Future visions of such a destitutent rupture are presented in chapter four.
[58] Interview with *Anonymous 121.*
[59] Interview with *Anonymous 96.* These reappering genes as seen by those being 15M will be excavated through chapter three.

is a historic nationality that constituted itself into an autonomous community. It did this according to the statute, in order to access its own government. In early 2015 Galicia is governed by the *Partido Popular de Galicia* (Popular Party of Galicia).

15Ms in Santiago de Compostela

On May 17th Spanish police evicted around 250 people camped in Madrid's *Puerta del Sol*. That same afternoon, thousands of people returned to the square and Facebook and Twitter were overflowing with messages saying that #acampadasol continued. In response to this, in *Plaza del Obradoiro* (Obradoiro Square) in Santiago de Compostela, hundreds of people demonstrated supporting *Puerta del Sol* and around twenty people decided to camp.[60]

> May 17th in Galicia is a public holiday. I was heading over to some concerts, and stopped at *Obradoiro*. I had some friends who had been organizing the DRY demonstration. At the square, we were all discussing whether to camp. I left to go home, so that I could pick up my tent, a sleeping bag and some blankets. Once I set them up in the square, they stayed until we dismantled the encampment."[61]

The encampment in Santiago "began as a rejection of the status quo whilst walking towards utopia."[62] The majority of participants during the first week were individuals that had no political experience. As one interviewee described it, "thanks to our political freshness we were able to dialogue with each other without too many vices or fallouts."[63] Participants, spoke to me of youth collectives that had joined the encampment and were linked to the different trade unions, and to leftist and

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[60] Interview with *Anonymous 123.*
[61] Interview with *Anonymous 132.*
[62] Interview with *Anonymous 128.*
[63] Interview with *Anonymous 129.*

nationalist political parties. Yet, as it was expressed, "15M was used by many in a generational sense to determine their own political views."[64] People from "BNG [*Bloque Nacionalista Gallego* (Galician Nationalist Block)], CNT, CUT [*Central Unitaria de Trabajadores* (Central Union of Workers)], IU and even people from UPyD [*Unión Progreso y Democracia* (Union Progress and Democracy)]" joined the encampment.[65] Nevertheless, "those that remained quickly diluted within 15M. Individuals from UPyD were the first ones to leave."[66] In Santiago, the impression I received was that although it was mostly young people filling the square, the 15M climate had spread broadly across the city. The sentiment it generated in different generations, was described to me with the help of a personal example by an individual being 15M:

> "I showed my 90 year old mother the images of *Obradoiro* on the television. She told me that she had to be there. The generation that lived the war and the dictatorship understands better than the rest what is coming."[67]

During the time of the encampment, there was a feeling in the square that 15M was presenting to the rest of society new ways of relating to each other. "Transformation was no longer initiated through vanguards, tutelages or monologues."[68] In the square, people were conscious of the fact that "there was a rupture with the old ways of doing politics. New frames were being created."[69] In its anonymous spirit, "15M was diffuse, with unknown actors having to face each other

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[64] Interview with *Anonymous 124.*
[65] Interview with *Anonymous 123.*
[66] Interview with *Anonymous 127.* Square brackets are my addition.
[67] Interview with *Anonymous 128.*
[68] Interview with *Anonymous 124.*
[69] Interview with *Anonymous 133.*

collectively."[70] The square was "transversal and heterogeneous."[71] This gave room for much discussion. "15M made us listen a lot and talk a lot. We had been a long time without individuals picking up a microphone in a public square."[72]

As with other 15Ms across the Spanish State, 15M in Santiago faced certain challenging agonisms. For example, "there was an initial reluctance from 15M to relate with established Galician social movements."[73] This generated friction throughout the duration of the encampment. There was also a much more intense conflict between those being 15M and individuals involved in Galician nationalist movements. "We were accused of being a copy of Madrid; of being a branch of a centralized Spanish movement; of having nothing Galician in us."[74] Many people from nationalist movements "found problematic that the main language being used in 15M assemblies was Spanish."[75] This led to a declaration coming out from the square "emphasizing Galician as the language of the general assembly."[76] Those in the encampment also encountered friction with the city's feminist movement, which accused 15M of being sexists. Finally, radical leftists movements accused 15M of being reformist.[77]

By the end of the encampment, 15M in Santiago had fractured into two broad camps. "Those more focused on seeking a rupture with the current political and economic system. And those more interested in reinforcing ideas and values associated with the concept of citizenship."[78] Furthermore, by the end of the encampment, people in the square were witnessing their discussions being "absorbed,

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[70] Interview with *Anonymous 130.*
[71] Interview with *Anonymous 132.*
[72] Interview with *Anonymous 123.*
[73] Interview with *Anonymous 129*
[74] Interview with *Anonymous 132.*
[75] Interview with *Anonymous 130.*
[76] Interview with *Anonymous 123.*
[77] Interview with *Anonymous 133.*
[78] Interview with *Anonymous 127.*

manipulated, and monopolized by elite structures of power. Even mobile phone operators were using images of the square in their advertising campaigns."[79]

Before moving to the neighbourhoods, a heated debate took place in the square regarding the potential occupation of an abandoned hospital. "Although in principle there was consensus on the legitimacy of occupying abandoned buildings, there was disagreement on the action itself. The occupation was rejected."[80] This process was carried out through consensus vote. Nevertheless, at around the same time, "*Sala Yago* was occupied. Although it was not a 15M project, 15M individuals supported the occupation."[81]

Following the encampment, few 15M projects remained labelled as such. Only the neighbourhood assembly of San Pedro was still active at the time of my interviewing. Nevertheless, the 15M climate was apparent in the city. Cooperativism and associations had spread throughout it. One interviewee described it in the following manner: "We are generating parallel webs of exchange and governance. It isn't just that they do not represent us, we simply do not need them."[82] During my stay in Santiago, *Stopdesahucios* (Stopevictions), which in this city stems out of the Alternatives Commission of 15M, was still active and strong.[83] After the encampment, the Alternatives Commission itself had merged with some trade unions and had created *Asamblea Abierta* (Open Assembly). By the time of my visit, the trade unions

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[79] Interview with *Anonymous 133*. Telefonica the largest phone operator in Spain used images of 15M in advertisement of its cellphone plans. It later had to make a public apology following strong criticism through social media. See Pascual, A. (01/12/2011) 'Telefónica pide disculpas por usurpar la imagen del 15-M tras las críticas recibidas', *Elconfidencial.com*. See online: http://www.elconfidencial.com/sociedad/2011-12-01/telefonica-pide-disculpas-por-usurpar-la-imagen-del-15-m-tras-las-criticas-recibidas_253845/

[80] Interview with *Anonymous 132*.

[81] Interview with *Anonymous 127*. Sala Yago is a historic cinema of the city of Santiago de Compostela.

[82] Interview with *Anonymous 125*.

[83] Interview with *Anonymous 130*.

had left the assembly and only people being 15M remained.[84] Following the

encampment, the Assamblea Abierta had occupied some land; had been loaned a

farmhouse; and had turned the space into a self-managed social centre.[85] In addition,

inspired by, and with the support of the *Cooperativa Integral Catalana* (Integral

Catalan Cooperative) a Galician Integral Cooperative had been started. A few food

cooperatives and a couple of eco-villages had also been created.[86] In support of these

moves, some initiatives that already existed had begun to converge with new

initiatives in a web-like manner.[87]

At the time of interviewing, police repression was a big concern for people

being 15M. Individuals were working in concert, to build defence mechanisms. One

of these was "a collective project by about fifty women of all ages, working on the

concept of fear from a feminist perspective."[88] Parallel to this, a broad civil rights

movement called *Silveiras* had come into being:

> "At Silveiras work revolves around establishing resilience protocols, working within already
> existing associative networks of cooperation. We consider ourselves immigrants in this
> patriarchy. We work on gender violence; violence against immigrants; prison repression;
> police repression; detentions; violence against homeless people; and evictions of occupied
> social centres."[89]

At the time of my visit to Santiago, the city's feminist movement was

mobilized against the Bill (later dropped) attempting to make abortion illegal in the

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[84] Interview with *Anonymous 128.*
[85] Ibid.
[86] Interview with *Anonymous 127.*
[87] Interview with *Anonymous 133*
[88] Interview with *Anonymous 129.*
[89] Interview with *Anonymous 132.*

Spanish State.[90] There were also many collectives working on creating social

currencies. The different sectorial struggles active in the city had acquired a 15M feel

to their actions."[91] One interviewee, explained the unexpectedly positive electoral

result of AGE *Alternativa Galega de Esquerda* (Galician Leftist Alternative) in the

2012 elections to the Galician Parliament.[92] According to this interviewee, the result

could not be explained without the eruption into Spanish politics of 15M. "AGE came

into existence and three months later 200,000 people voted in its favour because of its

15M discourse."[93] Another interviewee, pointed out how BNG, which had rejected

15M for being too Spanish, had suffered the consequences of this position in its

electoral results.[94]

During the time of interviewing, it was clear that those being 15M were

feeling a kind of "hard hangover following the tremendous potency of what was co-

experienced."[95] Those being 15M had entered into "a moment of deep reflection, in an

attempt to find resolution to numerous contradictions."[96] One interviewee, described

the different rhythms of social struggle between Galicia and Madrid. These different

rhythms made him question "whether Galicia was yet to experience its own 15M. A

collective presence with the kind of force that 15M had in a place like Madrid."[97] This

individual was also adamant about the fact that the state of shock imposed upon those

working on social justice issues was having its desired effect. A second interviewee

suggested the following:

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[90] Interview with *Anonymous 128.*
[91] Interview with *Anonymous 130.*
[92] AGE is an anti-capitalist and Galician Sovereignist coalition created for the Galician parliamentary elections of 2012. In the elections it became the third political force in Galicia with nine representatives and 14% of the votes. Interview with *Anonymous 129.*
[93] Ibid.
[94] Interview with *Anonymous 123.*
[95] Interview with *Anonymous 130.*
[96] Interview with *Anonymous 125.*
[97] Interview with *Anonymous 131.*

"Although we cannot know what we want to do. Our intuition should be able to tell us what we should not be doing in order to do things differently. We need to be more inclusive, and at the same time we should construct different communitarian means of being in society."[98]

As my interviewing in the city was coming to an end, discussions between those being 15M in Santiago revolved around the fact that 15M had managed to reframe Galicia's political agenda.[99] Discussion was thus focused, on whether there was any way in which 15M practices and ideas could enter institutional political structures. Interviewees who expressed interest in the representative option, often transmitted this intent cautiously. They often described how the aim was to contribute to social change by transforming the 'system' from within.[100] Debates regarding leaderships were a prominent part of this discussion. One interviewee described how she saw this issue being addressed:

"I think we are collectively working through a redefinition of the role of leadership. At this moment, there seems to be broad support for the idea of soft leaderships. Leaderships more appropriately defined, as numerous facilitators working together from collectively shared leadership spaces."[101]

A second interviewee, expressed concern regarding these moves towards leaderships and institutionalization:

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[98] Interview with *Anonymous 130.*
[99] Interview with *Anonymous 126.*
[100] Interview with *Anonymous 128.*
[101] Interview with *Anonymous 124.* A discussion on types of leadership will be an over-arching theme of chapters five and six.

"The space opened up by 15M is still open. What is closing is the collective imaginary of

what is possible. Discourse understood as a common process and other 'common senses' of

15M, are fundamentally different to those discourses and 'common senses' gaining traction

today."[102]

From those individuals being 15M in Santiago, during the interviewing, I

gathered some interesting reflections on what 15M is. One interviewee suggested that

"15M is the symptom of a pathology without diagnostic or medication."[103] A second

described 15M as a "decolonizer of the collective imaginary."[104] A third spoke of 15M

as "a catalyst of change which can be reformist or revolutionary depending on the

specific situation."[105] A fourth suggested that 15M was "the end of the transition and

beginning of new constituent processes."[106] And a fifth, in referring to the lively

discussion regarding constituent processes made the following claim:

In Galicia, when we are thinking about constituent processes in our current scenario we are

really thinking of de-constituent processes. This is because we need to think about dismantling

that which does not work, whilst at the same time constructing something anew."[107]

15Ms in A Coruña

People from A Coruña coming from collectives and groups such as Xnet[108] and

hacktivistas[109] had been in the initial Facebook group *Plataforma por la movilización*

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[102] Interview with *Anonymous 131*. Discourse as a common process is one of the elements inspiring the
approach of this dissertation. This common process of 15M is part of the common sense I am trying to
learn about.
[103] Interview with *Anonymous 124*.
[104] Interview with *Anonymous 123*.
[105] Interview with *Anonymous 126*.
[106] Interview with *Anonymous 129*.
[107] Interview with *Anonymous 125*. In chapter six I will address this construction of something anew by
bringing these 15M dialogues into dialogue with the work of Hannah Arendt.
[108] Visit online at https://xnet-x.net/.
[109] Visit online at http://hacktivistas.net.

ciudadana (Platform for citizen movilization). This platform was what eventually became known as DRY. From this Facebook page came the document with eight demands, which was later presented for discussion in 15M encampments across the Spanish State. In this page, there were three main streams of thought converging. "Views from the environmental movement; views on socialism coming from anarchists and communists; and input from advocacy groups dealing with accountability, transparency, and Internet freedoms."[110]

In A Coruña, the May 15th demonstration was a huge success. "1,500 people attended, and until the actual moment of the event we did not know if 20, 50 or 5,000 people would turn up."[111] As one interviewee emphasized, there had not been demonstrations this size in A Coruña since the Prestige oil-spill in 2002.[112] Following the success of the demonstration of May 15th, and in support of events taking place in Madrid, at 11pm on May 16th 2011, people in A Coruña met in the city's *Praza do Obelisco* (Obelisk Square). Here they discussed how to continue the mobilizations that had began the previous day.[113] Although this was in response to events taking place in Madrid, here in A Coruña people had in their imaginary the mobilizations of the *Geração à rascal* (Desperate Generation) in neighbouring Portugal. This imaginary gave people a sense that things could actually change.[114] Inspired by this, on that very night eleven people decided to camp. *Toma la Plaza* (Take the Square) became a reality in the city of A Coruña.[115]

The encampment quickly grew in size. During the first few weeks it was clearly inhabited by "people from 18 to 40 years of age. Children of the middle class

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[110] Interview with *Anonymous 138.*
[111] Interview with *Anonymous 148.*
[112] Interview with *Anonymous 136.*
[113] Interview with *Anonymous 149.*
[114] Interview with *Anonymous 135.*
[115] Interview with *Anonymous 151.*

who clearly could not aspire to a standard of living as high as that of their parents."[116] The majority of people present in the square knew of each other, nevertheless, they "were all starting from zero and were going to get to know each other through co-inhabiting in the square."[117] People were so adamant about starting anew, "that notes taken in the first assembly were signed day one year zero."[118] According to one interviewee, there was something particularly beautiful about 15M. "In this collective explosion we were all 'everyday' people, the no names of our society."[119] Everyone walked by and gave his or her opinion; everybody had a voice. "Our assemblies were often like a session in group therapy."[120]

15M Assemblies in A Coruña were like a constituent pact carried out on the street. Everything was being discussed: "From equality laws to the electoral system; public services; education laws; the prison system; the banking system; or pensions."[121] Sometimes people would decide that the assembly would be about egos; and people just talked about themselves. At other times, the topic was co-existence in the square and people would discuss why nobody was doing the dishes. "We wanted to fix the world and at the same time fix up the kitchen. It was difficult, a lot of things were intertwined."[122] The assemblies in A Coruña worked by consensus. This according to participants avoided the power of factions that appeared in places like the city of Vigo (where decisions were made by vote).[123] During the first few weeks of encampment in A Coruña the whole city seemed like a big general assembly:

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[116] Interview with *Anonymous 126.*
[117] Interview with *Anonymous 147.*
[118] Interview with *Anonymous 142.*
[119] Interview with *Anonymous 134.*
[120] Interview with *Anonymous 145.*
[121] Interview with *Anonymous 135.*
[122] Interview with *Anonymous 146.*
[123] Interview with *Anonymous 145.* The encampment in Vigo had a much bigger union presence. This was the case because of the strength in the city of traditional union struggles; linked to the shipbuilding industry.

"We were not alone. Everywhere in the city groups of people got together and talked about

what was happening in the Spanish State. Individualism had been momentarily interrupted."[124]

During the duration of the encampment those being 15M in A Coruña felt part of a collective intelligence. This collective intelligence was creating an amazingly interconnected web between encampments in different cities. One participant explained how one "would read what was happening in Murcia, and at the same exact time and without previous coordination, the same thing was happening in A Coruña's *Praza do Obelisco.*"[125] People in the square were "rethinking everything."[126] More importantly, "what was fascinating was how the square was not simply a place to think but had acquired a voice of its own."[127] The square was like a sociological experiment. "Building a micro city from zero, whilst reclaiming common space."[128] Despite these realities, as the encampment progressed dynamics and structures that were being criticized began to be reproduced:

"Commissions and sub-commissions sprung up. You wanted to work in a commission and

you were told that it was already full. This was contradictory with the idea that 15M belonged

to everybody. I was very disappointed."[129]

In A Coruña, the 15M encampment just like in other cities entered into conflict early on with the organizers of the DRY's May 15th demonstration. However, in this city the conflict was more direct. Here "DRY released a *communiqué* in which

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[124] Interview with *Anonymous 149.*
[125] Interview with *Anonymous 145.*
[126] Interview with *Anonymous 134.*
[127] Ibid.
[128] Interview with *Anonymous 146.*
[129] Interview with *Anonymous 155.*

it criticised the encampment. The encampment responded with a manifesto against DRY."[130] Nevertheless, the biggest conflict faced by the encampment was with those who had been active in the city's existing social movements. "Certain people did not have any patience with those that where learning about politics through 15M."[131] One participant described some of these behaviours in the following manner:

"For example, in regards to the people who had occupied *Las Atochas* (The Espartos). These were individuals engaging from within traditions of autonomous anarchism. They attended 15M assemblies. Yet, they behaved in the exact same manner as those in the institutionalized political system they had always criticized. They went to the square to tell people that the assembly was not an assembly. They suggested instead, that it was a collective therapy. I would asked myself why the process could not just be about learning and dialoguing together."[132]

Three months after its first general assembly the encampment at *Obelisco* came to an end. Many had said during its inception that it would not last more than two days. Yet, the three months it was actually active, although challenging altered the political scene of A Coruña. "Certain questions we did not ask ourselves before 15M we are now asking. 15m is more important for its questions than for any specific models it might suggest."[133] For one individual being 15M it was clear that this was the most important political event since the country's transition to democracy. This she justified by suggesting the following: that 15M had put on the table the fact that "the regime of 78, established with the country's transition to democracy, was

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[130] Interview with *Anonymous 146.*
[131] Interview with *Anonymous 149.*
[132] Interview with *Anonymous 134.*
[133] Interview with *Anonymous 144.*

sustained on even weaker foundations than those critically theorized by intellectuals

of the extreme left."[134]

What remained of 15M when I arrived to A Coruña in October of 2013, was a

15M climate. There was very little 15M labelled activity. Nevertheless, being 15M

were active in different collectives and initiatives.[135] According to one interviewee,

"following the encampment there is a counter-politics that has extended throughout

the city."[136] A second interviewee suggested that because of thinking within this

collective web, "people are more comfortable in the street and are putting their body

in a more determined manner."[137] A third individual emphasized the fact that 15M had

politicised the Aznar generation.[138] A fourth thought that 15M had "generated

expectation about the radicalization of Spanish society."[139] And a fifth suggested that

following 15M social movements were stronger and weaker at the same time:

> "Stronger, in the sense that there is much more activity going on with many more people and
> many more institutions of the commons. And weaker, in the sense that formal structures of
> social movements are disappearing because they are no longer what people need or want."[140]

By the time of interviewing two and a half years had passed since that initial

appearance of 15M as a collective presence. By then, many participants were

exhausted. One interviewee suggested that the emotional climate of "we are going to

take them out of power and we are going to change it all," had given way to "we are

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[134] Interview with *Anonymous 137.*
[135] Interview with *Anonymous 144.*
[136] Interview with *Anonymous 135.*
[137] Interview with *Anonymous 136.*
[138] Interview with *Anonymous 153.* The interviewee is speaking of the Aznar generation in reference to those people who were not of voting age during the time Jose Maria Aznar (right wing politician of the Partido Popular), was prime minister from 1996 until 2004.
[139] Interview with *Anonymous 137.*
[140] Interview with *Anonymous 135.*

going to save the furniture and then we will see what else we can save."[141] As a

second interviewee pointed out, following the encampments the city was going

through a difficult juncture. It was a moment "in which we should not have too much

optimism of the will. Yet, we should understand that we have not yet entered the point

of pessimism of reason."[142] A third interviewee did point out that "in 2013 the pulse

on the generation of excitement and on the production of activating narratives had

waned."[143] A fourth interviewee suggested that social movements were paralyzed.

"We are falling into the trap of theoretical debate. When we have stopped to think we

have lost the street."[144] And a fifth individual being 15M emphasized the fact that

people are still there during the silence:

> "What is happening, is that there are some people that do not understand that this path is slow.
> Slow in the sense that different times mark different rhythms. We go ever so slowly because
> we are going on forever. Some people do not understand that, they need success right away.
> That urgency is subtracting from our collective efforts."[145]

During my stay in A Coruña it was quite apparent that social movements were

building up muscle.[146] Yet, it was also apparent that there was a lot of "internal

division. Specially in regards to the electoral option being discussed."[147] Two and a

half years after the encampment social movements immersed in the spirit of 15M,

were "committed to constructing communities; social centres; consumer cooperatives;

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[141] Interview with *Anonymous 134.*
[142] Interview with *Anonymous 148.*
[143] Interview with *Anonymous 137.*
[144] Interview with *Anonymous 136.*
[145] Interview with *Anonymous 141.*
[146] Interview with *Anonymous 153.*
[147] Interview with *Anonymous 149.*

and alternative universities."[148] At the same time, many shared a deep conviction that "this prefigurative politics of advancing what we want and building on the margin, is not enough. We need to also occupy and inhabit institutions of political representation."[149] At the time of interviewing certain individuals who had acquired high profiles as 15M activists had "joined different political parties. Even though they had numerous reservations."[150] As one interviewee suggested, there were in A Coruña certain political parties that had listened to what was said by 15M and were attempting to rethink the politics of political parties from a 15M frame.[151] Another interviewee claimed the discussion should not be about whether we want to participate in the institutional power structures, but about what we want to do with them:

> "I think we need to participate in existing institutions, and then what we need to do is to discuss whether our objective is to destroy them, transform them or disperse them."[152]

At the time of interviewing, what became clear to me was that 15M had "managed to articulate the largest activist communication web the city has ever had."[153] 15M, according to one interviewee "pretended to change the world by inspiring people to change themselves. An objective that many people achieved."[154] In A Coruña, during my visit I witnessed numerous "micro-experiments."[155] There were some very interesting projects. People working on alternative media projects like

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[148] Interview with *Anonymous 152.*
[149] Interview with *Anonymous 134.*
[150] Interview with *Anonymous 136.*
[151] Interview with *Anonymous 144.*
[152] Interview with *Anonymous 148.*
[153] Interview with *Anonymous 138.*
[154] Interview with *Anonymous 153.*
[155] Interview with *Anonymous 140.*

Ciudadano zero a la izquierda (Citizen zero to the left).[156] There were some

individuals and groups articulating strategies to obtain an unconditional basic income

for Spanish citizens.[157] There was a movement coming to life, which was demanding a

new constituent process.[158] Different collectives were trying to articulate a joint

strategy for a social strike.[159] A lot of the collective imaginary was focused on de-

growth projects.[160]

    Different individuals being 15M in A Coruña described 15M to me. For one

interviewee 15M "was something that appeared like a mushroom but which is

difficult to define as something concrete."[161] For a second interviewee "15M is a

polyhedron. It has many faces. Yet, its cultural face (its cultural impact) is key and we

are missing important elements for its evaluation. An evaluation, which must be

postponed."[162] For a third interviewee 15M was a strange explosion for which he was

not able to analyse the causes.[163] For a fourth "it was the climate that emerged in

opposition to the installed climate of fear."[164] For a fifth, it was important to

understand that speaking about 15m one could not "define it as a unitary composition

or define it as meta-structure. 15M is a space, a moment, and a set of human groups.

In and through these groups, inputs and outputs have been generated."[165]

    The majority of interviewees being 15M in A Coruña did not think of 15M as

presenting new practices. As one interviewee put it: "15M presents a set of practices

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[156] Interview with *Anonymous 144.*
[157] Interview with *Anonymous 149.*
[158] Interview with *Anonymous 156.*
[159] Interview with *Anonymous 143.*
[160] Interview with *Anonymous 139.*
[161] Interview with *Anonymous 155.*
[162] Interview with *Anonymous 151.*
[163] Interview with *Anonymous 145.*
[164] Interview with *Anonymous 134.*
[165] Interview with *Anonymous 137.*

of that which has been called recombining politics."[166] What was new, according to this person, was "the way in which these practices are mixed. The way in which they spread and the way in which they add up."[167] A second interviewee spoke of 15M being "propositional energy and questioning."[168] A third described 15M as "a reflection of many differences."[169] A fourth suggested that 15M had something of both "event and of process."[170] And a fifth, suggested that 15M was something for which there was no space in the Spanish Constitution."[171]

As I was leaving A Coruña about to drive off with *La Pasionaria*, one interviewee waved me good-bye. At the same time he left me with the following reflection:

> "Yes we go ever so slowly because we are going on forever, but how far do we need to go and how fast should we be going?"[172]

Asturias

The autonomous community of Asturias is officially knows as the *Principado de Asturias* (Principality of Asturias). At the beginning of 2015, Asturias is goberned by the PSOE.

15Ms in Oviedo

Months before May 15th of 2011, a group of students from the University of Oviedo began to organize for the DRY demonstration. Soon, they realized that they

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[166] Interview with *Anonymous 134.*
[167] Ibid.
[168] Interview with *Anonymous 144.*
[169] Interview with *Anonymous 139.*
[170] Interview with *Anonymous 154.*
[171] Interview with *Anonymous 135.*
[172] Interview with *Anonymous 148.*

had been working in parallel to a different group that was working towards the same

objective. "Once we realized others were doing the same, we joined the other group in

an attempt to move the organizational meetings from Facebook to a physical space."[173]

According to one interviewee, the group that met on that first physical meeting was

very "naive". As he described it, "some individuals even thought they were

Anonymous and were wearing the Anonymous mask."[174] The group met three times in

preparation for the DRY demonstration. The day before they all attended a

demonstration promoted by CSI *Central Sindical de Izquierdas* (central of leftist trade

unions).[175] This demonstration on May 14th was called *Vamos a Levantar Cabeza* (Let

us Raise our Heads). As a second interviewee described it, it was "the best

demonstration we could organize using traditional organizational formats; 800 people

attended."[176] During that demonstration a march that was seeking "territorialisation

and plurality" was organized.[177] Small combative trade unions together with social

organizations, were attempting to come together in two marches that converged and

surrounded parliament."[178]

In the march of May 14th, following the convergence of these two marches and

the surrounding of Parliament people congregated. At that moment, one of the people

I later interviewed presented the nationwide demonstration of the following day. "In

the march we asked for the support of the trade unions. But we explained to them that

nobody could come out with their own flag." The next day, the 15M DRY

demonstration was a huge success; 2,000 people turned up.[179] Just like in numerous

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[173] Interview with *Anonymous 213.* It is interesting to note how people are coming together, by realizing they are paralleling each other's efforts.
[174] Interview with *Anonymous 165.*
[175] Interview with *Anonymous 213.*
[176] Interview with *Anonymous 162.*
[177] Ibid.
[178] Ibid.
[179] Interview with *Anonymous 213.*

other squares, here in Oviedo, following police brutality in Madrid people decided to camp. The encampment was set up in *Plaza de la Escandalera* (Row Square). It quickly became "a space of ultra-fast politicization."[180] Some people from existing social movements embraced the moment. "Life in the city during two months was beautiful. Nevertheless, for some realizing that the revolution did not need them was hard to swallow."[181]

The encampment in Oviedo "marked a change in social climate through which lots of hidden activity surfaced."[182] In the square, something was being decided and most people felt it was a historic moment. "The older people were saying that they had not seen anything like this since the transition to democracy."[183] The encampment demanded a deeper democracy to the outside. Internally, individuals being 15M were practicing direct democracy between thousands of people. "We were enacting direct democracy with its beautiful traits and with the problems that it raised."[184] Process was given priority. "As in feminisms from which one begins working on oneself as an individual but is aware of the fact that the process is collective."[185] At *Plaza de la Escandalera,* there seemed to be a collective awareness about the need to "construct from the local and from the collective. Not from big ideas and meta-thought coming from above."[186]

During the first few weeks, according to one interviewee, being at the encampment felt "as though one was changing glasses and everything was blur. Our whole society looked different from within this new space. It was impossible to see

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[180] Interview with *Anonymous 165.*
[181] Interview with *Anonymous 161.*
[182] Interview with *Anonymous 162.*
[183] Interview with *Anonymous 161.*
[184] Interview with *Anonymous 166.*
[185] Ibid.
[186] Interview with *Anonymous 161.*

things as we had been seeing them until then."[187] To a second interviewee the square "was a space that embraced existing marginal political and social practices and gave them new meanings and legitimacies."[188] A third interviewee described the square as a space that "made old certain behaviours and practices, whilst rejuvenating others."[189] There was a broad consensus amongst those I interviewed, about the fact that during the duration of the encampment political activity in the city was incredible.

With the encampment, as one interviewee suggested, "it was not just the regime of 78 that was questioned but the whole institutionality stemming from that process."[190] Social movements, trade unions and small political parties had been saying for a long time 'our lives do not fit in your ballot box.' Nevertheless, it turned out that the lives of those congregated around the city's 15M encampment did not even fit in the assemblies of any of the old institutionalized structure.[191] In rejection to this old institutionality, in the national and regional elections, "15M did not send a clear message about what could be done; this led to everything changing except the institutional arena."[192]

15M in Oviedo wanted to start a new society from zero. It rejected past experiences. It claimed that the power of this new collectivity being born could save the whole of society. Yet, as one interviewee suggested:

> "15M thought the revolution would begin from the healthy and the pure and that their purity would spread to the rest of society. But it turned out, that the social crisis; the ecological crisis; frustrated behaviours; rage; and violence were present in all of us."[193]

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[187] Interview with *Anonymous 162.*
[188] Interview with *Anonymous 166.*
[189] Interview with *Anonymous 162.*
[190] Interview with *Anonymous 161.*
[191] Interview with *Anonymous 163.*
[192] Interview with *Anonymous 168.*
[193] Interview with *Anonymous 162.*

This violence was clearly felt by feminist collectives amongst others. The sexist language in the square shocked many feminists. "We were so used to our spaces, in which care of the other is such an important element, that being in the square one often felt unnecessary hostility."[194] Nevertheless, at the time of interviewing those being 15M remembered the Oviedo encampment as a friendly and holistic space of convergence.

Two months after it had began, Oviedo's 15M was faced with the decision of what to do as encampments in other cities were moving to the neighbourhoods. Oviedo, unlike Madrid, did not have the critical mass to move to the neighbourhoods and help rearticulate social spaces. It was also getting cold, so the decision was made to occupy a building. *La Madreña* (The Clog) was born.[195] *La Madreña*, an abandoned governmental building became the trenches from which to regain strength. "We knew that we were entering into a reflux and we needed to have spaces from which to continue to think about, work on, and work with collective social and economic alternatives."[196]

Since the 15M departure from the square and the occupation of *La Madreña*, these kinds of spaces have multiplied. Spaces aimed at constructing long-term solutions to the problems faced by people in Asturias. By the time of my visit to the autonomous community a web had begun to form. A web between a set of interesting self-managed projects spread across different localities of Asturias. In Oviedo, in addition to *La Madreña* there was *Local Cambalache* (Exchange Space). In the city of Gijón, they had *La Manzorga*. In Áviles, they had *l'Ensame* and *La Caracola* (The

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[194] Interview with *Anonymous 161.*
[195] Interview with *Anonymous 164.*
[196] Interview with *Anonymous 162.*

Snail). In Navia, they had *La Casa Azul* (The Blue House). And in Villanueva de

Santo Adriano, they had *La Ponte*. One interviewee described this web in the

following manner:

> "Although each of these spaces has different characteristics, we see ourselves as part of an
> interlinked web of alternatives aiming to reinforce itself over the coming years."[197]

During the time of interviewing those being 15M felt there were strong

alternatives already in existence. "We have alternatives for energy; for work; for

management. The alternatives are here. The problem is that a large proportion of the

population does not know they exist."[198] For this reason numerous individuals being

15M were devoting a lot of energy to their promotion.

Parallel to the creation and promotion of this regional web of alternative

spaces and practices, following the 15M encampment a conscious decision was made

by those being 15M to take 15M horizontality back into the workplace.[199] In addition,

before 15M there were no groups attempting to defend public health; not even nurses

had organized. Yet, by the time of my visit, the White Tide was strong in Oviedo.[200]

The same was happening in education. The student movement, which prior to the

15M had been a little absent had picked up force and was organising in a 15M-like

manner.[201] According to one interviewee, although in Asturias there was no longer a

15M general assembly "a powerful 15M spirit has remained."[202]

As was the case in most of the cities I visited during my interviewing, in

Oviedo, I sensed in the collective imaginary a strong need for convergence. One

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[197] Interview with *Anonymous 161.*
[198] Interview with *Anonymous 165.*
[199] Interview with *Anonymous 167.*
[200] Interview with *Anonymous 164.*
[201] Interview with *Anonymous 168.*
[202] Interview with *Anonymous 164.*

interviewee described their on-going debate regarding this issue in the following

manner:

"Everyone is speaking of converging. There seems to be consensus on the need for the

identities of pre-15M parties, trade unions and collectives to dilute. These identities need to be

softer. Although everyone can carry their own flag, convergence needs to happen around a

platform that agrees on a set of minimums to be collectively address."[203]

By the time of my visit, interesting moves in the direction of convergence could be

identified. They could be seen in events such as an eviction in the city's district of

Ciudad Naranco (Naranco City). During this eviction, resistance coordinated by

Stopdesahucios (Stop Evictions) counted with the support of numerous social

movements but also with the support of the miners. "Thanks to the 15M spirit miners

joined the anti-eviction group. In Asturias we have never had miners supporting the

struggles of other collectivities."[204]

At the time of interviewing, those being 15M in Oviedo seemed clear about

the fact that a strategy needed to be put in place. This strategy would require finding a

way for citizens to break into the formal institutions of government. This, with the

aim of "throwing out the political caste and guaranteeing that they never come

back."[205] There also seemed to be a deep sense of needing to generate a constituent

process. "A process that will transcend our transition to democracy and will free

whole generations from being governed by the retrograde ideas of their parents and

grandparents."[206]

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[203] Interview with *Anonymous 166.*
[204] Interview with *Anonymous 164.*
[205] Interview with *Anonymous 164.*
[206] Ibid.

During my stay, Oviedo's atmosphere was one of "historic revolt."[207] Many 'small yet large' victories had been won. Lots of important terms such as 'anti-system' and' revolt' had been re-appropriated by those mobilizing.[208] Nevertheless, there seemed to be one serious agonism within Oviedo's 15M climate; the role of leadership in this transformative process. This agonism seemed to escape transcendence. One interviewee described discussions on leadership in the following manner:

> "People seem to have in their minds the idea that we need leadership. Yet, this need is obstructing the collective construction of the kind of horizontal leadership people seem bent on aiming towards."[209]

Two and a half years after the dismantling of the 15M encampment when asked about what 15M is, interviewees made some valuable suggestions. One interviewee explained that for him, 15M was a truly dialogical space. In this sense, "due to its dialogical nature, it has shifted into anti-capitalist positions the views of even those who appeared in the squares seeking reforms."[210] A second interviewee was adamant about the fact that 15M is something that cannot be explained. "We can reflect on 15M and make suggestions. We can describe it. But in order to witness its possibilities we need to live 15M."[211] A third interviewee suggested that 15M was a cultural revolution.[212] A fourth described it as a historic revolt. "In the sense that it gains space while invoking the whole of society and avoiding segmentation."[213] A

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[207] Interview with *Anonymous 162.*
[208] Interview with *Anonymous 167.*
[209] Interview with *Anonymous 166.*
[210] Interview with *Anonymous 165.*
[211] Interview with *Anonymous 162.*
[212] Interview with *Anonymous 164.*
[213] Interview with *Anonymous 163.*

fifth claimed it was only "a movement of rebellion." For him, it was "more interesting as a symptom than a solution."[214] Finally, a sixth interviewee suggested that "15M was identifiable by its collective anonymity and the liquidity of its invites for change." As he then added, "even though we do not really know who is and who is not 15M we see very clearly that which is not."[215]

15Ms in Gijón

Trade unions in Asturias have their headquarters in Gijón, and this marked the city's 15M experience from its inception. Particularly CSI, a very combative trade union, has been spearheading the struggle for worker's rights in this city and region. A city and a region marked by dwindling mining and shipbuilding industries. For this reason and despite its failures, when 15M occupied *Plaza Mayor*, CSI was still seen as an important point of convergence for those seeking social, political, and economic justice.[216]

The May 15th 2011 DRY demonstration was a big success in the city. In a sense, it marked the fact that at such a desperate time for so many of the city's inhabitants the unions were absent. "When we really needed our traditional tools for struggle (trade unions and leftist political parties) we realized that they were more a part of the problem than a part of the solution."[217] As the encampment was being setup this view was strongly articulated by those being 15M. The square, took a strong and radical anti-party and anti-trade union stance. This position, initially even affected the combative CSI. This in return generated strong criticism against 15M. Many

[214] Interview with *Anonymous 168.*
[215] Interview with *Anonymous 166.*
[216] The square was renamed by 15M as *La Plaza del Pueblo* (People's square)
[217] Interview with *Anonymous 171.*

identified 15M as "a bourgeois movement."[218] Nevertheless, as soon as those from

CSI approached the encampment "young people in 15M began to see that CSI did not

ask people to be militant or have membership in order to support their struggles. At

that point, the relationship quickly transformed."[219] In addition, numerous CSI

member quickly acknowledged that they "had been attempting to get people out on

the street, and now that they were out they needed to be embraced."[220] For this reason,

even as early as the 21st of May (six days after the beginning of the encampment),

those being 15M where showing solidarity with CSI militants. They did this by

supporting the struggle of workers fighting for their rights in the aluminium

industry.[221] The relationship between CSI and 15M was agonistic, but it was strong

and it created some beautiful spaces of confluence. One interviewee gave a good

example: "In our Savings Bank we are the only workers in the whole of Spain that

demonstrated together with the victims of the banking crisis/fraud."[222]

In Gijón the 15M encampment is remembered as something beautiful that

developed at an incredible speed. One interviewee described her move from digital

activism into street activism in the following manner: "A friend of mine sent the first

Tweet, I retweeted it and found myself in the square."[223] What she then experienced in

the square was "so horizontal, so dynamic and so imaginative that in three hours we

were able to organize mass demonstrations."[224]

At the square, activist energy was impregnated with Internet web practices. "It

is all about collaborative work, you do something in copy left mode and there is no

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[218] Ibid.
[219] Interview with *Anonymous 173.*
[220] Interview with *Anonymous 179.*
[221] Interview with *Anonymous 169.*
[222] Interview with *Anonymous 171.*
[223] Interview with *Anonymous 176.*
[224] Ibid.

authorship. It becomes a collective project."[225] These praxes fuelled agonisms with all forms of bureaucratic institutionality. "Bureaucracies are slow and very unimaginative. Working with them often blocks the imagination of those being 15M."[226] For many in *Plaza Mayor* (Town Hall Square) 15M was clearly one-hundred-percent anticapitalist.[227] As one individual described it, life in the square presented "a new form of development. A form of development through which we relate to each other as equals."[228] As a second interviewee suggested, "15M was not born to defend institutions or to inspire people to go and vote in the elections. It was born to remind society of the fact that we cannot just go on voting every four years; and of the fact that our most important task is to collectively empower each other."[229]

The encampment became a place from which, as one interviewee suggested, people "became citizens for the first time."[230] What 15M achieved, according to a second interviewee, "was that it put on the table the fact that all the political parties of the regime of 78 were implementing the same types of polices in benefit of elites."[231]

In Gijón, following the dismantling of the encampment only two neighbourhood assemblies remained. One assembly, continued to take place in *Plaza Mayor*. A second one was started in the neighbourhood of *El Llano* (The Plain).[232] According to one interviewee, the assembly at *Plaza Mayor* was mainly comprised of

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[225] Interview with *Anonymous 178.*
[226] Interview with *Anonymous 176.*
[227] Interview with *Anonymous 174.*
[228] Interview with *Anonymous 178.*
[229] Interview with *Anonymous 176.*
[230] Interview with *Anonymous 175.*
[231] Interview with *Anonymous 172.*
[232] Interview with *Anonymous 170.*

"anarchist insurrectionists."[233] Mainly "citizenry-building reformists" attended the one of *El Llano*.[234]

By the time of my interviewing in the city people were describing the post-encampment space in the following manner: One interviewee described how "before 15M there was a fossilisation of strategies and organizations."[235] According to her, this had changed since 15M. A second interviewee explained how they were "in a process of creating alternatives."[236] A third was adamant about the fact that since the eruption of 15M people had "been able to construct very friendly relational spaces. Positive and cordial despite everyone's differences."[237] And a fourth, suggested that firm steps were being taken "by constructing not only different organizations but different attitudes and cultures."[238]

As in other cities, during my visit to Gijón those being 15M were working on how to converge. In this city's 15M climate, according to one interviewee, there seemed to be consensus on "the need to work towards more coordinated collaborations."[239] A second interviewee, added that confluence needed to go hand in hand with the generation of spaces which "are much more anonymous. This way what becomes important is the work itself and not the individual or collective."[240] As a third interviewee then added, those being 15M were trying to converge whilst also "trying to break the culture of delegation inherited from the country's transition to democracy."[241]

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[233] Interview with *Anonymous 173.*
[234] Ibid. This tension between radical-anarchists and reformists will be further discussed in the closing remarks of this chapter.
[235] Interview with *Anonymous 171.*
[236] Interview with *Anonymous 174.*
[237] Interview with *Anonymous 180.*
[238] Interview with *Anonymous 175.*
[239] Interview with *Anonymous 178.*
[240] Interview with *Anonymous 176.*
[241] Interview with *Anonymous 179.*

In terms of what was the biggest political concern being discussed within the 15M climate, at the time of interviewing it was clearly as in most other cities, the idea of how to bring forth 15M ideas into existing institutional structures.[242] In Gijón, some individuals thought, as one interviewee pointed out that "multiple constituent processes needed to be opened up. Catering to the different regions of Spain."[243] Others believed, as a second interviewee described, that speaking of constituent processes was "hyper-vanguardist."[244] And others still, as a third interviewee suggested, understood the time of the now as "a time for a destituent process rather than a constituent one."[245] Nevertheless, as a fourth interviewee explained, whether or not a constituent process had begun in the country was not the most important issue. What was important was that institutions understood that "it is not they that represent the people, but the people that represent them."[246]

During my visit to Gijón, the mood of those being 15M was one of interiorization of the 15M slogan '*vamos lentos porque vamos lejos'*. "Those of us who speak with each other regularly understand that we are not going to see the change. Nevertheless, we believe that we are planting its seeds."[247] It was apparent in my discussions that there was broad acceptance in 15M spaces of a common understanding of revolution. From this common understanding "in a democratic process revolution is an accumulation of non-reformist reforms."[248] As one interviewee suggested:

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[242] Interview with *Anonymous 177.*
[243] Interview with *Anonymous 170.*
[244] Interview with *Anonymous 169.*
[245] Interview with *Anonymous 179.*
[246] Interview with *Anonymous 172.*
[247] Interview with *Anonymous 176.*
[248] Interview with *Anonymous 180.*

"When those of us being 15M in Gijón think of revolution, we tend to have in mind the

Carnation Revolution in Portugal; the fall of the Berlin Wall; and the spirits of Gandhi and

Martin Luther King."[249]

In alignment with Asturias' strong anarcho-sydicalist tradition, when asked about

what 15M is one interviewee suggested that it echoed much of the old Spanish

anarchism.[250]

Catalunya (Catalonia)

The autonomous community of Catalonia is considered a historic nationality.

Barcelona is the capital city of Catalonia. Although I visited other localities, most of

the interviews happened within Barcelona's metropolitan area.

15Ms in Barcelona

From as early as 2008, one could sense an accelerated politization of the

citizenry in Barcelona. "Many people were talking about the economy; many were

beginning to feel the crisis; and lots were beginning to perceive that there existed

other alternatives."[251] By the year 2011, developments in the Spanish State had given

large segments of the population a view into the fact that "police were hitting people

indiscriminately. That the King apart from being a nice guy was stealing from them.

And that politicians had been hiding their commissions in offshore bank accounts."[252]

On September 25th 2010, Spain had its eighth general strike since the country

transitioned into democracy. In Barcelona many spoke of that particular general strike

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[249] Interview with *Anonymous 170.*
[250] Interview with *Anonymous 171.*
[251] Interview with *Anonymous 186.*
[252] Interview with *Anonymous 204.*

as already showing signs, or prefiguring, some of what would later be spoken about as

the 15M climate:

> "A few days before the general strike we occupied the abandoned building of the *Banco*
>
> *Español de Credito* (Credit Bank of Spain) in *Plaça Catalunya* (Catalonia Square). We were
>
> giving support to the general strike and denouncing the banking system. It was also a way of
>
> letting people know that not only the trade unions were active in the struggle. In the
>
> assemblies in the bank, one could already see that not everyone was a militant of a political
>
> group. There was a diversity of views being exposed."[253]

By the start of 2011, CAPs *Centros de Atención Primaria* (Primary Care Centres)

began to close down as part of the government public sector cuts. One week before

15M a group of citizens had occupied a CAP in Barcelona. This occupation was

"guaranteeing service to patients whilst attempting to inspire other collectives to

occupy and reopen other CAPs."[254]

15M happened in Barcelona at a moment in which, although dispersed, there

was a lot of activity in regards to social, economic, and political justice issues. For

this reason, those working on planning the DRY May 15th demonstration in Barcelona

"were convinced that something could happen and wanted to provoke it."[255] DRY was

only planning a demonstration and was not aiming to occupy *Plaça Catalunya*.

Nevertheless, months before the event it was clear that the idea of occupying the

square was circulating in the collective imaginary. "Lots of people were saying that

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[253] Interview with *Anonymous 155.*
[254] Interview with *Anonymous 187.*
[255] Interview with *Anonymous 192.*

we needed our own Tahrir Square. There was a general feeling of needing to reclaim control of our political future."[256]

When people in Barcelona decided to camp in *Plaça Catalunya*, in the minds of those in the square, their action had nothing to do with the DRY demonstration. They saw themselves contributing to "a collective direct action. At the beginning it was known as *Take the Square* and/or *Yes we Camp*."[257] One interviewee described to me how he was at the university and noticed a badly photocopied piece of paper stuck on the door of the elevator. The note read: "tomorrow we go to *Plaça Catalunya*. Bring a sleeping bag; we are starting an indefinite strike."[258] When this interviewee attended the encampment on the first night "there were about 50 people. We all knew each other. However, over the coming days that nucleus was dispersed and something broader surfaced surpassing us all."[259]

At the square in Barcelona, assemblies with 10,000 people served to build "unity within the precariousness of it all. Important issues could not really be discussed because the sound systems did not even reach everyone."[260] Important issues were discussed in work groups and online. The Internet played a protagonist role. "We were co-creating the move from a 'paper democracy' to a techno-political rebellion. 15M is the largest workshop in social media ever conducted."[261] Through the square and the virtual world millions of people participated. In the conversations what at first was a "discussion about democracy versus dictatorship, quicky shifted to a conversation about what democracy we wanted to have."[262] People involved in 15M

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[256] Interview with *Anonymous 188.*
[257] Interview with *Anonymous 203.*
[258] Interview with *Anonymous 205.*
[259] Ibid.
[260] Interview with *Anonymous 200.*
[261] Interview with *Anonymous 198.*
[262] Interview with *Anonymous 199.*

were "digital natives."[263] There was a mass appropriation of technology. "Digital networks and digital identities were tactically and strategically used for collective action."[264]

Whenever those being 15M in Barcelona met with others being 15M in different cities "there was always an idea that in Barcelona we were the most violent."[265] Some interviewees pointed out that there was always a tension within 15M between those who argued that violence was justified, and those who adhered to a strict ethos of nonviolence. For this reason, the legal commission in *Plaça Catalunya* ended up breaking up. It became "two separate commissions. One commission that defended those with a history of violence, and a second, that only defended people without criminal records."[266] Nevertheless, 15M in Barcelona was not a violent movement. "There were three ethical norms that constituted the DNA of 15M: "Nonpartisan, nonviolent, and horizontal."[267]

15M in Barcelona "carried no flags, it had no frontiers."[268] The square showed that "ideologies did not bring people together."[269] Yet, the success of 15M generated rejection. "Extreme left groups were the ones that most viciously attacked those being 15M. They called them fascists."[270] There was also an attempt at the beginning to "appropriate 15M in a Catalanist key. When that failed, 15M was attacked for being too Spanish."[271] During the first few days, different groups kept appearing at the square. "There were even right-wing skinheads who came by wanting to contribute to

[263] Interview with *Anonymous 182.*
[264] Interview with *Anonymous 183.*
[265] Interview with *Anonymous 204.*
[266] Interview with *Anonymous 209.*
[267] Interview with *Anonymous 183.*
[268] Interview with *Anonymous 201.*
[269] Interview with *Anonymous 186.*
[270] Interview with *Anonymous 191.*
[271] Interview with *Anonymous 200.*

the encampment."[272] Clearly the encampment acquired a much more leftist feeling

after the first week. Nevertheless, due to the multiplicity of views "it was impossible

to reach consensus on demands or goals of 15M. In the end, it was decided that every

assembly did what it pleased."[273]

People joined the square as individuals, in a way that opened up possibilities.

"Without leaving behind our individuality which neoliberalism has been feeding, we

were able to claim our commons in an extremely transformative manner."[274] Groups

that previously existed participated in Barcelona's 15m from the very first moment of

the encampment. Nevertheless, people had come together to create something new.

"There were lots of different currents of activism coming together to listen to others

and to help others understand their views."[275] Long time activists and newly

politicized individuals were together "trying to figure out new ways of confronting

plutocracy."[276] In that sense, in 15M there was that romantic ideal of transformation

and new beginnings. "The chant '*El pueblo unido jamás será vencido*' (the united

people will never be defeated) was shouted in unison. For the first time in years we

actually believed it."[277]

One of the most interesting aspects of 15M, is that right from the beginning

"platforms were being constantly created. Yet, the creators would quickly disappear

into anonymous non-leadership roles."[278] Despite 15M's radically transformative

practices of collective empowering, extremist groups were saying that 15M needed to

radicalize. In regards to this need to radicalize, one interviewee had the following to

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[272] Interview with *Anonymous 204.*
[273] Interview with *Anonymous 191.*
[274] Interview with *Anonymous 194.*
[275] Interview with *Anonymous 204.*
[276] Interview with *Anonymous 199.*
[277] Interview with *Anonymous 205.*
[278] Interview with *Anonymous 198.*

say: "It often happens in history that practice is much more radical than discourse."[279] But 15M was submitted to constant pressure. Pushing it to radicalize, to define itself, and to do things faster. 15M individuals had as their mantra *vamos lentos porque vamos lejos*. Nevertheless, 15M was faced with the difficulty of maintaining its cry. Having to think about new forms of organization and lacking a new language, 15M begins to specialize. Then it "ends up reproducing the very system it was denouncing."[280] As this interviewee then added, "when the cry became an expert discourse, people began to leave the square."[281]

Following the encampment, despite its numerous challenges, 15M had managed to acquire strong social and cultural hegemony.[282] Assemblies continued in some neighbourhoods, and some became coordinators for existing activity. One interviewee was adamant about the fact that "there are over one million people very committed to 15M related activity in the Spanish State."[283] A second interviewee suggested that "the transformative window opened up by 15M is only at its very early stages."[284] A third interviewee was quick to point out that it would be more appropriate to speak of '*15Mayismo*' (15Mayism) than of 15M. This she suggested "because everything is very dissolved and it has been nurtured by other things and has in turn nurtured them."[285] A fourth interviewee suggested that 15M was just like in the square. People approached, listened, contributed, and left when they wanted. "Following the encampment, 15M continues to be the same open space in constant transformation."[286] Yet, a fifth interviewee explained how the "15M spirit in

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[279] Interview with *Anonymous 205.*
[280] Ibid.
[281] Ibid.
[282] Interview with *Anonymous 200.*
[283] Interview with *Anonymous 183.*
[284] Interview with *Anonymous 186.*
[285] Interview with *Anonymous 191.*
[286] Interview with *Anonymous 182.*

Barcelona is a little decaffeinated. This is the case because of the nationalist move for independence."[287] Finally, a sixth interviewee described how "the 15M label cannot be used in Barcelona. This is because 15M is seen by many colleagues as being centralized in Madrid."[288]

At the time of interviewing, in Barcelona there seemed to be pre-15M and post-15M movements working together. Nevertheless, individuals working in pre-15M movements were clearly returning to their previous identities. At the same time, lessons learnt from the square occupation were now being applied to other areas of political life. One interviewee described this move in the following manner:

> "At first we went from the Internet to the square. Then we moved from the Internet to surrounding congress. Now we are in the stage of moving from the Internet to starting platforms to enter electoral politics."[289]

According to a second interviewee, "the performative dimension of techo-politics allows anyone to construct an event or a narrative on the web. Then, if people like it, it picks up strength and can materialize outside of the Internet."[290] As a third interviewee suggested, following the square a lot of people realized that creating projects from the encampment was a difficult task. For this reason, "there is a tendency right now to catalyse from small networked cells."[291]

What became apparent during my visit to Barcelona was that people felt that the 15M climate had changed everything: "the meaning of occupations, perceptions of injustices against immigrants, injustices against women, or injustices against

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[287] Interview with *Anonymous 200.*
[288] Interview with *Anonymous 195.*
[289] Interview with *Anonymous 183.*
[290] Interview with *Anonymous 198.*
[291] Interview with *Anonymous 212.*

homeless people, all this and many more things have changed."[292] For example,

regarding solidarity "those who before were hostile towards immigrants for stealing

their government subsidies are now fighting side by side with them to protect each

others home."[293] In regards to people's perception of police, a second interviewee

mentioned the following: "Before 15M there was always a sense that police were

infiltrated in groups fighting for social justice, after the encampment nobody has any

more doubts."[294]

By the time of my stay in Barcelona a lot of seeds had been planted. Forms of

resistance had changed. "Stopping evictions, not paying for something, doing

escraches and sit-ins, all this has been broadly normalized and embraced. Five years

ago it would have been attributed to the extreme left."[295] In addition, the city had seen

a big increase in good and free education; training in regards to how to fight against

injustices; workshops on nonviolence; workshops on resistance; and workshops on

communication. Throughout the time of my stay there were workshops of all kinds.

As one interviewee described it:

> "Whatever you can think of related to being an effective activist there is always a workshop
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> somewhere in the city. People who come from outside of Barcelona are always amazed at the
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> amount of time we spend educating ourselves collectively."[296]

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[292] Interview with *Anonymous 199.*
[293] Interview with *Anonymous 188.*
[294] Interview with *Anonymous 195.* What the interviewee means by this statement is that after May 15th of 2011 it was clear that there was police-infiltrators within 15M.
[295] Interview with *Anonymous 199. Escrache* is a term, which was first used in Argentina in 1995 by people who would go to the homes or workplaces of those whom they wanted to condemn and publicly humiliate, in order to influence pubic opinion on the public actions taken by the individual. This practice has been used often in Spain following the 15M encampments.
[296] Interview with *Anonymous 207.*

In regards to the kinds of activity going on in Barcelona at the time of interviewing, there were lots of different projects going on. The majority of interviewees saw these projects as evolving and impregnated with a 15M spirit. There was a project working on a universal basic income.[297] Another project sought to establish a citizens' parliament.[298] Support groups for immigrants had mushroomed.[299] There were numerous projects aiming towards constituent processes.[300] The PAH had a strong presence working on housing emergencies.[301] The *Front Civic* (Civic Front) was trying to bring people towards converging.[302] The CUPs *Candidaturas d'Unitat Popular* (Popular Unity Candidatures), an alternative political group (having existed for 25 years) following 15M was gaining popularity.[303] In addition, AcampadaBCN a group created during the 15M encampment, was acting as a loudspeaker for the activities of numerous small collectives active around the city.[304]

Following the encampment, 15M had become like an umbrella under which lots of different groups were working. 15M individuals had worked hard to bring together different small groups working on similar issues. Such was the case with the struggle for public health and the struggle against the CIEs.[305] At the time of my stay the city had a very active *Espai de Coordinació* (Liaison Space), a project initiated by individuals being 15M that helped different collectives and groups coordinate their actions.[306] Along similar lines, *Juntas Podem* (Together we can) was an initiative in

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[297] Interview with *Anonymous 190.*
[298] Ibid.
[299] Interview with *Anonymous 207.*
[300] Interview with *Anonymous 187.*
[301] Interview with *Anonymous 188.*
[302] Interview with *Anonymous 190.*
[303] Interview with *Anonymous 195.*
[304] Ibid.
[305] Interview with *Anonymous 207.*
[306] Interview with *Anonymous 209.*

which many different assemblies met to discuss collective issues.[307] The *iayoflautas*
were also very active in the city. The iayoflautas were retirees within the 15M, "the
old guys of the clandestine times with a Twitter account."[308] In addition (considered
very important at the time of my visit), there was a lot of work being done around
police repression. *Retaguardia en Movimiento* (Rearguard in Movement) had been
setup as a resistance box to pay for people's fines and legal council. There was,
however, an effort being made to avoid making repression into the main axis of the
struggle.[309]

During the interviewing, I met with members of the *Asamblea Indignada de
La Floresta* (Indignant Assembly of La Floresta). With them, I learnt of the bank
occupation that they had sustained for one month. I also learnt of the vegetable
gardens they had started on occupied land.[310] On a separate occasion, I visited the
occupied abandoned factory complex of Can Batlló. Following the 15M encampment
Can Batlló was occupied. Individuals being 15M, together with neighbours who had
been demanding the use of the space for years carried out the occupation. In Can
Batlló, I attended a work group by the radical philosophy group *Espai en Blanc*
(Blank Space). There we discussed Catalan independence. I also attended the *Feria de
Economia Social y Solidaria* (Social and Solidary Economy Fair), which took place in
the occupied factory.[311]

Barcelona has a rich libertarian tradition. From it, occupied social centres are
working through assemblies and collective decision-making. They are networked

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[307] Interview with *Anonymous 191*.
[308] Interview with *Anonymous 208*. Those who initiated the iayoflautas lived the dictatorship in
constant hiding because of their political views. Then came the transition and democracy, and they felt
that society had silenced them. With 15M their political passions had resurfaced and individuals being
15M had showed them how to use new technologies.
[309] Interview with *Anonymous 189*.
[310] Interview with *Anonymous 200*.
[311] Interview with *Anonymous 206*.

between each other and are well integrated into their neighbourhoods. They are, one could say, an integral part of the neighbourhood social fabric. They also operate as hubs from which activism articulates itself in the city.[312] For this reason whilst in Barcelona, amongst many other experiences, I witnessed how neighbourhood resistance was set up in order to stop police from evicting an occupied social centre. This happened at the six year old, self-managed, occupied social centre of *La Carboneria* (The Coal Yard). Located in the neighbourhood of Sant Antoni. I also visited the headquarters of *La Cooperativa Integral Catalana* (Integral Catalan Cooperative), a project that calls itself a cooperative. It already counts over 1000 members and understands its identity above any legal terminology. The aim of *La Cooperativa Integral Catalana* is to expand interlinked, alternative social and economic spaces. Spaces that are trying to operate outside of existing economic and social norms.[313] I also managed to spend some time in *Can Mas Deu*. This is the occupation of an abandoned farmhouse in the natural park of Collserola. Since 2001, *Can Mas Deu* has been reinforcing a neighbourhood network designed to protect the city's last forest from speculation.[314] These are just a few of the numerous self-organized occupied social spaces in Barcelona. The network that these occupied spaces constitute, played an integral part in supporting and contributing to the 15M encampment. Out of that bond that grew between the square and the rest of occupations the network has expanded and has been strengthened.

Following the 15M encampment the amount of activity going on in Barcelona was amazing. The amount of self-managed and self-organized collective activity going on in the city was very impressive. I have not seen anything like it anywhere

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[312] Interview with *Anonymous 207*.
[313] Interview with *Anonymous 202*.
[314] Interview with *Anonymous 206*.

else in the world. Yet, not even in Barcelona – where self-organization, cooperation and mutual aid are so present in the social fabric of the neighbourhoods – did the collective imaginary escape the institutional question. One interviewee described this in the following manner:

> "It does not matter how beautiful an alternative we create. There always seems to be this infinite circularity that we somehow cannot touch, cannot change, and cannot redirect. This leads many of us to be pragmatic and try to go for the power of the institutions. But I believe this move breaks our collective strength. All of a sudden we become much more conscious of our differences."[315]

A second interviewee suggested that the force of being anonymous which 15M had publicly and broadly displayed, had subsided and was giving way to traditional identity politics. "Now everyone is thinking about elections. Nationalism and trade-unionism are once again reclaiming their space as the alternative."[316] A more hopeful interviewee suggested that all that was happening was that the only space not occupied by 15M was now being occupied. He defended this move with the following words: "We need a 15M in the institutions."[317]

Regarding what 15M was to different people, one interviewee suggested the following: "it is so many things that minimalist and reductionist explanations will most likely be wrong."[318] A second interviewee explained that "we need a new theoretical frame, which comes from knowledges stemming from within 15M."[319] A third interviewee was adamant about the fact that 15M was "a space of hope. In the

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[315] Interview with *Anonymous 194.*
[316] Interview with *Anonymous 205.*
[317] Interview with *Anonymous 186.*
[318] Interview with *Anonymous 196.*
[319] Interview with *Anonymous 183.*

sense that it showed that political life exists past what we had know until then."[320] A fifth interviewee described 15M as "the antithesis of *organizationality.*"[321] And a sixth interviewee, described how for him 15M was "the moment when nonviolence moved from being practiced in very reduced Gandhian and/or religious spaces to its political expression through mass citizen protests."[322]

Closing remarks chapters one and two

I was a part of a 15M general assembly for the first time in May of 2011. My first assembly was in Barcelona, in *Plaça Catalunya*. There I congregated with tens of thousands of my fellow human beings. I was drawn to the space by the fact that for the first time in my whole life I felt a deep sense of attraction to a collective space. This space 'we' had somehow created together, each one of us from our own particular space.[323] Some of us were wishing it, others were aspiring towards it and many were constructing it whilst dreaming it. The majority of us thought it impossible. Yet, we hoped for it nevertheless. Many of us were drawn to it as something different, unrecognizable and unknown, yet, somehow appealing.

To me, this space felt like a space of social, economic, and political transformation. In our collective community and communion I felt in harmonious construction with others, with individuals who like myself seemed to feel an abysmal disconnection from the current articulation of the Spanish State. People seemed to feel a disconnection from Spain's representative institutions and their supporting institutional actors. In spite of this, in our togetherness we also seemed to feel a deep-

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[320] Interview with *Anonymous 186.*
[321] Interview with *Anonymous 188.*
[322] Interview with *Anonymous 190.*
[323] Here I am thinking of all of those engaged in these activities as constituting a loosely defined 'we'. This of course, is a purely personal perception. I cannot affirm that this 'we' existed as I felt it.

reconnection with fellow others. Our communion was absent of external representation. We were clearly marked by our differences in our skin color, in our languages, and in our legal, economic and political positions. Nevertheless, we seemed to feel a togetherness that transcended our agonisms and differences. This 'being-together' presented us with an opportunity to converge. We were converging in a physical space, a central public square. We seemed to be converging in communal indignation and repudiation of the current state of affairs. Yet, we were converging in collective dignity. As though in our collective consciousness we knew that we deserved something better. We knew that we needed to somehow work together towards it. We understood that we needed to work towards a radical collective transformation of our societies.

'We' chanted slogans. We sang. We smiled and shouted in joy. We made a lot of noise. We banged our pots and pans in disapproval of those in political power-over institutions claiming to represent us. When this was happening my body shivered. Our power-with each other made me feel that I was a part of a revolution.[324] It made me feel that anything we agreed upon we could achieve. At the time, agreeing collectively did not seem impossible. Feeling so much collective-power, I was glad to acknowledge that this was a nonviolent power. Had I felt violence in the spirit of the congregation I would have felt terrified of its potential destructiveness. Such collective force is indeed very powerful.[325] However, in our collective silences we offered support to those most marginalized, those most affected by the current divisions in our societies. When we collectively and silently denounced numerous injustices, I experienced what from a more mystical perspective might be referred to

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[324] Here I am thinking of revolution as a total transformation of our current societal organization.
[325] Power-with force is discussed in depth through chapter six.

as a moment of oneness in our multiplicity.[326] In our silence we converged. In our silent shouts we made ourselves heard. Through our debates we worked through our agonisms and differences.

When I set out on my trip, two years had passed. I was curious to see how that collective force that I had experienced in 2011 had metamorphosed. What was left of it? Had 15M practices survived the passage of time? What had those being 15M been doing for the last two years? How did people remember the encampments? What had they learnt from them? What had the encampments, and 15M more broadly, achieved? When I set out on the trip I wanted to understand how 15M varied from place to place. How transformative was 15M? How new was it? How horizontal and nonviolent was it in practice? Was 15M a fad, or was it a way of being in the world that was gaining recognition and being embraced? I specifically wanted to find an answer to the question of what is the phenomenon that calls itself 15M.

What I am confident these chapters reveal is that two years after 15M encampments, 15M practices were widespread across Spain. 15Ms had metamorphosed from being a very powerful and large gathering of collective presences in public squares, to thousands of different initiatives dealing with all aspects of social, economic and political life. In some instances the label 15M had remained as the identifier of groups, in others, individuals who identified as 15M were contributing (in many instances spearheading) groups working under different labels.15M had clearly established itself as a term to describe a way of being in the world, doing and thinking things differently to ways which had been hegemonic both within activist circles and in society at large. What was left of 15M was its climate, which revealed a collective empowerment stemming from a multiplicity of factors.

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[326] By mystic I am thinking of one who believes in the spiritual apprehension of truths that are beyond the intellect.

New technologies; historical and current exemplars of struggle and alternative modes of being; solidarity; a sediment of existing practices which networked was able to empower voices not heard; a deep and collective understanding of the power of a dialogical multiplicity; an ethical commitment to the ideal of democracy; and an acknowledgment of nonviolence as the only way of being 15M. Not everyone rejected violence, nevertheless there was an understanding shared by all interviewees about the fact that what was violent was not 15M. These are some of the perceptions that permeated through the interviewing process. By no means are these the only defining characteristics of what can best be described as a 15M climate, nevertheless, they are clearly important elements in its constitution.

Negotiations via assembly with police officers in Malaga on the first night of the encampment; the occupation of a closed down public library in Granada (in which two elderly nuns played prominent roles); the unemployed collective parking by donation program in Cadiz; the self-organized groups in Barcelona re-opening closed down public hospitals; feminist collectives organizing cares and protections collectives in Galicia; marches to Brussels; and hunger strikers in Madrid's Puerta del Sol. All these and the numerous other examples that have been presented throughout these two chapters share in common the fact that they are considered, by those enacting them, as happening within this 15M climate.

Geographically the scope is broad, initiatives in Galicia are happening very far from initiatives in Andalucia. In addition there are issues of nationality and territoriality in dispute in the narratives stemming from within this 15M climate as it happens in different localities. The scope of ideologies is equally broad, looking close up, the unemployed collective of Cadiz or the occupied housing estates in Sevilla look like rainbows of a multitude of ideologies. In an occupied social centre in Barcelona

ideologies tended to be more uniform and the centres that I visited in that locality were clearly on the radical side of the left. Nevertheless, all these different initiatives were interlinked with each other by a shared understanding of the social, political, and economic moment; and a tacit agreement on a set of practices and ways of being appropriate to it. Nonviolence, horizontality (which although challenged was an agreed 15M trait), solidarity in resistance, construction of alternatives, and confluence was what remained of the 15M climate by the time my interviewing process came to an end.

By that time, the encampments were remembered as a moment of transformation. A moment in which self-governing people organizing together and taking their lives into their own hands enacted a new world and presented alternatives. Form the encampments people learned the importance of generating dialogical power-with relations between those striving for change. The encampments made visible and accessible to a large proportion of the Spanish population, both inside and outside of the encampments, a powerful way of being together in Spain as citizens. Namely, one based on a constitutive or pre-figurative relationship of 'being the change'.

The dialogues of reciprocal elucidation presented in these two chapters have shown that 15M is not a fad, but a way of being in the world that is gaining recognition and being evermore broadly embraced. In addition, 15M revealed itself as a way of 'being the change' which is new as a mass phenomenon but which is deeply rooted in certain spaces and is nurtured by multiple traditions, some older that others. In the next chapter I excavate these multiple traditions that nurtured the transformative climate that is 15M, in order to continue my disclosing of the field of 15M as understood by being dialogically engaged with*in* it. Before I do this, however,

it is important to briefly speak about three recurring tensions within 15M encampments across Spain.

Feminists versus sexism/anti-feminism

The first issue that I want to discuss is the relationship between feminists and 15M. Although individuals being 15M often address each other as sisters, this can only be understood as an attempt at breaking patriarchal practices deeply ingrained in our societies. Although there was a clear effort made in 15M encampments to overcome such conditionings, often feminists felt the effort was not sufficient. Numerous feminists that I intervieweed felt alienated from the power-with horizontality that 15M was claiming to uphold. Many feminists claimed that it was impossible for them to be empowered through a collective presence, which in essence was sexist and anti-feminist. They suggested that adequate channels for dealing with such a serious problem were not facilitated, and claimed that when feminist commissions tried to raise concerns in general assemblies, they were ignored. In many cities feminist abandoned the encampment to continue their struggles within feminist collectives and groups.

The tensions between feminists and 15M began in *Puerta del Sol* in Madrid within days of the beginning of the encampment in 2011. At one point during the first few days of the occupation, a feminist banner was hanged at the entrance of the subway station in the square. The banner read: *La revolución será feminista o no será!* (The revolution will be feminist or it won't be!). Soon the banner was brought down by people claming that such a banner was not inclusive and therefore should not be allowed. This generated a huge debate within the encampments across Spain and opinions were devided as to whether such a banner should be allowed or not.

Numerous feminists did not feel the question was properly resolved and the tensions continued throughout the 15M mobilizations. In fact only recently, following the assassination of a woman by her partner, as social movements across Spain began to organize a march demanding a response from the government, one could see that within social media debates the feminist flag brought down in May of 2015, still generated tension between feminists and other social movements.

This tension existed within 15M and continues today amongst the broader community of social movements. Clearly it is something to pay attention to, nevertheless, I do not think an evaluation of 15M should hindge on everyone being satisfied, democracy is a work in progress and horizontality is something that most people who joined the encampments of 2011 did not have much experience with. Limitations of those being 15M can be better understood if we take seriously their slogan *Vamos lentos porque vamos lejos* (We go ever so slowly because we are going on forever). Slowly individuals being 15M learn to be more democratic and more horizontal with every step that they take.

Long-term anarchists versus 15M

Long-term anarchists (individual who prior to 15M had participated in anarchists collectives or groups) participated in 15M and brough much needed skills to the encampments: facilitation of assemblies, direct-action tactics, and expertize in horizontality to name a few. Nevertheless, there always existed a tension between those with anarchist backgrounds and those coming into 15M without prior engagement in politically motivated mutual aid. In this sense, long-term anarchists often accused 15M of not being radical enough, and in numerous squares, they were found by many to be patronizing towards those without anarchist backgrounds.

In most of the cities that I visited there was a clear acknowledgment and deep appreciation of Spain's anarchist traditions. Yet, many in the squares felt that the anarchist and libertarian spirit of Spain's late 19th century and early 20th century was better represented by 15M's collective presence, than by those claiming to be direct inheritors of said traditions. According to many in the squares, those claiming to be anarchists were behaving more like counter-revolutionaries attempting to take control of the spirit of rebellion sweeping through the country. For most in the squares, there were no predefined paths towards revolution, and this meant that everything had to be decided together in a democratic power-with manner. Contrary to this, long-term anarchists often felt that they had the right strategy for moving forward and this clearly generated rejection.

Nonviolence versus violence

Trying to determine what could be a working definition of what is political violence is a recurring debate within activist circles. From my engagement with individuals being 15M, and trying to figure out what it was that people within 15M felt was the distinction between violence and nonviolence, I cannot claim to have advanced very much in creating a working definition for political violence nor for nonviolence.

Peter Gelderloos, during the 15M encampments of 2011, launched a strong critique against those who he claimed had "sanitized the movement by imposing an extreme pacifism" within the square occupations.[327] According to Gelderloos, these extreme pacifists had often imposed nonviolent practices in what he described as a

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[327] Gelderloos, P. (2011) *Spanish Revolution at a Crossroads*, Counter Punch. See online at: http://www.counterpunch.org/2011/06/07/spanish-revolution-at-a-crossroads

violent manner.[328] Gelderloos pointed to these "ideologues of pacifism" who verbally

and physically abused those attempting to block streets, applauded police for arresting

thieves or football fans, and silenced those insulting or yelling at the police. What

Gelderloos fails to point to, however, is that for example in the case of football fans

being arrested, what people in the encampment applauded was that police arrested

violent Barcelona football club fans whom following the clubs victory in the

Champions League wanted to create chaos in the 15M encampment.

It is true that within 15M, often those wanting to instigate violence were often

questioned as 'infiltrators' or police provocateurs as Gelderloos points out. It is also

true that at times many within 15M "glorified the police or claimed they were fellow

workers"[329] but this must be contextualized in order to do justice to the actual

circumstances. The nonviolence of the squares was vindicated numerous times within

general assemblies with thousands of people present. Within those assemblies there

were many children as well as elderly people participating, and it was an accepted

believe that in order for the squares to be filled with such multiplicity, nonviolence

was the only viable option. In addition, from very early on, because of the fact that the

occupation of the square was considered illegal by the authorities, a public relations

campaign was set in motion with most mass media claiming that the people in the

streets were radials trying to destroy the system. When police officers were glorified it

was because they refused to attack protestors and took off their helmets in acts of

defience to orders from above.

The nonviolence we witnessed throughout the 15M occupations was not as

Gelderloos suggests imposed by extreme pacifists, but by the majority of citizens

present in the square who understood that if violence broke out public support for the

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[328] Ibid.
[329] Ibid.

occupation would fade. A fear that materialized in Barcelona (city to which

Gelderloos seems to pay most attention), when following the surrounding of the

Catalan parlament, in what was meant to be a nonviolent act of civil disobedience,

some people within the crowd attacked politicians attempting to enter the building.

Following this event, media commentators and politicians lashed out at 15M saying

that behind their pretense of nonviolence one could clearly see the radical and violent

intentions of 15M. Following this surrounding of parliament and what most people

within 15M and outside of it understood as an act of violence, public support for 15M

dwindled rapidly.

Individuals being 15M did not as Gelderloos suggest, uncritically accept

definitions of violence by journalists, the majority did not see journalists as their

friends. People who came together within 15M wanted to be the change they wished

to see, and the change they wished for was one in which society moved away from

violence and towards nonviolence. A position, which for those advocating for

diversity of tactics was not something pleasing. Nevertheless, if they attended the

general assemblies of that which refers to itself as 15M, it would have been evident to

them that violence was not something desired by the majority.

It is clear that within 15M there was not a clear definition of what to consider

a nonviolent act, as Gelderloos points out, in the cultural context of Spain "the

concept of nonviolence still has room for self-defense, blockades, or the sabotage of

inanimate property".[330] Within 15M debate was constant about what could be

considered as a nonviolent action, but just like in his book *How Nonviolence Protects*

the State, in which Gelderloos argues that violence cannot be clearly defined, within

15M although nonviolence was an aspiration, its meaning was always open to

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[330] Ibid.

debate.[331] In each situation although committed to an ethics of nonviolence,

appropriate action was for the most part discussed in assemblies and decisions made

collectively and via consensus.

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[331] Gelderloos, P. (2007) *How Nonviolence Protects the State*, The Anarchist Library. See online at: http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/peter-gelderloos-how-nonviolence-protects-the-state

– Chapter three –

Different traditions co-being, co-interpreting and co-creating in the 15M climate

> "We will continue to speak of what 15M is just as we speak of what May 68 was. It will be object of dispute and memory. It is important that those of us being 15M narrate our own histories." *Anonymous 163.*

Some clarifications about this chapter

I begin this chapter after having just watched a Spanish documentary film from 1981, called *Mientras el cuerpo aguante* (For as long as the body holds).[1] It was recommended by one of the interviewees during my trip as indicative of one of the multiple streams of traditions nurturing 15Ms. In the film, we enter the life of forgotten (by mainstream culture) songwriter and performer, Chicho Sanchez Ferlosio. Directed by Fernando Trueba, the documentary tells the story of this songwriter whose anonymous songs became popular anthems of the fight against General Franco's dictatorship. Chicho's father had been a writer and one of the founding members of the *Falange Española* (Spanish Falange) but Chicho took a different path.[2] Some would argue that songs of his like *Gallo rojo, gallo negro* (Red rooster, black rooster)[3] and *La Paloma de la Paz* (Peace Dove),[4] were key in raising the popular spirit which brought down the dictatorship.[5] As one of the individuals

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[1] See documentary at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BHtaWNZP71c
[2] The *Falange* was a political organization founded in 1933, during the Second Spanish Republic. During the Spanish Civil War the Falange was taken over by General Franco, who combined it with the Carlist party by decree (Unification Decree), and put it under his command. This became the core of the only official political organization in Spain, the *Falange Española Tradicionalista y de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional-Sindicalista* FET-JONS (Spanish Traditionalist Phalanx of the Assemblies of National-Syndicalist Offensive" (FET y de las JONS). See Payne, S. (1999) *Fascism in Spain, 1923-1977*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. page 476.
[3] For an interpretation of the song *Gallo Rojo, gallo negro* see the following video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u7r24w3nAhA
[4] For an interpretation of the song *La Paloma de la Paz* see the following video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S699ZpL8oE0
[5] Interview with *Anonymous 103*.

being 15M that I interviewed told me, "Franco died in bed but Francoism died on the streets, and music played an important role for many throughout the process."[6]

This documentary, Chicho's songs, and the fight against Francoism are just a minute part of what nurtured 15M. A single example, of the multiplicity of traditions; of historical moments; historical characters; historical songs; historical languages; or/and historical struggles that contribute to the collective imaginary of those who see themselves as being 15M. Presenting a multiplicity of examples of traditions, which contribute to making 15M what it is would not allow us to see the whole constitution of 15M. Nevertheless, we can attempt an approximation to traditions that individuals being 15M claim as theirs. If we do this, we can begin to form a genealogical map of events and traditions that help in descriptions of what 15M is today.

This 'experience', which we refer to as 15M, at its peak moment of public exposure counted an estimated 6 to 8.5 million people in the Spanish State that identified with it and in someway got involved in co-creating it.[7] I interviewed only 213 individuals who identified as being 15M. The interviews took place in only 25 different localities out of hundreds of cities in which participants were active. Thus while I consciously selected the interviews to be representative of the general geographic and demographic diversity of 15M, it remains a limited view of the many things that 15M is. Nevertheless, what I am attempting to offer is a peek into 15M's complex and networked multiplicity. I do this through a continuing attempt to make it more approachable and familiar without at any moment attempting to simplify it.

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[6] Interview with *Anonymous 31*.

[7] These numbers come from an Ipsos Public Affairs survey that was carried out in the early days of the encampments. Other data that was presented included the following: 0.8 and 1.5 million Spanish citizens participated intensely in 15M initiatives. 76% of Spanish citizens considered the demands and the practices of 15M reasonable, and felt that there was a democratic right to fight for them in the way those being 15M were doing. See RTVE (06/08/2011) *Más de seis millones de españoles han participado en el Movimiento 15M.* Online at: http://www.rtve.es/noticias/20110806/mas-seis-millones-espanoles-han-participado-movimiento-15m/452598.shtml

In the previous chapters, I provided names of different formations, groups, collectives and actions that are currently imbued in the 15M climate of the Spanish State. I also attempted to approximate the reader to the co-existing; co-creating; and co-transforming democratically agonistic 15M climate with*in* which I travelled. In this chapter, I continue in my attempt to facilitate approximation to 15M knowledges. I do this by genealogically working through some of the traditions, which those being 15M that I interviewed recognize as having contributed to the construction of that which we refer to as 15M. In this sense, I hope to offer an approximation into what certain events in Spanish history and in other histories look like, to different individuals from within the 15M climate.

The chapter attempts to do this by following interviewees in their descriptions of events, places, individuals, and groups, that they consider constitutive of a 15M genealogy. With their descriptions, plus the support of secondary literature, I then attempt to approximate the reader to a complex and ever-shifting collective imaginary that exists within the 15M climate. A collective imaginary about what is happening inside the Spanish state regarding social, political, and economic issues. This imaginary, sketches why it is happening. It does so, by drawing from different traditions that according to different people being 15M are sources from which alternatives have been growing. By conducting historical research in dialogue with those being 15M I am practicing what Dána-Ain Davis has characterized as being "between objectivity and subjectivity".[8] In essence, what I am trying to generate is

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[8] Dána-Ain Davis (2006) *Ethnography of the Treacherous Interstices. Battered Black Women and Welfare Reform: Between a Rock and a Hard Place*, Albany: State University of New York Press, page 8.

what Jafari Sinclaire Allen, describes as "a radical shift away from 'traditional' authority and legitimacy, toward the margins."[9]

This chapter presents a detailed account of various and disparate events and conflicts in the past and suggests that these traditions have made 15M what it is today. This affirmation stems from interviewees themselves, whom when asked about their traditions of struggle and construction presented the multiplicity of traditions that is this chapter. The chapter does not in anyway attempt to condense all these events and conflicts in Spanish history as if together they constitute one sole 'tradition of resistance'. Rather, what the chapter aims for is to present what many interviewees claim to be genealogically linked causes that originated in distant times and places.

The chapter recognizes the fact that individuals being 15M are able to establish symbolic connections with those times and places through an exercise of historical imagination that conveys them an emotional empathy with them. The chapter also acknowledges that this is a powerful resource for their political and ethical self-interpretation. Nevertheless, the chapter does not suggest that this is one sole and continuing tradition, it does not take at face value the intergenerational connections that individuals being 15M describe. Instead, it focuses on unearthing the multiplicity of traditions that have nurtured 15M, in the sense that metanarratives of people being 15M are not empty dreams but have real effects in practice.

The perspectives on Spanish history presented in this chapter are very individualized. Participants are treated as individual voices offering individual perspectives. These perspectives cover the multiple pasts underlying the individual

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[9] Allen, J.S. (2008) 'Ethnography of the Treacherous Interstices', in *American Anthropologist*, Volume 110, Issue 3, page 371.

interviewee's '15M beingness'.[10] Throughout the chapter, I generally refrain from judgment about how important traditions and movements being described really are. I do not take scholarly consensus on events in Spanish history and counterpoise it with the views of those being 15M. Instead, I offer individuals being 15M a space from which to narrate the country's history, as they understand it. The literature on Spanish history that I engage in this chapter aims to expand on the issues being raised by interviewees. Once interviewees shared their imaginaries of historical events I followed up with finding written narratives and studies supportive of their claims. This is the move made by Howard Zinn in *A People's History of the United States*.[11]

In the case of Spain, where the dictatorship is still recent, excavating oral histories in such a manner is an important step toward remembering and reparation. Through their oral histories, interviewees are bringing to the surface events and movements that scholarly consensus might have missed. As someone who attended Spanish schools as a child, I was shocked during interviewing by much of what I learnt from these 15M perspectives. In this sense, I would say, that although particular dates are well known because of their impact on the whole of society, the way they are narrated by interviewees does not reflect obvious, dominant, 'everyperson' understandings.

Through the presentation of the multifariousness of 15M via this dialogical approach, I am excavating ways of being and events, that inspire and/or mark individuals being 15M. Through this approach we get to the origins and antecedents of 15M. These are important because they show very clearly that 15M did not appear

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[10] This approach is how I think public philosophy can best be practiced. However, I am confident further work can be done with these historical traditions and antecedents; and their relevance to 15M as manifested in collective practices. For example comparative work could be conducted in regards to movement doings, rituals, and repertoires of contention.
[11] Zinn, H. (2005) *A People's History of the United States*, New York: HarperCollins.

out of thin air or with the invention of social media. 15M has deep 'routes' and 'roots'
in over a century of collective practices of dissent. A survey of some of these
practices is what this chapter offers to the reader.

Individuals being 15M are telling their histories, I am trying to facilitate a
dialogue between them. It is an exploration and experimentation in the power of co-
learning about our past. The dialogues that ensue were prompted by the following
three questions: What traditions and movements are nurturing 15M? What similarities
do you see between 15M and past collective practices of dissent? And, do you think
social mobilization today is affected in any way by the country's transition from
dictatorship to democracy?

Without a doubt, during interviewing Spain's transition to democracy was the
most referenced time and situation. Interviewees often linked to it genealogically
when trying to explain events in the Spanish State since May 15th of 2011. Even when
referring to other times, often interviewees expressed how revisiting the transition was
key before being able to contextualize traditions and events from other periods.
Nevertheless, there were other times and situations from which interviewees drew.
Often interviewees referenced traditions and events from outside of Spain.
Nevertheless, for the purpose of this chapter I will focus only on traditions and events
discussed by individuals being 15M and happening within the Spanish State.
Following from this, the ensuing sections *first* unearth 19th century traditions and
events. *Second*, disclose early 20th century (pre-civil war) traditions and events. *Third*,
present Spanish Civil War traditions and events. *Fourth*, discuss traditions and events
in late Francoism and the Spanish transition to democracy. *Fifth*, reveal traditions and
events from the 1980s. S*ixth*, crystalize traditions and events from the 1990s. And

seventh, reference early 21st century traditions and events that many interviewees identified as prefiguring 15M.

15M and 19th century traditions and events

Most of the focus given by individuals being 15M to the 19th century, addressed the latter part of the century. It focused on how events in Spain then resembled events in post-15M Spain.

What was happening during these times, which individuals being 15M recollected during the interviewing process, was that there was an unprecedented level of social struggle for freedom. Much of this struggle was conducted under the principles of nonviolence, cooperation, and direct democracy. Already as early as 1869, in Spain, the strength of these traditions was clearly visible. One could see it for example in the way the First International was created. Marking a remarkable difference with the First International in other countries, in Spain, it was created under a strong anarchist influence. This influence adhered to ideas of horizontal collectivism. These ideas were apparent in the actions of the organization, which in Spain was known as the *Federación Regional Española* (Spanish Regional Federation). The federation was made illegal in 1872, but it operated underground until the International was eventually dissolved.[12]

In 1870, counting 30,000 members the *Federación Regional Española* organized its first congress in Barcelona. It ended with agreements on direct action, the push for a general strike, and electoral abstention. The Federation considered these

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[12] See Peirats, J. (2006) *Los Anarquistas en la crisis política española (1869-1939)*, Buenos Aires: Libros de Anarres.

processes to be means by which to achieve social and political change.[13] In 1878,

Peter Kropotkin visited Spain and stayed with renowned anarchist José *García*

Viñas.[14] Kropotkin had developed a close association with Spanish anarchists, and at

the time, he was expecting "an outbreak of social revolts as a consequence of the

country's serious economic crisis."[15] During his visit, apart from his stay with Viñas,

Kropotkin had been entrusted with the task of reconciling groups in Barcelona and

Madrid.[16] These groups had been disagreeing on tactics. The groups in Madrid were

thinking primarily in terms of individual and more or less terrorist acts. The Barcelona

Internationalists were favoring collectivist action.[17] He achieved his goal. The Spanish

Federation remained firmly committed to collectivism. Indeed, at their Barcelona

Congress in September of 1881, they reiterated their firm commitment.[18]

Throughout the 1880s and until the end of the century, an intellectual

renaissance swept Spain. It was not just the *Federación Regional Española* (Spanish

Regional Federation). Horizontal collectivist ideas propagated through many different

associations and alternative projects. Associations like the *Federación de los*

Trabajadores de la Región Española (Workers Federation of the Spanish Region)

(1881-1888) and the *Pacto de Unión y Solidaridad* (Union and Solidarity Pact) (1889-

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[13] Cuevas, F.J. (2010) 'La Línea Rojinegra Educativa del Anarquismo Español', *HAOL*, Volume 21, pages 101-10.

[14] Esenwein, G.R. (1989) *Anarchist ideology and the working-class movement in Spain, 1868-1898*, Berkeley: University of California Press, page 72.

[15] Cahm, C. (1989) *Kropotkin and the Rise of Revolutionary Anarchism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, page 60.

[16] Although during my interviewing most people referred to Kropotkin as a big influence on the Spanish anarchism they identified with, it is important to mention Proudhon and Bakunin as the two most influential thinkers of late 19th century and early 20th century Spanish anarchism. As George Woodcock suggests, anarchist doctrine in Spain "came from the same spring, and shared the same prophets - Proudhon first, and then Bakunin, with Kropotkin as a less important third. Proudhon's appeal came early, for in 1845 his disciple Ramón de la Sagra, whom Max Nettlau has described as the first Spanish anarchist, founded in Coruña a journal called ElPorvenir." See Woodcock, G. (1962) Anarchism: A History Of Libertarian Ideas And Movements, Cleveland and New York: Meridian Books.

[17] Idem., page 107.

[18] Idem., page 59.

1896)[19] also promoted horizontal collectivist ideas. It was the time of libertarian communist ideas in Spain. These organizations collectively called for the abolition of the state, private property, and capitalism. They were in favour of common ownership of the means of production, direct democracy, and self-governance. Thanks to texts by people like Peter Kropotkin, Élisée Reclus, Jean Grave and Errico Malatesta, by the end of the century these ideas were beginning to have a significant impact on the different territories of the Spanish State.[20] People were begining to enact alternative modes of citizenship at a large scale.

One individual being 15M, described during his interview the importance of this period in the following manner:

"It is clear that in the Spanish State when speaking about environmentalism we are thinking of Eliseo Reclus. When speaking of feminism we are reminded of Federica Montseny. When we talk about grassroots social movements we are taken to the times prior to the creation of the CNT. In the Spanish State, when we think of autonomous movements and social mobilization outside of institutionalized structures, we are taken back to the country's libertarian traditions and the activities that began towards the end of the 19th century."[21]

On a similar note, a second interviewee emphasized the importance of the cooperative movement during these times: "We are part of the cooperative tradition which in these territories has been active for over one century."[22] This individual was referring to a tradition that in Spain was born with *La Proletaria* (The Proletarian). *La Proletaria*

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[19] Peirats, J. (2006) *Los Anarquistas en la crisis política española (1869-1939)*, Buenos Aires: Libros de Anarres. Alternative projects included the following: The satirical newspaper *La Tramuntana*[19] (1881-1896), started by collectivist writer José Llunas Pujols; Initiatives like the Catalan anarchist publication *Acracia*[19] (1886-1888); and others like the newspaper *El Productor*[19] (1887-1893).

[20] Peirats, J. (2006) *Los Anarquistas en la crisis política española (1869-1939)*, Buenos Aires: Libros de Anarres, page 60.

[21] Interview with *Anonymous 60*.

[22] Interview with *Anonymous 206*.

was a silk cooperative started in Valencia in 1856. Part of a tradition that by 1864 had started textile collectives in Mataró, that soon proliferated across Catalonia.[23] The expansion of cooperatives in Spain was promoted by people like Fernando Garrido, Antonio Vicent, Josep Roca i Galés, and Doménec Perramon.[24] Numerous individuals whom I interviewed within the 15M climate identified with this cooperative tradition, the genealogy of which includes world-renowned Basque cooperative Mondragon.[25] Mondragon is an often-cited exemplar of the power-with force of this tradition deeply rooted in the Spanish State.

15M and early 20th century (pre-civil war) traditions and events

The 20th century in Spain began where the 19th century had left off. With the constructive programs of the country's collectivist, cooperativist, and libertarian traditions growing at full-speed. By 1900, numerous 'worker resistance associations' had been established. Some examples of these included: "*El Provenir del Trabajo* (The Future of Work), which grouped construction workers, *La Precisa* (The Precise); which grouped miners, and *El Bien* (The Good), which grouped metallurgy workers."[26] On the 13th of October of 1900, a congress of worker resistance associations took place in Madrid and 150 associations attended. In the congress, the FSORE *La Federación de Sociedades de Resistencia de la Región Española* (Federation of Resistance Associations of the Spanish Region) was created. The main

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[23] Marín D. (2006) *Cooperativas y cooperativismo: una historia de solidaridad*. Available at: http://www.grupotortuga.com/Cooperativas-y-cooperativismo-una
[24] Ibid.
[25] According to the company's website, "Mondragon is a co-operative business organisation integrated by autonomous and independent cooperatives that competes on international markets using democratic methods in terms of its company organisation, job creation, both the human and professional development of its workers and a commitment to the development of its social environment. This mission was defined at the Co-operative Congress, which means it has the approval of all the co-operatives that make up Mondrago." Visit website at: http://www.mondragon-corporation.com.
[26] Guareña, J.L. et al. (1999) *Sociabilidad fin de siglo: espacios asociativos en torno a 1898,* Universidad de Castilla La Mancha, page 239.

aim of the federation was to build union and solidarity between workers in different trades.[27]

The first and second decades of the 20th century were marked by solidarity building, mutual aid initiatives, and numerous worker strikes. As one interviewee described it: "This was the time when the libertarian movement really began to pick up strength." The same interviewee felt that the libertarian movement in early 20th century resembled 15M, in that "they both presented theories and practices that were not in common use but once people experienced them they did not want to return to how things had been before."[28]

By 1907, in many regions of Spain anarchism was rapidly becoming the most popular option amongst the working class for organizing unions and federations. In 1907, labour federation *Solidaritat Obrera* (Worker Solidarity) was formed in Barcelona.[29] In 1910, groups coming together through *Solidaritat Obrera* founded CNT in Barcelona. This confluence significantly expanded the role of anarchism in Spain.[30]

By 1915 the political positions of Spanish anarchism were becoming quite clear. With World War I already started, that year, an *International Congress Against the War* was held in the Galician city of El Ferrol.[31] There, the anti-war position of Spanish anarchism was clearly stated. The Congress ended with strong support for

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[27] Iñiguez, M. (2001) *Esbozo de una enciclopedia histórica del anarquismo español.* Madrid: Fundación de Estudios Libertarios Anselmo Lorenzo, page 239.
[28] Interview with *Anonymous 55.*
[29] Bookchin, M. (1998) *The Spanish Anarchists: The Heroic Years, 1868-1936*, Oakland and Edinburg: AK Press, page 131.
[30] To learn more about the CNT see, Liarte, R. (1977) *La C.N.T y el federalismo de los pueblos de España*. Barcelona: Producciones Editoriales.
[31] Well-known anarcho-syndicalists like Manuel Andreu, Francisco Miranda, Eusebio Carbó, Antonio Loredo, and Ángel Pestaña attended the congress.

both a pacifist and an antimilitarist position,[32] and the idea of a revolutionary general

strike (tied to the thought of Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis).[33] One interviewee

being 15M described the spirit of Spanish Anarchism at the start of the 20th century,

as he saw it:

> "The anarchist tradition with which myself and others identify has been predominantly, and
> since its inception, a nonviolent tradition. It has been working on mutual aid and fighting
> against oppression."[34]

By 1919, in Spain, the separation between those being governed and those

governing was so large that on February 5th of that year a large nonviolent strike

began in Barcelona. This became a general strike that paralyzed 70% of Catalan

industry. The strike lasted for 44 days and became known as *La Canadiense* (The

Canadian).[35] It received so much popular support that the government ended up

declaring a State of War. Through this move, normal life was drastically restricted

and political opposition was crushed. Eventually tanks were brought out to the

streets.[36]

By 1929 the situation in the country had deteriorated to such an extent, that

students were reclaiming the streets with constant demonstrations and acts of civil

disobedience. Soon, workers inspired by this activity began strikes. First the strikes

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[32] The anti-militarist and pacifist position of the CNT is also expressed by libertarian literature of the time; in publications like *Tierra y Libertad*, *Solidaridad Obrera*, *Acción, Acción Fabril*, *La Colmena Obrera*, and *El Vidrio*. In a 1916 issue of *La Colmena Obrera* magazine, the following can be read: "We condem all wars because we consider them barbaric and inhumane" cited in 'Los grandes problemas', *La Colmena Obrera*, Number 29, September 23rd 1916, page 3.
[33] Devesa Pájaro, D. (2008) 'El discurs pacifista dins de l'anarcosindicalisme: el cas de Badalona i Mataró durant la Primera Guerra Mundial', in *Cercles*. Revista d'història cultural, Number 11, January 2008, page 7.
[34] Interview with *Anonymous 149.*
[35] In reference to *La Canadiense,* which was the company in which the conflicto began.
[36] Peirats, J. (2006) *Los Anarquistas en la crisis política española (1869-1939)*, Buenos Aires: Libros de Anarres, page 11.

began in Barcelona and later in Madrid. A general strike took place in Madrid, and at the same time the CNT managed to paralyze the city of Barcelona by calling for a public transport strike.[37]

By 1930, the Spanish population was immersed in a transformative collective imaginary. In order to explain the difference between those times and today, one interviewee offered the following reflection: "15M has appeared at a time when hegemony is in the hands of capitalism. In the 1930's that was not the case."[38] The same interviewee describes his hometown of Gijón during those times:

"In the last days of the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, in 1930, Gijón had 80,000 inhabitants. There were workers' cultural associations in every neighbourhood. There were popular cultural centres and popular cinemas. People were proud of being workers. There was an affirmation of worker pride."[39]

On May 14th 1931, Spain's Second Republic was proclaimed. King Alfonso XIII left the country following municipal elections in which Republican candidates won the majority of votes.[40] One interviewee described how the period just before this event resembled May 15th of 2011:

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[37] Idem., pages 33,43.
[38] Interview with *Anonymous 170.*
[39] Ibid.
[40] The new republican period officially lasted from April of 1931 until April 1st of 1939. That date, marks the end to the country's Civil War that gave rise to Franco's dictatorship. Nevertheless, the Second Republic is usually thought about as being divided into three specific periods. In its first period from 1931 until 1933 it was governed by a Republican and Socialist coalition. In its second period from 1933 until 1935, it was governed by a coalition of right-wing parties. In the third period, a coalition of left-wing parties known as the *Frente Popular* (Popular Front) governed from February 1936 until the *coup d'état* of July 17th and 18th of that same year. For a great account of this period see Pla. J (2006) *La segunda República española. Crónicas parlamentarias 1931-1936*, Barcelona: Destino.

"The times are similar. At that time there was a regime that was like a corpse waiting to be

buried and people were asking for a transition. Today we are asking for a constituent process,

a democratic rupture."[41]

Starting in 1931, anarchists from across Spain had been working towards the

formation of a National Industrial Federation. This work, prepared them in their

coordination of strikes as social conflict intensified in different parts of the country.[42]

On January 8th of 1933, anarchists initiated an uprising across Spain. The objective

was to institute libertarian communism. On January 11th, assault guards killed

numerous peasants in the town of *Casas Viejas* in the Province of Cádiz. This event

became one of the most tragic events of the Spanish Second Republic.[43] One

interviewee said the following regarding *Casas Viejas*: "Those of us entering 15M

coming from libertarian traditions, have had very present our inheritances. All of us

here remember what happened in *Casas Viejas*."[44] A second interviewee was more

specific:

"In *Casas Viejas* they managed to collectivize everything. The response from the government

was tanks and death. The people were acting from a position of nonviolence wanting to take

charge of their territory and control it collectively through municipalist collectives. This was

happening across Andalucía. In my hometown, in 1936 the fishermen collectivized the ships.

The communists later arrived to dismantle all that."[45]

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[41] Interview with *Anonymous 144.*
[42] Ibid.
[43] Jackson, G. (1985) "La derrota de las izquierdas" *La República Española y la Guerra Civil (1931-1939)*. Madrid: Orbis.
[44] Interview with *Anonymous 28.*
[45] Interview with *Anonymous 67*. According to Jerome R. Mintz, the events of Casas Viejas were not nonviolent, however, in the imaginary of this interviewee they were. For a description of events at Casas Viejas see Mintz, J. R. (1982) *The Anarchists of Casas Viejas*, Boomington: Indiana University Press.

By November of 1933, the governing Republican and Socialist coalition had collapsed. The anarchist uprising and the events at *Casas Viejas*, together with the fact that anarchists favoured abstention from voting, gave the elections of November 19th to an electoral coalition of parties on the political right. Alejandro Lerroux became the new president.[46] Nevertheless, following the elections, stability in the country was not recovered. On October 5th of 1934, UGT called for an *Alianza Obrera* (Workers Alliance). This was an insurrectional general strike aimed at reaching socialism through abandoning the parliamentary path. This was the time, as one interviewee pointed out, "when Buenaventura Durruti and other key figures of the working class movement were asking people not to vote."[47] The government's response was to proclaim a state of war.[48]

Interviewees remembered these years prior to the Spanish Civil War in different ways. The views expressed by the following two interviewees are indicative of the perception of those times as seen from within the 15M climate I visited. One interviewee, described how "these where the years during which laws that had been passed during the first years of the Republic were annulled and the military and police were used to repress the population."[49] A second interviewee, suggested why post

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[46] These were the first elections in Spanish history in which women could vote. For a useful account of this period see Jackson, G. (2005) *La República española y la guerra civil*. RBA Coleccionables S.A.

[47] Interview with *Anonymous 67.*

[48] Tamames, R (1974) *Historia de España Alfaguara VII. La República. La Era de Franco*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial, p. 230. During this insurrection, in most parts of the country the CNT refused to accept a vertical alliance with UGT. This non-convergence between groups led to the insurrection failing in most places except in Asturias. In the Asturian city of Gijón, the Regional Federation of the CNT, despites threats of expulsion by the Confederation's Executive reached a pact with UGT. Signed on March 31st of 1934, this workers' pact gave rise to what is referred to as the Revolution of Asturias of 1934. This revolution was part of the October 5th insurrectional general strike. This was an insurrection that by its third day already had a large part of Asturias under the control of the miners. Workers created what they referred to as a red army. By the tenth day it counted 30,000 individuals, mainly miners and factory workers. See both Ruiz, D. (1988) *Insurrección defensiva y revolución obrera. El octubre español de 1934*. Barcelona: Labor, pages. 13-14, and Thomas, H. (1976) *La Guerra Civil Española*. Barcelona: Ed. Grijalbo, page 162.

[49] Interview with *Anonymous 129.*

May 15th of 2011 Spain looked similar to what the country looked like prior to the elections of 1936:

> "Prior to the elections of 1936 the right was in power and the autonomy of Catalonia was being discussed. There was an upsurge of different nationalisms. People were asking for bread and occupying properties, whilst the military was repressing strongly."[50]

When interviewees spoke of the period of 1900-1936 there was a sense of citizens gradually empowering themselves and beginning to govern themselves in numerous ways. This being the case for quite a sustained period of time despite elite attempts to silence dissent. Interviewee discussions clearly transmitted that people organized within Spanish territories and outside of the legality of the State were the *raison d'être* of the *coup d'état*.

15M and 20th century Spanish Civil War traditions and events

As the military coup began in Spain, the social revolution was well on its way.[51] Millions of the country's cooperative democrats were well into their constructive projects of mutual aid and cooperation. In the countryside, much previously unused land had already been collectivized. In the areas of Spain in which the republican government remained in power, accelerated social changes were taking place at an unprecedented level. There were innovations in the domains of economics, politics, social life, culture, education, and sexuality. In the areas where the CNT had

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[50] Interview with *Anonymous 56.*

[51] On July 18th 1936 a military coup marked the beginning of the Spanish Civil War. The rebel forces received little popular support as they came up from the South and the brutal use of force surpassed other dictatorial regimes. As General Franco assumed control of the military junta in the early months of 1937 terror and death would define this period of Spanish history. See Casanova, J. et al. (2002) *Morir, matar, sobrevivir: La violencia en la dictadura de Franco*, Barcelona: Editorial Crítica, page 85.

majority support another Spain was happening. A new organization of the production, consumption, and governing capabilities 'of' the demos was being put into practice 'by' the demos. The means of production were collectivized. Self-government was carried out. Especially in the regions of Cataluña and Aragón the social reality of citizens was drastically changing. The structure of the state was shrinking. The abolition of a class society was beginning to be a reality through the use of cooperative means.[52]

One interviewee described the similarities between the social revolution of 1936 and post May 15th 2011 Spain in the following manner:

> "George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia* speaks of very similar things to those that we experienced in 15M encampments across Spain. What is different is that we are not yet in a revolution. We are doing what Buenaventura Durruti referred to as *gimnasia revolucionaria* (revolutionary exercises)."[53]

Certainly, the times are very different and all interviewees were fully aware of this. By the time Orwell was in Spain, there had already been numerous revolutionary accomplishments. For example, although during the very early days of the military outbreak many workers were actually on strike, soon many began to reclaim their production capabilities. They seized corporations and organized themselves in assembly-run collectives. Strategic industries such as the oil company CAMPSA had been collectivized. Only one week after the military uprising, different self-organizing *demoi* were running public transportation, the train system, water, and energy

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[52] Cuevas, F.J. (2010) 'La Línea Rojinegra Educativa del Anarquismo Español', *HAOL*, Número 21, page 105.
[53] Interview with *Anonymous 195*.

sources.[54] In many cases, collectivization was so far reaching that it encompassed the whole process of extraction or cultivation, production, distribution, and administration.[55]

Throughout the conflict, in Republican areas anarchists were working tirelessly to create schools and libraries in remote villages. In most of the villages, these educational centres were built in reclaimed villas baptized with names such as *Villa Kropotkin* or *Villa Montseny*.[56] In addition, many small rural communities were carrying out experiments in libertarian communism[57]. In metropolitan areas agrarian land was being collectivized.[58]

In Barcelona, the central fruit and vegetable market in the neighbourhood of the Born was collectivized. Distribution from the countryside was facilitated.[59] In Montblanc articles were bought with a new collectivized currency. Some collectives used central storage areas where everyone took what was needed. In others, such as Llombay (Castellón), goods were distributed based on family needs. In most of the collectivized areas, when shortages existed priority was given to children, the sick, elderly people, and women. In Peñalba medical experts chosen by the community

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[54] Peirats, J. (2006) *Los Anarquistas en la crisis política española (1869-1939)*, Buenos Aires: Libros de Anarres, page 81.

[55] In cases in which the whole industry was collectivized the population refered to it as a socialized industry. Examples of such industries included the *Sindicato de de Madera de Barcelona* (Wood Syndicate of Barcelona), bakers, and the train system in Cataluña and Aragón. In Asturias, the fishing industry and its derivatives were also fully socialized. A distribution cooperative (*Consejo de Cooperación Provincial*) was created, in order to guarantee delivery from the coastal towns to the interior areas of the region (Idem., pages 82,87).

[56] In Amposta for example, the school offered public baths; classes for almost illiterate adults; a cantine for kindergarten children; and a school for arts and trades (Idem., pages 103,104).

[57] Peirats points out how *La Revista Blanca* on May 1st 1933, reported on examples of such communities in Burgos; Santander; Lleida; Soria; Asturias; Andalucía, and Extremadura. In the magazine a peasant is quoted as saying: "We have no rich and poor, no social problem, and no unemployed workers. Production is shared equally, and we all live happily and in peace" (Idem., page 97).

[58] In Barcelona, for example, 1000 acres were collectivized. In Hospitalet de Llobregat 15 square kilómetros were collectivized. In Sueca (Valencia), 3.600 acres of rice, 320 of vegetables, and 115 of orange trees were collectivized. In Belvis del Jarama (Castilla la Nueva) 2400 acres were collectivized. In Brihuega (La Alcarria), almost the whole municipality was collectivized (Idem., page 98).

[59] Idem., page 101.

allocated rations. Transactions between collectives in most instances were bartered

(for example, Calanda exchanged oil for textiles with Barcelona).[60] Currency in

collectivized communities lost most of its value as most people refrained from its

use.[61] In Seros, unmarried people were fed in communal kitchens and were given

clean clothes. When they married, the community helped them set up their new family

home. In Graus, the population paid for newly weds to go on honeymoons.[62]

Relationships in collectives were deeply democratic. In Hospitalet de

Llobregat they celebrated general assemblies every three months. In Ademuz,

assemblies were celebrated every Saturday and in Alcolea de Cinca, whenever anyone

in the community deemed an assembly necessary.[63] The period of the Spanish social

revolution was taking place within the broader context of a civil war. Many

collectives supported the Republican war effort. Nevertheless, most collectives were

simply focused on developing their constructive programs towards a new society

based on nonviolent, cooperative, and democratic principles.[64]

The time of the Spanish Civil War was a violent time. It would be naive to

portray the collectivized militias fighting against the Nationalist army by painting a

melancholic and utopian picture of their work. Defend what they may, armies are a

violent and tragic reality of human existence. This said however, it is interesting to

point to the fact that even within the most horrendous of human realities (war),

collaborative, cooperative, and democratic traditions came together at the trenches.

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[60] Idem., page102.
[61] Idem., page 105.
[62] Idem., page 106.
[63] Ibid.
[64] In addition to this exemplary constructive work, there were groups within Spain that were advocating publically for a nonviolent resolution to the conflict. Such was the case of *La Liga Española de Resistentes a la Guerra* (Spanish War Resisters League. Affiliated to the American War Resisters League, it called for nonviolent revolution, and carried out relief work in war torn areas. Founded by professor José Brocca, the league provided humanitarian aid to refugees. It distributed food and other necessities, opened orphanages and refugee centres, and helped children escape to other countries. See Bennett, S.H. (2006) 'Pacifismo socialista y revolución social no violenta: La WRL y la Guerra Civil Española', Presented in *Congreso Internacional Sobre la Guerra Civil Española*, Madrid.

Even there, they attempted to enact a new society. This is how George Orwell

described his time in the trenches at the Aragón front:

> "I had dropped more or less by chance into the only community of any size in Western Europe
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> were political consciousness and disbelief in capitalism were more normal than their
>
> opposite… In theory it was perfect equality, and even in practice it was not far from it… Of
>
> course such a state of affairs could not last. It was simply a temporary and local phase in an
>
> enormous game that is being played over the whole surface of the earth. But it lasted long
>
> enough to have its effect upon anyone who experienced it… For the Spanish Militias, while
>
> they lasted, were a sort of microcosm of a classless society… The effect was to make my
>
> desire to see Socialism established much more actual than it had been before."[65]

Orwell speaks of a state of affairs that could not last because of its theoretically

perfect equality and its approximation in practice. After being within 15M, one can

easily understand the kind of power-with force presented by Orwell's simple, yet

powerful statement.

15M and late Francoism and Spanish Transition to democracy traditions and events

Transitologists like John Higley and Richard Gunther describe 'pacted'

transitions as 'elite settlements'.[66] The Spanish transition is broadly considered as a

clear example of a pacted transition. Among students of democratic transitions this

kind of transition is viewed as exclusionary and undemocratic in character. Guillermo

O'Donnell and Phillippe C. Schmitter describe such pacts as being negotiated by a

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[65] Orwell, G. (1952) *Homage to Catalonia*, London: Harcourt, pages 103-105.
[66] Higley, J and Gunther, R. (1992) *Elites and Democratic Consolidation in Latin America and Southern Europe*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

reduced number of actors representing established institutions. According to

O'Donnell and Schmitter, they operate in the following manner:

> "They tend to reduce competitiveness as well as conflict; they seek to limit accountability to
> wider publics; the attempt to control the agenda of policy concerns; and they deliberately
> distort the principle of citizen equality."[67]

In the case of Spain, this pacted transition acknowledged "the legality of the

institutional framework bequeathed by Franco."[68] Via an amnesty law, the pact

exempted the regime from any responsibility for the atrocities carried out throughout

the civil war and the dictatorship. Despite repeated requests for the derogation of this

law from numerous organizations including The United Nations, Human Rights

Watch and Amnesty International, the law is still in place today.[69]

Individuals being 15M described in their interviews how at the time of the

transition, whilst elites were deciding the institutional fate of the Spanish State, on the

streets people were contributing to a creative process of direct action that had been

growing in strength since the 1950s. Since then, there had been a lot of popular

pressure on the streets for the democratization process to begin. Neighbourhood

groups, clubs and associations had spearheaded these mobilizations. Hiking groups,

Sports clubs and blood donor associations were amongst those most active. Together

they were promoting interpersonal relationships with co-workers, family members,

neighbours and friends. A social discourse different to that presented by the regime

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[67] O'Donnell, G and Schmitter, P. (1986) *Transition from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative conclusions about uncertain democracies*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, page 38.
[68] Rigby, A. (2000) 'Amnesty and Amnesia in Spain', in *Peace Review*, Volume 12, Number 1 (2000), page 76.
[69] For detail on this law see Amnisty Law 46/1977, of October 15th. Published in BOE October 17th 1977. The law protected political prisoners, and numerous political crimes and acts of sedition and rebellion.

began to surface and much constructive work began to be carried out in many different areas of social life.[70]

As part of this transformative constructive process, dissident Catholic movements closely connected with the working class began to appear such as *Les Gemandats Obreres d'Acció Catòlica* (Worker Brotherhoods of Catholic Action) in the 1950s and *Solidaridad* in the 1960s.[71] This latter group was comprised of an eclectic mix of Christian and syndicalist revolutionaries.[72] As one interviewee described it, "at the time there were many priests that used the priesthood like a political space. They were working-class first, then priests."[73] A second interviewee suggested that "without the parishes there would have been no anti-Francoism. Whenever anybody needed to hide, they hid in the churches."[74]

By the 1960s the dictatorship was severely weakened. It reached a point at which students had created 'free-zones' in universities across the country. In these free-zones the legality of the dictatorship was systematically transgressed. "People do not talk much about the 1960s, but a lot of people were being killed by the dictatorship. They could not be a part of the staged transition that was being prepared."[75] That was the time when the anti-militarist nonviolent movement surfaced. It was a "non-institutionalized, coordinated, and collective movement. It did not end until its objectives were met."[76] It was a movement of conscientious objectors and draft-dodgers. It rejected the country's compulsory military service. It integrated a

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[70] For example, neighbourhood groups begin extensive occupations of buildings in order to highlight problems in housing. For detail on this and other actions, see Calle Collado, A. and Jiménez, M. (2008) 'Transiciones en movimiento: La cultura de protesta en España y el ciclo de movilización global', *unpublished document prepared for the Informe Foessa*, page 21.

[71] Fontana, J. (2005) 'Bases per a una nova transició', in *Revista HMiC*-2005, page 105.

[72] The roots to these catholic currents can be traced to Liberation Theology and the Second Vatican Council of 1962-65 initiated by Pope John XXIII.

[73] Interview with *Anonymous 11*.

[74] Interview with *Anonymous 94*.

[75] Interview with *Anonymous 60*.

[76] Interview with *Anonymous 8*.

strong Christian base with groups such as *Pax Christi* and *Justicia y Paz*. It was comprised of informal networks surrounding self-governed social spaces, libertarian groups, radical leftist collectives, and environmentalist groups. By 1971, the son of a Lieutenant Colonel of the Francoist army, Pepe Beúnza, became the first conscientious objector. "He was part of a nonviolent civil resistance movement that had strong links with the extra-parliamentary left in Germany and Italy."[77] By 1975, the country witnessed the first collective conscientious objection in the neighbourhood of *Can Serra*. This happened in L'Hospitalet de Llobregat (Barcelona). From this small neighbourhood, activists practiced nonviolence, rejected militarism, and demanded democratic freedoms.[78]

By the 1970s, the regime had become conscious of the dangers to its survival coming from the activities of workers, working class priests, and students. The authorities claimed groups were "attempting to set the working class population against the established order."[79] The public realm had been rekindled after years of hibernation. As one interviewee describes it, "there were whole neighbourhoods into which the police could not enter. Autonomous spaces were proliferating."[80] The housing situation had surfaced as a serious social concern. In fact, many of the neighbourhoods were shantytowns. As an individual being 15M described it, "once big property owners were identified, whole neighbourhoods demonstrated 24/7 in front of their houses."[81] A second interviewee active within 15M in Badia del Valles,

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[77] Interview with *Anonymous 103*. To learn more about conscientious objectors in the Spanish State see: Ajangiz, R. (2004) 'Objeción de conciencia, insumisión, movimiento antimilitarista', in *Mientras Tanto* Número 91-92 verano-otoño, page 2. Also: Soríano Díaz, R.L. (2000) 'Insumisión y desmilitarización', in *Derechos y libertades: Revista del Instituto Bartolomé de las Casas*, Año nº 5, Número 8, page 530.

[78] Idem., pages 288, 294.

[79] García Cotarelo, R. (1987) *Resistencia y desobediencia civil*, Madrid: Eudema Universidad, page 15.

[80] Interview with *Anonymous 108*.

[81] Interview with *Anonymous 27*. In 2013 the PAH began to do these kinds of actions and they were given the name *escrache*. The term is borrowed from social protests in 1995 Argentina.

in the province of Barcelona described life in the city then. She explained how in the mid-1970s, this new town of brand new government subsidized housing was mostly occupied by squatters. This she explained was due to the fact, that "corruption had made it impossible for those in need to access a property."[82]

During these last stages of the dictatorship, as one interviewee pointed out, "teachers were marching across the country. They demanded public education for everyone, creating links and showing alternatives."[83] This radical push for public education exploded in working-class neighbourhoods everywhere. In Barcelona for example, it took place in neighbourhoods like *La Sagrera*, *San Andrés* and *Ciudad Meridiana*. In response to the shortage of places for children in public schools, commissions of parents, teachers and neighbours organized. They demanded from the Ministry of Education a commitment to building schools, guaranteeing free public education, and allowing schools to be managed by the community.[84] A movement grew around the *Soller*, *Pegaso,* and *Ferrer i Guardia* schools. Many buildings were occupied and transformed into assembly-run, self-governed schools. The children, the parents, and the teachers organized these institutions.[85]

The 15Ms that I spent time with*in*, were not spaces in which there was much controversy regarding the fact that the Spanish transition had been a fraud. As one interviewee explained it, the French May of 1968 had picked up in Spain a little later. Nevertheless during Spain's transition period the same questions were being asked: "If the revolution is not now, when? If it is not here, where?"[86] For a second interviewee, the transition times were clearly times in which in the collective

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[82] Interview with *Anonymous 210.*
[83] Interview with *Anonymous 203.*
[84] Cuevas, F.J. (2010) 'La Línea Rojinegra Educativa del Anarquismo Español', *HAOL*, Número 21, page 108.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Interview with *Anonymous 206.*

imaginary, it was clear that "power lay in the ministry of protest."[87] A third

interviewee recalled the boom in cooperatives in the Basque country during the

transition.[88] A fourth interviewee, remembered the *Proceso de Burgos* (Burgos

Process).[89] A fifth interviewee, pointed to the Green March of 1975.[90] One thing

seemed clear to most of the individuals that I interviewed. The fact that many of the

struggles being fought today could find genealogical roots in that period of the

country's history. These times were broadly thought of as times in which the

population was cheated out of a true constituent process.

It seemed quite apparent to me during my research trip that the people I met

being 15M were generally people who understood their struggle not as a struggle just

against austerity, political corruption, territoriality or identity. There was in the 15M

climate that I witnessed a deep realization about the fact that the foundational contract

which was meant to legally and politically bind the society together, was not really

legitimate. Or at the very least, was very rapidly losing any form of legitimacy. In

retrospect, when comparing the conversations I had with interviewees in late 2013

with the initial discussions in public squares in May of 2011, there is an apparent

shift. In 2011 a lot of people were mobilizing for the first time or had been working in

their own more isolated spaces. By 2013, the 15M climate had facilitated a space of

co-learning in which many challenges to hegemonic convention had been co-explored

and in a certain sense collectively interiorized. Whether that difference is substantial

or not I can only speculate. What is clear to me, however, is that by late 2013 within

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[87] Interview with *Anonymous 162.*
[88] Interview with *Anonymous 138.*
[89] In this trial, members of ETA *Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* (Basque Homeland and Freedom) were facing the death penalty. "This was 1970, and my generation was faced with the responsibility, of taking an anti-repression stance and standing up to defend those youth." Interview with *Anonymous 170.*
[90] In the Green March of 1975, the Moroccan government orchestrated a mass march to pressure Spain to hand-over to Morocco, the disputed Spanish Province of Sahara. "During that Colonial dispute a lot of arrests were made in Las Palmas de Gran Canarias. It that was an explosive moment for my generation." Interview with *Anonymous 74.*

the 15M climate I was a part of official transition narratives were being heavily contested.

15M and 1980s traditions and events

In 1982, the PSOE with Felipe González as primer minister began to govern Spain. Gonzalez's period in power was characterized by complete disinterest in revisiting the past. It has been referred to by Spanish scholars, as "the years of great silence and of no memory."[91] Yet, as one individual that I interviewed stated, "the social mobilizations of that period have inspired the activities we are living in today's 15M climate."[92] The 1980s in Spain, were times in which it was evident to many people, that politics could not only happen through official and institutional channels. During this decade, neighbourhoods were undergoing deep transformations. The social upheaval, which during the transition had been silenced, had not ceased.

The 1980s saw working class Christians organizing and neighbourhood associations booming. Throughout my trip around the Spanish State, numerous individuals linked post May 15th 2011 social struggles, to the social struggles of the time. In the city of Barcelona, while visiting *Can Batlló* (the occupied factory turned self-managed occupied social centre) the link was clearly emphasized:

> "Although this occupation happened after the 15M encampment and with the support of
> individuals being 15M, there was a struggle going on for over thirty years demanding
> buildings for the community. When individuals being 15M left the encampment and went to

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[91] Encarnación, O.G. (2008) 'Reconciliation after Democratization: Coping with the past in Spain', in *Political Science Quarterly*, Volume 123, Number 2, page 440.
[92] Interview with *Anonymous 184.*

the neighbourhoods, they converged with existing assemblies. The confluence of new and old ways of organizing makes *Can Batlló* a very valuable project."[93]

Closely tied to the neighbourhood activity surrounding housing, the 1980s also witnessed in Spain the emergence of the *okupa* movement. The movement followed in the footsteps of the neighbourhood groups of the 60s and 70s that had occupied buildings as public statements denouncing the housing situation in the country. The okupa movement grew exponentially and a new social discourse began to evolve. For okupas, demands for housing were mixed with calls for autonomous social spaces for political expression. The okupa movement developed in Spain intermixing with the environmentalist and peace movements. It embraced strong contra-cultural currents and anti-capitalist ideas stemming from autonomous movements in Italy.[94] It was also heavily inspired by the activities of German social movements. As one interviewee described it: "okupas were learning from German citizen initiatives, squatters in Germany, and the early stages of the German green party."[95]

Referencing the 1980s, other interviewees spoke of the influence during that period of experiences like the collectivisations in the town of Marinaleda,[96] in Andalucia. There were many references made also to community run televisions and radio stations that boomed in the 80s.[97] Nevertheless, most of the focus given to this period by individuals interviewed focused on conscientious objectors and the popular struggle against the entry of Spain into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

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[93] Interview with *Anonymous 189.*

[94] Calle Collado, A. and Jiménez, M. (2008) 'Transiciones en movimiento: La cultura de protesta en España y el ciclo de movilización global', *unpublished document prepared for the Informe Foessa*, page 21.

[95] Interview with *Anonymous 87.*

[96] Marinaleda was discussed in more detail at the beginning of chapter one of this essay.

[97] Interview with *Anonymous 162.*

The Spanish population entered the 1980s with the apparent threat of the country's eminent adherence to NATO. By 1981 large demonstrations were taking place in the country. These followed from calls to action from pacifist organizations such as MPDL *Movimiento por la Paz* (Movement for Peace). APD *Asociación por la Paz y el Desarme* (Association for Peace and Disarmament). And *Mujeres por la Paz* (Women for Peace). Collectives from the environmentalist movement, Christian organizations, the Communist Party, and radical leftist organizations supported these calls.[98] By 1982, the government formally entered into agreement with NATO ignoring the clamour coming from the country's streets. Nevertheless, the peace movement continued to gain traction. It continued its struggle towards a free Spain outside of NATO and a citizenry out of the reach of the country's military grip.[99] One interviewee described the effect of these struggles on those mobilizing at the time:

> "Those of us that began to be active in social movements in the 80s are deeply influenced by conscientious objection; by the amount of nonviolence workshops we attended and the amount of work we did on nonviolent methodologies. All this has been passed down into all subsequent movements. When we see the exemplary nonviolence of those being 15M we are not seeing a Gandhian tradition. We are seeing the influence the MOC *Movimiento de Objeción de Conciencia* (Conscientious Objection Movement) has had on the country's demos."[100]

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[98] Calle Collado, A. and Jiménez, M. (2008) 'Transiciones en movimiento: La cultura de protesta en España y el ciclo de movilización global', *unpublished document prepared for the Informe Foessa*, page 8.
[99] Idem., page 20.
[100] Interview with *Anonymous 46*.

According to opinion surveys conducted during this highly charged anti-militarist period, 63% of the population rejected a mandatory draft.[101] In fact, opposition was so blatant that encouraged by the *Asamblea Andaluza de No Violencia* (Andalucian Nonviolence Assembly), every year since 1983 thousands of Spaniards systematically carried out fiscal objection to military expenditures.[102] Also in 1983, the CEOP *Coordinadora Estatal de Organizaciones Pacifistas* (State-wide Coordinator of Pacifist Organizations) began a process of coordinating the activities of different peace organizations across the country. In 1985, a conference took place in Barcelona. It concluded with an intensified call for a referendum regarding military conscription and Spain's membership in NATO.[103] By 1988, following years of being ignored by the political elite, the Spanish public responded with the largest antimilitarist protests in the country's short post-dictatorial history.[104] One individual being 15M described the learning experience of that decade of mobilization. He linked it to 15M, in the following manner:

> "The capacity to create local committees and to organize mass protests was exemplary. Our marches would go on into the late hours of the night. I travelled a lot around the country at the time. I can assure you that the climate was very similar to that of 15M."[105]

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[101] Calle Collado, A. and Jiménez, M. (2008) 'Transiciones en movimiento: La cultura de protesta en España y el ciclo de movilización global', *unpublished document prepared for the Informe Foessa*, page 20.

[102] People deducted from the taxes to be paid the costs of military expenditure and would file their taxes with the deduction and an explanation.

[103] Pastor, J. (1991) 'Movimientos Sociales y Nuevas Demandas', in *Revista de Derecho Político*, Number 34, pages 225-235.

[104] see Calle Collado, A. and Jiménez, M. (2008) 'Transiciones en movimiento: La cultura de protesta en España y el ciclo de movilización global', *unpublished document prepared for the Informe Foessa*, page 20.

[105] Interview with *Anonymous 184*.

Today the Spanish State still remains a member of NATO. Nevertheless, by

1996 this nonviolent anti-military movement had forced the end of the country's

compulsory military service.[106] This fact was ever present in the collective imaginary

of those being 15M that I interviewed.

15M and 1990s traditions and events

In the numerous 15Ms that I encountered, generally there was a clear sense of

the following: from the early days of the 1990s, social mobilization in the Spanish

State began to acquire specific traits that would later be foundational and

constitutional of 15M. One interviewee described this in the following manner:

> "In human existence there are ruptures and discontinuities, but also historical processes.
> Understanding 15M as a shout of indignation would be ignoring the fact that it is really the
> result of an accumulation of struggles. At the very least this accumulation runs from as early
> as the 1990s. One only needed to be in neighbourhoods like Lavapiés or have engagement
> with the student movements and workers movements of the time to have a better sense of the
> temporality of 15M."[107]

Some interviewees spoke of the early 1990s as a time in which a different kind

of political subject came into being. This political subject was seen to be using

technology in order to facilitate new forms of global mobilization whilst at the same

time developing new ways of interaction. One interviewee described this phenomenon

in the following manner:

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[106] Real Decreto 247/2001, 9 de marzo, *por el que se adelanta la suspensión de la prestación del servicio militar*. See online at: http://noticias.juridicas.com/base_datos/Admin/rd247-2001.html
[107] Interview with *Anonymous 33*.

"What was happening in the 1990s was that a new way of being political was being born. It allowed every individual a voice, and was based on a hyper-sensibility towards power-over politics of any kind. I think this is a key trait found within the multiplicity of ways in which alternative economies, politics, and cultures, are being co-thought and co-created today."[108]

During interviewing, numerous individuals being 15M spoke of this new political culture being already present in movements and initiatives of the early 1990s. According to them, it could be seen in the campaign *Desenmascaremos el 92* (Unmasking 92) which aimed to unmask global capitalism at a time in which Spain was hosting a series of 'World' events.[109] It could be identified in the *Euromarchas* (Euromarches) against unemployment and precarious labour conditions across Europe.[110] It was present in the *Movimiento Anti-Maastricht* (Anti-Maastricht Movement) that evolved following the protests against Spain's presidency of the European Union in 1995.[111] It was also present in the more local struggle of the workers of the Bruguera publishing house in Barcelona. These workers started a financial services cooperative called COOP57 in order to save their jobs. By 2005, it had developed into a financing web for social and cooperative organizations across the country.[112]

In 1993, a new movement had appeared called *Plataforma 0.7%* (Platform 0,7%). Its main aim was to push for the government to adhere to the deal reached with United Nations of committing 0.7% of the country's gross domestic product to

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[108] Interview with *Anonymous 46.*
[109] To view the manifesto and call that was made in the early days of the movement see: http://www.revistacienciassociales.ucr.ac.cr/manifiesto-de-convocatoriadesenmascaremos-el-92/
[110] For more info on the *Euromarchas* see Navascués J. (2000) 'Euromarchas 2000. De Colonia a Lisboa y Niza, pasando por Seattle', *Viento sur: Por una izquierda alternative*, number 49, 2000, pages 43-46.
[111] Calle, A. (2003) *Nuevos movimientos globales: sedimentando e impactando*. Available online at: http://fundacionbetiko.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Nuevos-movimientos-globales1.pdf
[112] Interview with *Anonymous 65*. For more information see: http://www.coop57.coop

supporting development.[113] In 1994, demonstrations in support of the platform's demands spread throughout the country. Working within the network of the international campaign *50 Years is Enough*, citizen-participants in *Plataforma 0.7%,* began local encampments in numerous cities across Spain. This happened as the World Bank summit was being hosted in Madrid.[114] During the event, an alternative summit was organized, and symbolic blockades were practiced. This summit received support from a broad array of collectives and small political parties.[115] Six years later, on March 12th of 2000 (coinciding with the country's general elections), across most of the Spanish state a public consultation was held by the platform. The consultation addressed the possibility of abolishing external debt.[116] One interviewee described the event in the following manner:

"More than one million people across the country voted in favour of the abolition of foreign debt, despite police repression on those who had set up the voting tables. The event ended in front of congress with police hitting everyone and arresting people indiscriminately for organizing a referendum. In this country referendums are prohibited."[117]

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[113] Calle, A. (2003) *Nuevos movimientos globales: sedimentando e impactando*. Available online at: http://fundacionbetiko.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Nuevos-movimientos-globales1.pdf, page 11.
[114] Calle Collado, A. and Jiménez, M. (2008) 'Transiciones en movimiento: La cultura de protesta en España y el ciclo de movilización global', *unpublished document prepared for the Informe Foessa*, page 12.
[115] Stemming from workgroups around *Plataforma 0.7%, RCADE* (Red Ciudadana por la Abolición de la Deuda Externa), develops and becomes really active during the alter-globalization protests. The activities of citizen-participants with*in* this movement are characterized by the practice of radical democracy and of civil disobedience (Idem., pages12,17). See Calle, A. (2003) *Nuevos movimientos globales: sedimentando e impactando*. Available online at: http://fundacionbetiko.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Nuevos-movimientos-globales1.pdf, pages 12,17.
[116] To learn more visit the platform's website at: http://www.plataforma07.org/historiadel07.html
[117] Interview with *Anonymous 103*.

In 1997, *Rompamos el Silencio* (Breaking Silence) came into being.[118] It was a citizen-led initiative, which practiced civil disobedience and nonviolent direct action. It attempted to influence political, economic, and social decisions. Then, in 1998, ATTAC *Asociación por una Tasación sobre las Transacciones Financieras Especulativas para la Ayuda a los Ciudadanos* (Association for a Tax on Speculative Financial Transactions in order to Help the Citizenry) was born.[119] It proposed a tax on speculative financial transactions. By the late 1990s, events and movements of this kind were clearly revealing a growing public realm. In addition, there was an expansion of cooperation amongst an ever-broadening spectrum of the population.

In 1998, stemming from initiatives with*in Rompamos en Silencio*, MRG *Movimiento de Resistencia Global* (Global Resistance Movement) began meetings in the church of Entrevías in Vallecas. Vallecas is a working class neighbourhood in Madrid. The meetings saw the coming together of collectives that included communists, members of autonomous movements, anarchists, and progressive sectors of the Catholic Church.[120] At around the same time, MJG *Movimiento de Justicia Global* (Global Justice Movement) began to present alter-globalization proposals. It did this through practices similar to those of the 'okupa' movement. These practices included: the creation of self-governed occupied social centres, horizontality in decision-making, and an overarching critique of capitalism. Civil disobedience and the search for alternative ways of debating and public communication characterized their actions.[121] These were times in the Spanish State when the alter-globalization

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[118] Morán, A. (2000) "Rompamos el silencio": siete días de lucha social, *Éxodo*, Number 52 (Jan-Feb 2000), pages 42-55.

[119] To learn more about ATTAC visit: http://www.attac.es/about-2/historia/

[120] Iglesias, P, and Jerez, A. (2005) 'El movimiento global y las contracumbres. Una reflexión sobre la visibilidad del conflicto social desde España', in *Documentación Social*, Number 152, page 83.

[121] Their actions and platforms included informal referendums about foreign debt in 2000, the Iraq war in 2003, and the European constitution in 2004. It also included the creation of new virtual spaces for information and debate, such as http://www.Nodo50.org and http://www.barcelona.indymedia.org. See

movement was very strong. From my interviewing, it became apparent that numerous participants in 15M had also been very active participants in the alter-globalization movement. Alter-globalization was clearly very present within the 15Ms that I experienced.

Interviewees described the connections between events in different ways. One interviewee suggested 15M could not be understood without Genoa, Prague or Seattle.[122] A third interviewee was adamant about the fact that "the struggle is the same in *Puerta del Sol* as it was in Seattle. Different scenarios; the same struggle at core."[123] A fourth interviewee, highlighted playful and transformative elements from action theatre and clowning found in 15M as repertoires of the alter-globalization movement.[124] For a fifth interviewee, 15M was simply one more episode of the struggle that began with alter-globalization. He described this in the following manner:

"The search for a different way of being political, of being in the street, and of communicating. Having a strong presence in the Internet, building webs, and using them for political action. I lived this in the alter-globalization movement. At that time, we began organizing social actions outside of traditional channels, parties, and unions."[125]

Calle Collado, A. and Jiménez, M. (2008) 'Transiciones en movimiento: La cultura de protesta en España y el ciclo de movilización global', *unpublished document prepared for the Informe Foessa*, page 8.

[122] Interview with *Anonymous 119*. The interviewee is referring to Seattle N30, which occurred on November 30th 1999. On that date protesters blocked delegates from entering the World Trade Organization (WTO) meetings in Seattle, in the United States. She is also referring to protests in Prague during the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank summit of September 2000. These happened in the city of Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic. Finally, she also referred to the Genoa Group of Eight Summit protests from July 18 to July 22, 2001.

[123] Interview with *Anonymous 123*.

[124] Interview with *Anonymous 134*.

[125] Interview with *Anonymous 197*.

Although connections and similarities between 15M and the alter-globalization movement were often made, attention was also given to explaining differences between the two. One individual pointed out that the alter-globalization movement demanded rights for those that were far away in the global South. Whereas, as he put it, "15M focuses on the miseries generated by the crisis in this country. 15M is much more grounded in the everyday lives of participants."[126] One individual offered an interesting reflection. I think it captured well how the alter-globalization movement was interpreted by a large proportion of the people I interviewed within the 15M climate. It also captures well in what sense different individuals might identify the alter-globalization movement as being a part of a 15M genealogy. This is how this interviewee thought of what had started with alter-globalization and was part of the DNA of 15M: "A group of us referred to these movements that were prefiguring 15M, not as social movements, but as societies in movement."[127] These societies in movement were certainly present in the collective imaginary of those being 15M who I interviewed.

15M and early twenty-first century traditions and events

In 2001, a movement grew asking for the regularization of all 'illegal immigrants' in Spain. This movement was characterized by demonstrations, lock-ins, occupations, hunger strikes, and blood donations. Beginning in Murcia, it rapidly extended to other cities. It spread to Barcelona, Madrid, Valencia, Almería, Melilla, and throughout most of the country. In Murcia alone, 20,000 migrants workers

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[126] Interview with *Anonymous 108.*
[127] Interview with *Anonymous 111.*

managed to resolve their legal status.[128] Local churches played a strong supporting

role in many cities. They became occupied spaces with support from the clergy. Apart

from immigrants, Spanish citizens joined in the protests with collectives such as

Desobedecer la Ley, and *Associación Pro Derechos Humanos.*[129] In Barcelona,

African workers camped in *Plaça Catalunya* and remained there for days until they

were evicted.[130] In Madrid, the offices of the ombudsman were occupied. With student

support across the country, lock-ins took place in many universities.[131] The movement

was characterized by horizontal decision-making through assemblies. In most

instances, occupations were open to the public. This was done in order to promote

dialogue between occupiers and neighbours.[132]

In 2002, students and professors came out to the streets against a new law

regulating universities. Those in the movement, claimed that the LOU *Ley Orgánica*

de Universidades (Organic Law for Universities) was aimed at destroying public

education. Instead, with the use of slogans such as *otra universidad es possible*

(another university is possible), they advocated for a different university model.[133] The

movement was horizontal in its decision-making processes and focused on mass

protests and nonviolent civil disobedience.[134] One interviewee active within 15M

described how he experienced the protests against LOU: "In the city of Sevilla we

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[128] Laubenthal, B. (2005) 'La Emergencia de las Protestas de Inmigrantes sin Papeles en España: El caso de la región de Murcia', in *La Condición Inmigrante: Exploraciones e investigaciones desde la Región de Murcia*, Andrés Pedreño Cánovas and Manuel Hernández Pedreño eds. Universidad de Murcia: Aula de Debate.

[129] Idem., page 167.

[130] Suárez-Navaz (2007) *Las luchas de los sin papeles y la extension de la ciudadanía. Perspectivas críticas desde Europa y Estados Unidos*, Madrid: Traficantes de sueños, page 191.

[131] Idem., page 192.

[132] Three years later in 2004, the movement collaborates with movements present at the European Social Forum in Athens and occupies Barcelona's cathedral (Idem., page 225)

[133] Iglesias, P, and Jerez, A. (2005) 'El movimiento global y las contracumbres. Una reflexión sobre la visibilidad del conflicto social desde España', in *Documentación Social,* Number 152, page 80.

[134] Even the president of Madrid's Universidad Carlos III publicly called for civil disobedience campaigns to begin. See Ramos Martínez, I.J. (2006) 'La protesta estudiantil en Galicia contra la Ley Orgánica de Universidades', in *Athenea Digital*, Number 10: pages 1-15 (otoño 2006), page 5.

camped for 65 days in front of the Town Hall."[135] A second interviewee described

how they marched towards the ministry of Education. "From the windows of the

ministry, its workers were showing messages of solidarity with those demonstrating

on the street."[136]

Also in 2002, the largest environmental disaster in the history of Spain took

place. The sinking of the oil tanker Prestige that caused a spill off the coast of Galicia.

In response, the movement *Nunca Máis* (Never Again) was born.[137] Thousands of

people from across Spain travelled to Galicia to support the cleaning effort. In

addition they were denouncing the government's mishandling of the disaster. One

interviewee described her experience travelling to help *Nunca Máis.* She linked it to

her experience within 15M. "The solidarity between people cleaning up those beaches

felt the same as the solidarity in the 15M encampment. We all had differences but

worked together from our similarities."[138]

In 2003, Spanish streets witnessed millions of people clamouring against the

war in Iraq. *No a la Guerra* (No to War) managed to organize 26 different

demonstrations across Spain.[139] The largest six counted 1.5 million people.[140] One

interviewee described his involvement in *No a la Guerra*: "We occupied buildings

that we called 'liberated spaces against war'. We would ask 'what is your war?' Then,

we would suggest that war is the halting of everything."[141] A second interviewee,

pointed to the fact that "the self-organizing we would later see in 15M was already

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[135] Interview with *Anonymous 14.*
[136] Interview with *Anonymous 132.*
[137] To learn more about *Nunca Máis* visit: http://plataformanuncamais.wordpress.com/
[138] Interview with *Anonymous 200.*
[139] Rtve.com (15/02/2003) *Manifestación contra la Guerra de Irak 2003*, see online at:
http://www.rtve.es/alacarta/videos/fue-noticia-en-el-archivo-de-rtve/manifestacion-contra-guerra-irak-2003/1054930/
[140] Calle Collado, A. and Jiménez, M. (2008) 'Transiciones en movimiento: La cultura de protesta en España y el ciclo de movilización global', *unpublished document prepared for the Informe Foessa,* page 3.
[141] Interview with *Anonymous 205.*

evident in *No a la Guerra.* One could see it when people were printing their own posters and tee-shirts from templates found on the Internet."[142]

On March 11th of 2004, an al-Qaeda inspired terrorist cell carried out a set of orchestrated bomb attacks on trains in Madrid. This happened three days before Spain's General elections. This event is referred to in the country as 11M. The government tried to link the attack to ETA *Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* (Basque Homeland and Freedom). In response people began to organize spontaneously to expose that the government was lying. Many people believed that the attacks had been in retaliation for Spain having entered the Iraq war. On March 13th, someone sent an SMS (text message) to some friends. It asked to meet at the PP headquarters to demand the truth.[143] The text went viral. In this way, the 'day of reflection' prior to the elections was broken by millions of people demonstrating against the government in an act of civil disobedience. This event is referred to in Spain as 13M.[144] Numerous interviewees found these dates to be early signs of what would later become 15M. One interviewee emphasized how in 2004, just like in 2011, the demonstrations broke the day of reflection prior to the country's elections. As he suggested, "both of these events show the deterioration of Spain's current legal-institutional frame."[145] A second interviewee suggested that people had managed to turn on its head the version of events that the government and the media had constructed.[146] A third interviewee explained how although 13M came and went (it was really only one night) it left many people thinking. He described this in the following manner:

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[142] Interview with *Anonymous 103.*
[143] To learn more about the PP visit online at: http://www.pp.es/
[144] Flesher, C. (2011) 'The Madrid bombings and popular protest: misinformation, counter-information, mobilisation and elections after '11-M', *Contemporary Social Science: Journal of the Academy of Social Sciences.* Volume 6, Issue 3, 2011, pages 289-307.
[145] Interview with *Anonymous 103.*
[146] Interview with *Anonymous 182.* The same interviewee explained its effects: "This empowered the population. We were able to show ourselves that we could do something together. Something that we did not think was possible."

"It raised a set of questions: Who were these people? How had they decided to come together on the street? Where were they coming from? This was the first appearance in the Spanish State of the 'power of collective anonymity'. The next time it appeared was with *V de Vivienda* in 2007."[147]

In 2005, the EuroMayDay network came together, aiming to unite precarious people of the world for a free, open, and radical Europe.[148] As one interviewee described it: "we were trying to use Facebook to organize a Europe-wide movement."[149] By 2007, *V de Vivienda* came into being.[150] In the midst of the country's housing bubble, an anonymous email asking for a demonstration denouncing the housing situation was picked up by thousands of people. Following from this, through self-organization, city squares across Spain were filled with thousands of people.[151] As one interviewee pointed out, "*V de Vivienda* began with sit-downs at public squares. From there large demonstrations were initiated."[152] For this individual being 15M, what was evident in those sit-downs was "the search towards being political in the first person."[153]

2008 was a very intense year of activity within CSOs *Centros Sociales Okupados* (Occupied Social Centres). A self-identifying activist-academic being 15M, explained to me these 'other' spaces of the political in which he was immersed at the time. "Those practices tied to open culture, to being self-managed and to working on the margins of institutional politics, are something that I saw in CSOs in 2008. Three

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[147] Interview with *Anonymous 194.*
[148] For more information on EuroMayDay visit online at: http://www.euromayday.org/about.php
[149] Interview with *Anonymous 183.*
[150] To learn more about V de Vivienda visit online at: http://www.sindominio.net/v/
[151] Interview with *Anonymous 197.*
[152] Interview with *Anonymous 197.*
[153] Ibid.

years later I saw it in 15M encampments."[154] That same year the student movement

was active throughout the country. It was responding to the EU's Bologna Process.[155]

This constituted a set of ministerial meetings and agreements between European

countries regarding the quality of higher education qualifications. Finally, also in

2008, the PAH[156] was created. In chapters one and two of this dissertation, it became

quite evident how 15M has been instrumental in the success of the PAH.

By the start of 2011, social tension in Spain was clearly mounting. On

February 11th of that year, *Estado del Malestar*[157] grouped together people in different

cities in Spain. These people demonstrated against the political and financial system.

The movement grew out of an event created in Facebook. And although it was not a

mass movement, it established links between individuals. Many of these individuals

would later converge within 15M.

On February 15th, the Sinde Law (attempting to curve Internet piracy) was

approved by congress. When the law had first been suggested, in one day 200,000

people had signed a public call against it.[158] Before it was approved, discussion on the

Internet had centred on making sure that if the government approved the law, those

governing should not be re-elected. After it was approved, *No Les Votes* (Do not Vote

for Them) asked people not to vote for those responsible. This is how one interviewee

described *No Les Votes*: "a kind of social movement in which nobody had seen each

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[154] Interview with *Anonymous 134.*

[155] For more information on the Bolonia Process see: Fernández, C. and Serrano, C. (2009) *El Plan Bolonia.* Madrid: Los libros de la Catarata.

[156] To learn more about the PAH visit online at: http://afectadosporlahipoteca.com/

[157] People active in *Estado del Malestar* described their movement in the following manner: "We are people of all ages and with numerous ideological differences, but we have a common denominator. We are pissed-off and full of indignation against the current political and financial system. We feel betrayed by this system and we believe it needs to be changed." For more information visit *#15Mpedia*: 'Estado del Malestar.' Online at: http://wiki.15m.cc/wiki/Estado_del_Malestar

[158] Interview with *Anonymous 183.*

others face, openly asked people not to vote for those considered to be at the heart of the country's problems."[159]

On February 20th of 2011, *Plataforma de coordinación de grupos pro-movilización ciudadana* (Pro citizen mobilization coordinating platform) was created as a Facebook page.[160] Representatives from different collectives joined the group, with the objective of organizing a mass protest and developing a manifesto; by March 16th of 2011, the group transformed into DRY.[161] A website was activated with a manifesto, political proposals for the future of Spain, and a call for a mass demonstration on May 15th of 2011 (15M). On March 23rd, a mass student protest took place across the country. As one interviewee pointed out: "that demonstration was already calling for people to come out as individuals and not as members of unions or parties."[162]

Just before May 15th of 2011, on April 7th of that same year, JSF *Juventudes sin Futuro* (Youth without a Future) was born in Madrid.[163] "Members of IA *Izquierda Anticapitalista* (Anti-capitalist Left)[164] together with people from the autonomous movements and close to *Patio Maravillas* (Playground of Marvels),[165] created JSF."[166] At the time, the youth involved in the movement were already shouting the following slogan: "*Sin Casa, sin curro, sin pension, sin miedo* (Without a house, without work,

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[159] Interview with *Anonymous 138.*
[160] A useful source to learn more about the platform: http://wiki.15m.cc/wiki/Plataforma_de_coordinaci%C3%B3n_de_grupos_pro-movilizaci%C3%B3n_ciudadana
[161] To learn more about DRY visit online at: http://www.democraciarealya.es/
[162] Interview with *Anonymous 213.*
[163] To learn more about JSF visit online at: http://juventudsinfuturo.net/
[164] To learn more about IA visit online at: http://www.anticapitalistas.org/
[165] To learn more about *Patio Maravillas* visit online at: http://patiomaravillas.net/
[166] Interview with *Anonymous 169.*

without a pension, without fear)."[167] This lack of fear ignited the 15M climate which ensued and still prevails.

Closing Remarks

A lot of voices contributed to this crystallization of a genealogy of events and and collective actions nurturing 15M. Through their individual histories, interviewees have brought to the surface knowledges, ways of being, and events that are a part of a people's history of the Spanish State. It is the aim of this chapter to prompt debate and further exploration into genealogies of collective presences such as 15M. Silenced histories, once we excavate them present us with the opportunity to tentatively carve new understandings of our present realities. In this sense, I do not see this chapter as a chapter of history. Instead it is more a chapter on the history of the present. In this category it reveals important information in regards to what is the phenomenon that calls itself 15M.

The chapter has presented a genealogy of social and economic cooperatives; neighbourhood associations, and a diversity of horizontal modes of being political, economic and social. All these modes of being in concert together reveal the fact that other Spains are actual. The chapter has also revealed that horizontal organizations in Spain have one century and a half of living history. This living history is useful to think about, if we are to discuss events such as 15M. It reveals that despite being spontaneous, 15M participants have the historical living memory of events that happened in the dates that have been presented in this chapter. The struggles of 2003, events in the 1980s, challenges of the 1960s, victories and losses of the 1930s, and so on, are not just memories. In the narratives of those being 15M, traditions and events

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[167] Interview with *Anonymous 34.*

actually exist. In fact, there are in Spain actual existing cooperatives and a cooperative spirit, which have survived and have animated generations of engaged citizens. Being able to peek into this reality is the value of this chapter; it reveals the resilience of these modes of being.

– Chapter four –
15M imagined-futures

"I am not against you. You are going to disappear as a power, not as a person. We are constructing another power which will make yours obsolete. It is not a fight against, but a process of construction." *Anonymous 10*

Opening remarks

So far in this dissertation, I have carried out three primary tasks. *First*, in the introduction to the thesis, I have presented my dialogical approach; explaining the reasons for choosing to explore and experiment with*in* the 15M climate through working via dialogue with individuals being 15M. Through this dialogical approach, I have then moved to the *second* task. Here I have presented through chapters one and two an approximation to the state of 15M, where 15M is here and now of the time interviewing came to an end in November 2013. From the 'here and now' I have carried out a *third* task through chapter three, by presenting a genealogical explanation of the 'roots' and 'routes' of 15M. Moving on from 'where we have come from,' in this chapter, I attempt to present to the reader an interpretation of where things are going from here and at what kind of pace. A peek into how things look moving forward from within the 15M Climate.

The purpose of the chapter is to present an accurate portrait of different future-visions about the future of Spain as they were presented in dialogues with individuals being-15M. During the intervieweeing I enticed participants to predict the future. However, by presenting these futures I do not by inference vindicate the predictive abilities of people being-15M. What I aim for by addressing these futures is to present a glimps of the kind of future individuals being 15M are trying to construct (by being the future they want to see). Through their predictions, which are more like action-

based projections, these individuals transmit to us the world they hope for and also the one they hope to avoid. Most importantly hearing what futures 15M envisions is important because such collective presences are often dismissed for not providing an alternative to the capitalist state and representative democracy. Often they are portrayed in the media as a critique without an alternative. Here individuals being 15M are presenting what they see as the future or the alternative.

The chapter presents future-visions as understood by me from within a dialogical sisterhood of individuals being 15M. These future-visions stem from engagement in a dialogue that took place between May 2013 and November of 2013. Numerous participants in this dialogue are very public or/and active figures whose work and voice has a deep influence on the country's social, economic and political climate. This is especially true since the appearance of 15M. In this sense, some of the predictions made in 2013 have already taken place. Although in a sense this seems to reveal a certain ability to predict, it is more a case of the people being interviewed also being main actors promoting concrete objectives. I am confident that understandings stemming from these dialogues can be constructive in trying to anticipate events to come in the Spanish State.[1]

Eight themes were reoccurring during my 15M-dialogues. Each one of these is dealt with individually in the chapter. 1. *Failed State* reflects on the current state of Spain as seen from within the 15M climate. It attempts to approximate the reader to 15M visions about what is happening now (at the time of interviewing) and to 15M visions about what a long-term future could look like as seen from within 15M spaces. 2. *Where to go from here* presents a short description of alternatives and

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[1] This is what de Sousa Santos says in regards to anticipation: "All theory (and specially critical theory) requires a combination of memory and anticipation." See de Sousa Santos, B. (2012) *Para una teoría jurídica de los indignados*, Facultad de Derecho, Universidad de los Ándes, Feb 1st 2012.

possibilities that people being 15M see as potential ways forward. 3. *Constitutent and Destituent Processes* speaks about the rupturing of the frame of the transition to democracy, and how this has opened up a constitutent-destituent phase. 4. *Moving towards constitutent assemblies* reflects on the moves being made towards the articulation of new constitutent pacts. From within 15M spaces, resolution of the crisis of the State passes through such a process. 5. *Nonviolence and violence moving forward* briefly presents the status of this 'old' debate within 15M circles. It also highlights its perceived pertinence as the future unfolds. 6. *Work outside of official institutionality* describes work being carried out or being thought about without engagement with official institutions of representation. 7. *Work* with*in official institutionality* shares with the reader the kind of work being done working with and/or inside official institutionality. Finally 8. *Working from outside and* with*in official institutionality* presents how the majority of individuals being 15M are doing both work outside of and with*in* official institutions. The selection of these themes as areas of discussion stems from the fact that at the time of interviewing they seemed to vertebrate the collective imaginary of 15M.

The content in this chapter differs from the content presented in previous chapters, in that it is more intentional and anticipating in nature. During the interview process, through a set of broad and forward-looking questions, interviewees were asked to anticipate events that might unfold within the Spanish State. These questions served as the basis from which this part of our dialogue ensued. The questions pertinent to this section were as follows:

> 1. Do you think that ideas stemming from 15M can obtain political majorities through elections?

2. How do you think Catalan demands for independence will evolve?

3. Do you think social struggle can remain nonviolent in this country?

4. What do you anticipate will happen in regards to the country's social, economic and political situation?

5. What do you think can be done now and what are you personally focusing on?

Due to the forward-looking nature of this section, a tremendous opportunity opens up to treat the "intersubjective space of dialogue… as a space of story-telling or the exchange of narratives" in its truest sense.[2] This approach drawn from James Tully's public philosophy constitutes a valuable tool, which facilitates the anticipation of some of the events different inhabitants in Spain might be facing in the near future. By engaging in story-sharing and story-building with individuals deeply engaged in the transformation of the Spanish State, I can perhaps narrate a story of where we might be going which might eventually resemble events that actually unfold. The work of David Bohm is helpful here, in order to aid our understanding of why such an 'intersubjective space of dialogue' might be useful in anticipating future events.

The word dialogue, Bohm reminds us in his 'On Dialogue,' "comes from the Greek word *dialogos*. Logos means 'the word,' or in our case we would think of the 'meaning of the word.' And *dia* means 'through'".[3] Bohm points out that dialogue can happen between more than two people and he presents dialogue as "stream of meaning flowing among and through us and between us."[4] According to Bohm, this makes "possible a flow of meaning in the whole group, out of which may emerge some new understanding."[5] This understanding of dialogue, which sees it as being

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[2] Tully, J. (2012) *Deparochializing Political Theory, Western Perspectives on Comparative Political Theory, The Dialogue and Interbeing Approach* (unpublished article), page 15.
[3] Bohm, D. (2004) *On Dialogue*, New York: Routledge, pages 6-7.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Idem. Page 7.

"aimed at going into the whole thought process and changing the way the thought process occurs collectively,"[6] is really in alignment with the way dialogue is understood and enacted within the 15M climate that I experienced. In this sense, I continue in this chapter as a facilitator of a dialogue between different 15M voices. I do this, by presenting different visions and constructing 'stories,' pertinent to where these voices think we are heading as inhabitants of the Spanish State, and where they think we should be going. This section is partly written as a response to the numerous voices that over the last few years have been suggesting that 15M and other collective presences such as Occupy have not been able to present and articulate solutions to the multiple problems that have been pointed out and denounced. It is also useful in order to see the multiple and intricate ways in which individuals being 15M are thinking through the reconstruction or reconstitution of the Spanish State. Thinking always in terms of making all current social, political and economic structures and norms more inclusive, more horizontal, more nonviolent, and ultimately more democratic.

What this chapter offers is a selection of the multiple visions regarding Spain's future that were shared with me through dialogue by individuals being 15M. In doing this, through my selection and translation of seemingly shared understandings I am story-telling. Narrating my own vision of challenges and opportunities inhabitants in the Spanish State might eventually face, and solutions that might arise. This understanding that I present has evolved out of a flow of meaning co-generated by all the co-participants in this dialogical sisterhood. In this sense, and imbued in a 15M spirit, the gap between my individual thoughts and collective understandings has been, I believe, substantially reduced through dialogue. Below, I present a 'story'

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[6] Idem. Page 10.

about possible futures for the Spanish State as I understand events following a particularly long, broad, expansive, and transformative 15M dialogue.

Before beginning with the chapter I would just like to make one clarification. What I present here from my dialogues with 15M individuals is story-telling, not specific quotes from a given interview. What is being cited is the essence of the dialogue. Through the selection of elements to bring into the discussion for this section, what I am trying to do is capture the tone, the mood and the essence of what was being discussed. Because of this, when I reference a particular conversation with an individual being 15M, in the footnote it will appear in the following manner: 'Stemming from dialogue with anonymous *[number of interviewee]*.'

15M voices have much to say regarding alternatives to the *status quo.* Here are just a few examples.

1. *A Failed State*[7]

In the Spanish State 15M has recovered dialogue and through this politics has also been recovered. Yet, the struggle is still being fought for acquiring the formal and legal right to be truly political.[8] There is clearly a need for a transition of some sort in Spain. Horizontal consensus-based assemblies, together with digital democracy, are going to be key pillars of said transition. Nevertheless, whilst there is strong support for deeper democratization there is also clearly strong opposition.[9] This said, traditions of consensus-based assemblies are deeply rooted in the Spanish State and

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[7] Charles Taylor suggests that if any of the following are happening, we are looking at a Failed State: 1. We do not understand ourselves as forming collective agencies; 2. We do not understand the institutions/procedures as constituting valid decisions of this agency; 3. We do not have a common understanding of modes of non-destructive conflict; 4. There is no power and/or vocation of changing the society through state power. See Taylor, C. (2014) *Some Crises of Democracy* (Unpublished article).

[8] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 114*.

[9] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 42*.

communication technology today permits us to have a permanent constituent process. Via this process changes can be continuously made based on the demands and needs of the population. With the Internet we can have continuous assemblies with millions of people discussing, voting and arriving at consensus without too high a cost. It can perhaps be at a lower cost than that of current elections.[10] Internet is prefiguring what a Republic of the 99% can look like. In addition, collectives like the PAH *Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca* (Platform of those Affected by Mortgages) are institutional, or instituting in nature. In the sense that people who are going to lose their home call the PAH first, in order to find a solution.

Constituent and destituent moves are both taking place right now and new *ad-hoc* institutions are being created. The future is one of *ad-hoc* institutionality.[11] In addition, although in the Iberian Peninsula crypto-currencies are not yet too visible, millions of people are navigating in these new economies. Through this process, they are realizing that they can organize their finances outside of the reach of any state. In this sense, there is a genuine possibility that over time states can become obsolete.[12]

There is no straight path. A map of possibilities is being opened up.[13] There is however, a search for new ways of being political. These ways are being approached concentrically in a spiral manner. In this sense, there is an awareness of the fact that as the horizon is being approached, it distances itself. Nevertheless, the ethical position is one of continuing the search – in line with Mahatma Gandhi's idea of experimenting with truth.[14] The way things are changing is through nonviolence, by

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[10] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 37*.
[11] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 196*.
[12] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 212*
[13] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 67*.
[14] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 29*. One cannot see the whole truth but can be experimenting with truth, can discover and test new understandings, new truths. For more information on what Gandhi is referring to in regards to experimenting with truth see, Gandhi, M. (1957) *An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth,* Boston: Beacon Press.

doing things slowly and doing things well terrain is being gained.[15] Through

amorosity fears are being dispersed and egos are diluting.[16] It has become important to

speak of love, because through current mainstream articulations of society the

capacity to truly love is being rapidly lost.[17]

      15M could not have been so beautiful without previous mobilizations and

numerous traditions nurturing it. What 15M allowed us to see, was the existence of an

affluent river of traditions that keeps rising with the objective of transforming

society.[18] A silent labour of unconditional love, of being-with each other in numerous

ways through which "the free development of each is the condition for the free

development of all."[19] If a majority interiorises this way of being current systems of

oppression will tumble and things will radically change.[20] In advanced societies love

will replace law, multiple vocabularies of behaviour will evolve and ethics not law

will be the guarantee.[21] There might be police but officers will be more like monks

and without guns. Politicians will transform in a similar manner. Like the president of

Uruguay, José Mujica, they will be planting their own tomatoes and living in their old

humble homes.[22]

      The force of 15M, the force of anonymity, this force without a name will

appear in another tomorrow and it will be stronger. It will surprise us again.[23] Many

are getting ready to propel it forward just like they did with 15M from their

continuous dedication to social justice and love. Nevertheless, there is a deep

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[15] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 23.*
[16] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 11.*
[17] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 19.*
[18] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 190.*
[19] Marx, K. and Engels, F. (2006) 'The Communist Manifesto', in *Karl Marx Selected Writings*, edited by David McLellan, Oxford: Oxford University Press, page 262.
[20] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 90.*
[21] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 10.*
[22] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 79.*
[23] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 194.*

awareness of the fact that in our societies the culture of vanguards still dominates. Individuals with a political vision propose and the majority follow.[24] This in essence is producing a sense of impotence in the majority of the citizenry. The citizenry is being disempowered by this vertical approach to urgent social transformation. In order to maintain our humanity in facing our multiple crises, the situation seems to be calling for horizontality as the approach. Counterpoised to this, some people are more practiced than others in the creation of collective projects. Those that are working within such experiences are articulating their insatisfactions and fighting their own revolutions up to where they can. Doing this seems to be helping them feel less powerless than those whose struggle is waiting for leaders.[25] But at the end of the day there is a struggle being fought between a multiplicity of truths. Acknowledging current hegemonic discourses the horizon being invented by many does not look very promising. Things are definitely getting worse on a daily basis![26]

Some individuals think we are heading towards collapse, that discussions on risks and alternatives should be broader and more serious. Can we really avoid collapse? People are asking themselves this question and yet the word collapse does not even enter mainstream debate.[27] With the limited resources of the planet and current geopolitical moves, we seem to be heading towards a world war. Another risk seems to be the rearticulation and expansion of fascism. When security becomes more important than freedom you have the essence of fascism.[28]

Although we have made great strides with digital communication we are in the pre-history of real communication.[29] Because we are trapped in our own memories

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[24] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 206.*
[25] Ibid.
[26] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 205.*
[27] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 108.*
[28] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 42.*
[29] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 162.*

and struggles we are unable to organize and truly stop this glocal[30] and generalized folly.[31] Attempts at multiple alternative modes of organization will continue to prosper. In addition, the weight of a nationalist dimension, a localist dimension, and a libertarian dimension in the political culture of the Spanish State, is reflected in the tendency of organized citizens to tentatively resolve problems from below rather than from above. There is ample popular support for these traditions. They seem to form part of the subconscious political imaginary of numerous *demoi* from which alternative Spains are being understood and enacted.[32]

2. *Where to go from here*

The rights that we had active until now are being reorganized.[33] There are urgent things that need to be addressed. We need to guarantee that finance works in the service of our productive economy and that our economy operates within the limits of the planet. This whilst being of and for the common good.[34] In this sense, the health of our environment needs to determine our social, political and economic frames. The importance of this needs to enter mainstream understandings.[35] In addition to this, people need to be above governments. Not only citizens, but also undocumented or excluded people.[36] We need to decolonize our forms of power.[37]

There is a climate of change that is slow partly due to fear. A ruthless ideological war has been waged for decades (centuries if we take a long-term view) and it is difficult to react. Nevertheless, a change of epoch requires changes in

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[30] Glocal is now a term in use, which refers to being both global and local.
[31] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 206*.
[32] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 108*.
[33] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 199*.
[34] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 42*.
[35] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 165*.
[36] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 191*.
[37] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 162*.

language.[38] Endearing leadership can perhaps offer a way out of modes of patriarchal

leadership.[39] Whether soft or semi-soft, patriarchal leadership eventually always

hardens.[40] Discussion and consensus are elements that will help us avoid the

hegemony of organized groups.[41] With great synchronicity and with everyone

assuming their responsibility we could work without leaders. Nevertheless, the work

needs to be done at the grassroots level by learning together and overcoming our

fears.[42] Thinking ourselves through the immigrant paradigm we might be able to make

some valuable discoveries.[43]

Alternatives being created are attempting to avoid reproducing the logic of

current hierarchical structures of power. Yet, this quest is not always successful.[44]

This is one of the traps of our current democracy. Change we are told is only possible

by entering existing hierarchical institutions. Reorganizing this will take a long time

and political parties still play an important role. We go ever so slowly because we are

going on forever.[45] The system itself is in transition; it is shifting towards a

totalitarianism that clearly manifests itself in the conception of the war on terror. The

other as a terrorist; morality has become institutional politics. This in turn is

influencing the way resistances are being reconfigured.[46] And in this sense, a series of

conditions seem to indicate that there is a possibility of defying power and proposing

alternatives. Alternatives regarding the economic crisis, the political crisis, the crisis

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[38] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 148.*
[39] For Marcela Lagarde, endearing leaderships are not about imposition but about convincing, they are also action-based leaderships. For more on this topic see Lagarde, M. (2000) *Claves feministas para liderazgos entrañables*, Managua: Puntos de Encuentro.
[40] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 129.*
[41] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 130.*
[42] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 125.*
[43] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 128.*
[44] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 102.*
[45] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 139.*
[46] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 169.*

of democracy, the crisis of the system of autonomous communities, and the crisis of the monarchy.[47]

3. *Constituent and Destituent Processes*

The idea of a destituent phase on one side and a constituent one on the other is really misleading; they cannot really be separated. They are part of the same process. What is needed right now is for those that camped on public squares to show the population all the things that we have learnt. To show all the things we have been able to do and suggest things that can be done together moving forward.[48] Only constituent assemblies seem capable of changing the dismal state of things in the Spanish State, and in order for that to happen confluence is necessary.[49] When thinking of such a process, one cannot think of one constituent process but must think of processes. This is because the plural respects diversity and at the same time allows for collective unity to remain.[50] To arrive at such a constituent assembly diverse common fronts need to be opened. These fronts must be ample enough to accommodate the multiplicity of voices that need to be heard. They should also aim to converge with a common program.[51] Forcing in this sense multiple and federated constituent processes. These processes should integrate the nationalist narrative together with the narrative of the 99%.[52] Nevertheless, before this can happen, as peoples in our multiplicity we need to ask ourselves where the space of that which is constituent resides.[53] Maybe the space

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[47] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 188.*
[48] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 110.*
[49] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 204.*
[50] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 121.*
[51] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 33.*
[52] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 111.*
[53] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 134.*

of that which is constituent lies within our ability to disobey all unjust laws and rebel against an unjust State.[54]

The political left in the Spanish State is trying to construct a narrative that aims at hegemony by speaking of a *nación de naciones* (nation of nations). The difficulty of articulating a collective narrative that brings together peoples with diverse identities is a challenge. Nevertheless, the opportunity seems to exist for co-emancipation through informal and formal alliances of peoples.[55] If we ask ourselves where resides that which is constituent and we are able to avoid reproducing old codes by giving time and energy to the institution of new spaces of organization, then constituent processes seem a viable option in the horizon of this transformative and revolutionary transition.[56] This transition should give legal body to all the instituting practices that exist within the Spanish State. Occupied social centres, the PAH, grassroots referendums, vegetable gardens on occupied land, and all kinds of autonomous social initiatives exemplary of other ways of living should be reflected in a new constitution.[57]

What is clear by now is that the frame of the transition to democracy is broken. The territorial conflicts with Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia are going to make it difficult for a new elite-led transition to be hastily carried out. In fact, it seemed that the social question was what would break once and for all the present institutionality of the Spanish State. Now the national question raised in Catalonia seems to have accelerated the process.[58] A constituent process in Catalonia seems like a real possibility. If it happens, it serves as the entry into having to re-constitute the

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[54] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 189.*
[55] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 118.*
[56] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 82.*
[57] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 120.*
[58] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 112.*

Spanish State.[59] In this process we will need to think about whether we want to belong to the Europe of capital or if we want to belong to something different.[60] Everything has to be decided and this is where the narrative of the 99% can converge with the narrative of independence. In that they both seek the right to decide.[61] The key is to apply the right to decide not just to the issues of territory and nationality, but to make it into a transversal right that allows people to decide about everything that affects them.[62]

Learning to recognize transition initiatives that are already in motion amongst us is important. Understanding that they are everywhere and are relevant to democracy, economics and our ways of life. The transition of 1978 was an agreement to move from a dictatorship to a formal democracy. The process in motion now is deeper and far more radical.[63] Allowing elites to steer the social discontent towards a process that grants just about the right amount of reform to not change much is what has to be avoided.[64] Elites have already shown that their choice is to demonstrate to the population that nothing changes by being on the street. They are seeking to bring people back into the world of institutional representation in an orderly manner.[65]

4. *Moving towards constituent assemblies*

Whether we speak of Spain or of the diverse peoples in the Spanish State, the sovereignty of the people has been lost. In this sense organizing with each other and continuing to build alternatives is of extreme importance. Autonomous and interlinked initiatives for co-existence and sustainability need to expand, multiply and

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[59] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 101.*
[60] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 133.*
[61] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 121.*
[62] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 120.*
[63] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 42.*
[64] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 49.*
[65] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 162.*

be protected. We need to strengthen our connections. Concrete struggles are the fundamental basis and the sum of them gives us the whole.[66] At the right junctures boycotts of different kinds must be contemplated.[67] It would be hard to predict a civil war but we could ask ourselves to what degree are elites willing to hollow-out democracy. Are they going to hollow it out to such a degree that we will need to call it something else in order to refer to it? Will they hollow it out so much as to force us to refer to it as Fascism in order to be intellectually honest?[68]

15M planted a seed of hope. Now we need to be aware of the nurturing needed inside our common spaces.[69] The kinds of changes that are being envisioned take a generation or two to be interiorized in the collective imaginary and become a part of collective practices. Transformations in education, in culture, in the generating of new collective spaces; these processes take time. They are happening, but they do need amplification.[70] In addition, common spaces need to be inviting and inclusive. Common spaces must aspire to generate possibilities for those that come from existing organizations to dialogically co-create new meanings and understandings with those that are not members of organizations and do not aspire to be.[71] From such spaces of confluence new understandings of politics and of being political can emerge. New stories about what it can mean to be political can be narrated. We need to prefigure with our creative dialogues whether and how an institutionality of the commons can be created.[72]

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[66] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 69.*
[67] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 43.*
[68] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 47*
[69] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 67.*
[70] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 65.*
[71] Ibid.
[72] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 82.*

We have entered a juncture from which we are moving from 'conflict-protests' to 'conflict-proposals'.[73] On the institutional front we are going to witness the creation of new political parties, not just in the sense of new brands but new concepts of what a political party is. At the same time old parties are going to reconfigure their discourses. The ideas emanating from civic and civil organizations are going to be co-opted.[74] The co-opting of these discourses will go hand-in-hand with the destruction of those spaces from within which self-organization and mutual aid are gestating.[75] We are all seeing that whatever happens, no matter how serious it is, little changes and few people resign from office. These are the seeds of hatred being planted. Those in movement are channelling this well. Nevertheless, those that feel alone and abandoned and whom today are hiding at home out of desperation could one day burn the bank.[76] Spain is currently a Failed State, yet, we are children of the regime of 1978 and in this sense it is difficult to find an exit.[77]

There is no extreme fascist force as powerful as the Greek Golden Dawn in the Spanish State.[78] This is because the right-wing PP with fascist roots is still governing. When that changes, there are already forces in Spain picking up strength to play the role of a Golden Dawn like party-movement of the extreme right.[79] The emergency is extreme and we would benefit from re-thinking some of the narratives that have placed us in the centre and not the periphery. We are the global south not the global north. If we acknowledge this, we can learn from those spaces that have organized as

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[73] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 125.*
[74] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 120.*
[75] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 110.*
[76] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 31.*
[77] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 13.*
[78] For more information on Golden Dawn see Ellinas, A. (2013) 'The Rise of Golden Dawn: The New Face of the Far Right in Greece', in *Southern European Society and Politics*, Volume 18, Issue 4, pages 543-565.
[79] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 120.* Some extreme right wing parties in Spain include the following: DN *Democracia Nacional* (National Democracy), Plataforma per Catalunya (Platform for Catalonia), and *España 2000* (Spain 2000).

the global south.[80] We need more unity and coordination between those of us fighting

from southern European states. Join strikes, coordinated occupations and more

extended joint-repertoires along these lines.[81]

Within the Spanish State we need to keep mobilizing. We need to avoid falling

into disillusionment and that sense of defeat that drives people back into the resigned

silence of the home.[82] The more isolated we are the more scared we become.[83] If we

can all do our own experience whilst identifying with a collective imaginary, we

might change this oppressive system. Clearly, that which is already established is not

able to offer solutions to our multiple crises; hence, the need for constituent

assemblies as a humane way out of this paradox.[84] Anticipation, together with a deep

and honest recovery of memory will be necessary if this process is to avoid the fate of

the country's 1978 transition from dictatorship to democracy.[85]

5. *Nonviolence and violence moving forward*

As the situation in the Spanish State continues to deteriorate some people are

figuring out exit routes out of the country.[86] There is a deep awareness about where

we are politically, economically and socially. People understand that repression can

be overcome only if there is a large amount of support and individuals are willing to

assume shared responsibilities.[87] After thirty years of a 'silent majority' people had

stopped attending demonstrations because they feared being attacked by police. 15M

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[80] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 137.*
[81] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 28.*
[82] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 133.*
[83] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 162.*
[84] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 208.* The term paradox is used here in the sense that David Bohm suggests in his 'On Dialogue'. Our multiple crises are not problems that can be systematically solved, but paradoxes in that they are to be approached through relationality. Paradoxes have no discernible solutions, and new approaches are required. Sustained attention to the paradox is most important. See Bohm, D. (2004) *On Dialogue*, New York: Routledge, page xxiii .
[85] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 155.*
[86] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 45.*
[87] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 189.*

changed that and opened possibilities. The police should be fearful about hitting

people, and people should respond to their violence in the best way possible.[88] There

is clearly a preference towards a new societal pact stemming out of nonviolent

agonisms rather than violent antagonisms. Nevertheless, many believe that it will be

difficult to reach a nonviolent pact if things continue along the current path.[89] The

spirit inspiring protests and constructive programs is a nonviolent spirit. However, a

lot of what looks like nonviolence is really absolute fear of the state and its use of

force.[90] Yet, as fear is being lost, in many spaces nonviolence as a moral position

useful for revealing the wrongs of state institutions has slowly given way to

discussions into an array of possible and legitimate actions.[91]

A few years ago, energy, anger, frustration, and discontent, congregated

around and with*in* 15M encampments. They materialized into consensus-based and

open popular assemblies. A new emergence of such collective energies can be of a

different kind and could be far less constructive.[92] There will be appropriations of

basic necessities and lootings in supermarkets. What will most likely happen is that

just like we are normalizing the occupation of empty homes, we will normalize

actions in which self-organizing groups seize first necessity products from large

supermarket chains.[93] It is not only possible, but also likely, given the harsh conditions

being imposed on millions of citizens. There will be an increase in violence towards

property. There will be outbreaks of violence towards the police. Not all will contain

their nerves. Despite this, not many people are creating weapons to go out and kill.

Although it is true that there are certain sectors building their arsenals by learning to

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[88] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 162.*
[89] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 13.*
[90] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 184.*
[91] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 134.*
[92] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 131.*
[93] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 192.*

cook nitro-glycerine,[94] the violence we are likely to see will be the violence of the poor, the violence of desperation. Not everyone can put up one's hands and shout '*estas son nuestras armas'* (these are our weapons).[95] The struggle waged by those working within networks of mutual aid will be to support the creation of constructive alternatives in order to avoid everything descending into absolute nihilism.[96]

15M closed the violence-nonviolence debate and made it difficult for the discussion to be ongoing.[97] Yet, without advocating for violence as the right approach there are clearly different *demoi* interested in maintaining the debate open. Suggesting in their arguments that we cannot be so monolithically inclined towards nonviolence.[98] From certain spaces within the 15M climate individuals feel that certain traditional forms of struggle like barricades have lost legitimacy with the closing of the violence-nonviolence debate. In this sense, different voices advocate for their reappearance in a recomposed and rearticulated manner. In order to help in our empowerment as people.[99]

6. *Work outside of official institutionality*

Collective work towards a change of paradigm is both being done with*in* official institutions and from outside of them. Those most interested in working from outside do not seem too keen on creating strong organizational structures. There seems to be more interest in thinking of creating consensus-based structures suitable

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[94] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 45*. Since the 19th century nitro-glycerine has been used as an active ingredient in the manufacture of explosives, specially dynamite.

[95] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 139. Estas son nuestras armas* is a popular slogan being shouted during the moments in which police is attacking nonviolent protestors. It popularized during the 15M encampments.

[96] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 130*. In this part of the dialogue this discussant used the concept of absolute nihilism. Prior to his passing away I had the pleasure of meeting Jonathan Schell at an informal workshop held at the London School of Economics. In that workshop he used the same term in a similar sense.

[97] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 155*.

[98] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 60*.

[99] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 162*.

for collective strategic planning.[100] 15M showed that it was possible to popularize the use of assembly-based organizing. Now there is a drive toward extending and generalizing these practices as a way of life.[101] Some groups are organizing citizen-led assemblies that will take place at polling stations during regional and national elections.[102] Others are working on extending their assemblies by planning to occupy institutional buildings and bank branches; to hold symbolic peoples assemblies.[103]

There is strong support for occupying abandoned properties, land, offices, factories and schools. A push aimed at building parallel networks of alternative economies and self-run, self-managed spaces.[104] There is a growing network of individuals looking to collectivize factories.[105] There are initiatives working towards metropolitan strikes, figuring out how to paralyze cities by working from inside the neighbourhoods.[106] Networked initiatives, that give legal and emotional support to people that refuse to pay protest related administrative fines are growing and becoming very efficient.[107] Campaigns with thousands of people demanding food outside of supermarket chains are being planned.[108]

Activist groups are aware of the fact that a run on the bank could be disastrous for the Spanish economy. Nevertheless, needing to find creative ways to pressure banks into changing their practices, activist groups are working on creating citizen-led platforms of savers. These platforms aim to threaten banks with withdrawing savings on specific dates unless particular demands are met. If these platforms fill up with

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[100] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 69.*
[101] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 8.*
[102] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 62.*
[103] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 89.*
[104] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 8.*
[105] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 36.*
[106] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 25.*
[107] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 46.*
[108] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 26.*

millions of people a new form of pressure will be exerted on banks.[109] On a similar note, different groups are working collectively on exploring the legal and financial consequences of mortgage holders joining hands and collectively withholding mortgage payments on given months. The idea as with coordinated bank withdrawals is that millions of people not paying their mortgage at the same time can create a strain on the banks and thus force changes in banking practices.[110] Finally, also related to the relationship between civic citizens and banks, different collectives are exploring ways of building citizen-led, civic-shareholder platforms that might creatively pressure banks to 'commonize'.[111]

In the meantime, political, financial and corporate figures identified by different groups as responsible for the political, economic and social crisis, will continue to be ridiculed in public; and in proximity to their homes. This is becoming more common and it is likely to continue to spread.[112] At the same time, constructive programs will continue. Things like self-organized, self-financed pedagogic missions by activists travelling around the country from cities to small villages. Exchanging practices, co-learning, and co-creating in networks of co-responsibility.[113] These kinds of practices will continue to expand without forgetting preparations for worse case scenarios. Certain groups within the 15M climate are working on thinking through what citizen-organized strategic plans can look like for self-organizing crisis refugees. As the number of victims of this economic, political and social crisis (institutionalized fraud) continues to grow, mutual aid has consolidated as the preferred approach

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[109] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 2.*
[110] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 38.*
[111] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 66.*
[112] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 4.*
[113] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 67.*

amongst those more focused on transforming the Spanish State through working outside of official institutionality.[114]

7. *Work* with*in official institutionality*

Amongst those most interested in working for a societal transformation with*in* official institutions, there is broad consensus that 15M has shown the failure of the country's current representative institutions of power. Nevertheless, there is a sense that without alternative political parties the existing parties (beneficiaries of the pacts of the transition to democracy) will simply alternate in order to keep the country under their control.[115] The majority of those from within the 15M climate that I interviewed, and who share this view of preferring to work for change with*in* official institutions, align with those more interested in working outside of them on a very important point. Predominantly, within the 15M climate most individuals are seeking a radical transformation of the existing Spanish State. This said, for those whose main focus is on working with*in* official institutions, revolution is understood as an escalated process of radical reforms. Radical reforms, which once political power is attained can be carried out with more intensity.[116]

From this preference of working with*in* official institutions, there is an idea that a new political party or a multiplicity of new parties has to be created in order to win the elections into office and reclaim the institutions from within. Once in power, in a top-down or power-over move, the new leaders (a modern version of the wise philosopher kings) will return sovereignty to the people through new constituent

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[114] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 15.*
[115] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 162.*
[116] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 82.*

processes.[117] Because from within the 15M climate there has been a rejection of existing party structures, the task of organic intellectuals (in a Gramscian sense) is to re-channel the voice of the people via a vanguard that attains hegemony and sweeps into power in the elections.[118] This vanguard is a true representative of the downtrodden majority, the 99%, and thus reconstructs the state by balancing it in benefit of the oppressed. Those most vocal in defending this view are the ones preparing to sweep into power.

Taking state power will require a broad progressive front. In some circles, this broad front is thought about in the context of the nation state. In others, people are thinking about it in a Southern European key.[119] Nevertheless, it is almost always thought about as a convergence of social movements, political parties, trade unions, NGO's, citizen candidacies and sectorial tides. Down-up initiatives serve as inspiration. What a Spanish version of Syriza can look like is a question many are asking.[120] The premise underlying the thinking behind the plans of those most interested in transformation with*in* official institutions is that the less you demand from people the more massive the response will be. In this sense, getting people to vote is going to be much easier than getting them to occupy parliament.[121]

The fears or concerns being suggested by those keen on this approach, is that unless there is this broad front the vote on the left is going to be fragmented and the right will win the elections. In this sense, this front is presented as an absolute necessity. An emergency response that requires millions of disillusioned Spaniards to trust a new group of representatives. These new representatives will only be there to

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[117] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 31.*
[118] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 134.*
[119] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 124.*
[120] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 9.*
[121] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 11.*

change the rules of the game. They will allow the people to decide their future by collectively deciding how to confront the crisis.[122] The call these organic intellectuals make to those citizens most mobilized is a request for aid in their rise to power. A centralized power found within the vertical institutional structures of the Spanish State. Their ultimate thesis being that although mobilization, self-organization and mutual aid are important, nothing can change without taking control of the state.[123]

8. *Working from outside and* with*in official institutionality*

There are people within the 15M climate that prefer to work outside of official institutions and others who prefer to work with*in.* Nevertheless, in the 15M that I encountered during interviewing, the majority of people with whom I dialogued, held a position moving forward that combined both work outside and work with*in* official institutions. 'One foot inside, one foot outside' was a frequently repeated idea. People will continue to make requests to institutions and will seek to change them. This, however, will be combined with the auto-constitution of new ones when necessary. Whilst requests for rights will continue to be made to official institutions, if they are not given people will claim them by disobeying.[124]

Whilst there is broad support for working with*in* official institutions as strategies are being thought, re-thought, understood and re-understood, numerous concerns are being raised. Certain voices from within the 15M climate express concern that electoral logics divide what on the streets was converging. From this

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[122] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 24.*
[123] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 26.*
[124] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 110.*

position, the multiplicity of voices working together outside of the electoral arena get divided once individuals are forced to select particular parties.[125]

Those currently in power within the Spanish State have been adamant about individuals being 15M needing to articulate an option to enter institutions if they want to make any changes. Although in 15M many also hold this view, at the same time, there is concern regarding the rigid structures of the current representative system. There is a consciousness that institutional rigidity might force whatever is new and enters the space of official institutions to become old as soon as it has entered.[126] In addition, there is a concern that the collective imaginary regarding elections tends to lead to individuals delegating their responsibilities and decisions to a party structure.[127]

Within 15M individuals are also raising concerns that mobilization will bureaucratize if the temporality of events is marked by the representative calendar. There is a fear that alternative practices will be left aside and that without them we will be unable to creatively overflow current institutional frames.[128] From these positions, the idea seems to be that elections can be important and useful if they are seen as mobilizations. They are part of a broader process. Elections are a form of mobilization, mobilizations are quotidian referendums and the construction of alternatives is constituent in nature.[129] Power is not taken but co-created; it is constructed through relations.[130] In regards to relations, worries are also being raised about the exclusionary nature of the current representative system that excludes those it does not regard as citizens. The concern being that the power-with of being all

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[125] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 111.*
[126] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 199.*
[127] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 5.*
[128] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 162.*
[129] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 2.*
[130] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 162.*

equals can get severely weakened if exclusionary paths are taken without consensus or the proper cares.[131] Finally, the fear does exist amongst many that the institutional path through such a corrupt representative system might have been exhausted. In this sense, there is a worry that all efforts along the representative front might become wasted transformative energy.[132]

Means and ends need to align. Yet, there is a sense of urgency in that most within the 15M climate have come to the conclusion that there is no outside to run to and thus institutions need to be addressed.[133] Perhaps the representative option is not the most attractive, but lesser evils (hopefully allies) have to be voted into power to aid in the transition.[134] Those more comfortable working from the outside need to hold hands with those most comfortable working with*in*.[135] Despite the fact that the current official institutions are thought of by many as being cancerous, most feel that extermination is not the solution and institutions might yet be cured.[136] From the paradox presented so clearly in the slogan *no nos representan* (they do not represent us), two new questions have arisen: How are we going to be represented in official institutions? And, how is the process of representation going to work?[137]

Closing remarks

Overall, this chapter has revealed the tenacity of those being 15M. It has also shown their ability to construct imaginatively and under the guidance of their own temporality. A lot of what was said was enticed by me as dialogue partner asking individuals to dream. I asked them to unblock their minds from conditioned fears

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[131] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 12.*
[132] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 8.*
[133] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 162.*
[134] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 99.*
[135] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 128.*
[136] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 164.*
[137] Stemming from dialogue with *Anonymous 111.*

about what can and cannot be said. I was hoping that they could in this way share with me the deepest and truest essence of their reasons for struggle. The dialogical space became a place from which individuals being 15M could share in detail ideals for the future, frustrations, fears, expectations, and limits. I wanted to know what they really thought was possible. In this approach to the dialogue, I was aiming at facilitating a view into the dreams that comprise the imaginary of the possible that makes 15M what it is. On a personal level I wanted to get from activists a sense of the kinds of thoughts they entertain in their contemplative solitude. In terms of collectives, I was interested in knowing what was being planned and strategized in the most covert spaces of 15M knowledge and practice. As an outcome I have presented these co-constructed dialogues stemming out of my attempt at trying to develop my own ethos of translation. What they reveal are the kinds of ideas and thoughts in the minds of individuals and in assemblies of collectives across the Spanish State.

The history of the present that this chapter has presented has revealed many future-oriented judgements made by 15M sisters. If someone in Spain were to watch mainstream television or read a mainstream newspaper or magazine that person might think that these future-stories told by people being 15M were stories told by 'hopeless optimists'. Nevertheless, to anyone familiar with Spanish mainstream media it is easy to understand why 15M exists, why it has the support that it does, why 15M would need to dream of something different, and why some of the debates regarding what is possible exist. Although it is not within the scope of this essay to present a media analysis to back this statement, in the appendix I do provide a summary of some of the news stories that have flourished in just one year of media analysis (mostly for

2014).[138] What it reveals is that as 15M sisters think and construct alternative worlds on shoestring budgets, the full-force of the state clamps down on them and their efforts and achievements are quickly silenced. Without a doubt, when one studies Spain's social, political and economic situation, one is perhaps inclined to think of 15M sisters as 'hopeless optimists'. Nevertheless, after having spent six month in deep immersion with*in* 15M, my scientific analysis of the situation is very different. When I think of people being 15M that I interviewed, I think that they are eternal optimists who practice magical realism in their way of being. In the same way that Gabriel García Márquez practiced it in his writings.

In *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, García Márquez is not just writing a novel. Prior to this book García Márquez has been a political journalist; he is very much aware of the history of Latin America and of the political, economic and social realities of its post-colonial present. When he writes *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, he presents a philosophical critique of the present. His way of making it accessible is through making it magical. In the multiplicity of his characters he opens doors from which we can open different avenues. The destruction inflicted upon life by 'progress' in the imperialist and capitalist sense, shows itself throughout the novel as a human force running amock. In this sense, García Márquez is a realist. Yet, through his complex character formation and complex interaction between characters he is able to present other human forces. He presents to us other human forces such as human kindness, human gentleness, human care, human love, human compassion, and human awareness of the other as another humanbeing. Through these forces García Márquez

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[138] See appendix (page 318) at the end of this essay for a detailed description of some social, political and economic events as seen through the lens of the mainstream media. The information for this appendix stems from a body of data that includes over 6,000 pages of archived online articles from national and international, mainstream and alternative publications. The archive I have created myself through diligently surveying the press on a daily basis. Although the survey I present is mostly regarding 2014, the archive strated in 2011 and it continues growing today. I chose to focus my attention on 2014 because that year reveals how the state responded to three years of a 15M climate.

is able contrast the crude realism of one century of capitalist explotation with imperial legacies with the magical reality of the complex system of human existence.[139]

The 15M climate presents in the present the actions and dreams of eternal optimists struggling against what they identify as a whole bureaucratized system for human and non-human subjugation. In response to this, the way 15M sisters chose to approach the reality that they see is by being magical in their ways. People being 15M dream about possible futures but they do not dream like hopeless optimists. Instead, their optimism is ridden by the hope of those who are already seeing other Spains happening. They are already co-constructing and co-creating the futures they project and which they hope will inspire others. 15M sisters are not predicting the future for all of us. They are telling us future-stories about the Spains in which they inhabit. These Spains feel different to the Spain of official narratives. In this sense, these alternative visions and futures offer necessary insight if we are to understand what is the phenomenon that calls itself 15M.

The chapter has been shorter in length because less time was dedicated in the interviewing process to speaking about the future. Nevertheless, it contributes to our phenomenology of 15M valuable insights about the 15M sisterhood's long-term thinking and constructing, and its deep grasp of the challenges and opportunities faced by Spanish citizens today. In addition, Boaventura de Sousa Santos claims that critical theory requires both history and anticipation.[140] If this is the case, this chapter together with the previous chapter (chapter three) may present fertile ground from which to

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[139] The purpose of this chapter is not to elucidate on the work of Gabriel García Márquez. I am borrowing the idea of magic realism from novel writing and applying it to thinking about 15M. García Márquez's novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is an exemplar of this kind of text. In this sense, I am just drawing on this novel for the formation of my idea of what it means to be a magical realist.
[140] See footnote one on page 198 of this essay.

develop critical theory pertinent to, and stemming from, a Spanish State imbued by a

15M climate.

The first four chapters of the dissertation have presented a phenomenology of

15M. Following from this, in the next two chapters (chapter five and chapter six) I

show how disclosing the field of 15M through a method of reciprocal elucidation

reveals it to be different to how it is presented by other theoretical frames. The central

concern of the two chapters is the possible establishment of a power-over relationship

between Podemos and 15M by which 15M is instrumentalized by Podemos in order to

win state power. Party-movement Podemos has developed within the 15M climate

and branded itself as an option for potentially bringing a 15M spirit to the Spanish

State's official institutions of political representation. In this sense, certain theroretical

frames that will be discussed in the following chapters present 15M as an instrumental

means to gain political power for Podemos. Nevertheless, my method of reciprocal

elucidation reveals 15M as a confluence of power-with organisations that embodies a

completely different view of relations between means and ends. Namely, means and

ends from within 15M are understood as requiring a constitutive or pre-figurative

relationship of 'being the change'.

– Chapter five –

A mistrustful confluence heading towards a reconstitution of the Spanish State

> "15M is not a body defined by its materiality. One enters and exits 15M, one stays and leaves, comes and goes, and it has given footing, soul and body to multiple things." *Anonymous 44*

Opening Remarks

Spain is going through a national emergency of great magnitude. The country has a history of periods of great turbulence. Throughout history, this turbulence has been overcome by multiple *demoi* through mutual aid and cooperation. Mutual aid and cooperation have traditionally been persecuted. Yet, throughout the country's multiple nations, and throughout at least the last one-century and a half, organizations and modes of being anchored in horizontality and nonviolence have survived and flourished. Chapter three of this dissertation revealed this reality.

In May of 2011, the emergency the country faces became 'common-knowledge' thanks to the work of 15M. Before 15M Spanish citizens were struggling to grasp the severity of the emergency. For four years now, multiple individuals being 15M across the Spanish State, acting in concert, have been at the forefront of a struggle aimed at overcoming the present political, economic and social dangers faced by Spanish citizens. The work of 15M individuals (not exclusively, but certainly as a rich and ample contribution) has been opening up debates and prying into spaces that were traditionally closed to public discussion.[1] Through these turbulent four years, Spain can be said to have existed within what can be best described as a 15M climate. Imbued in this climate, people have been acting in concert, seeking confluence and attempting to take control of their own fate. This they have done in response to what they precieve as the pillaging of the 'common-wealth' of Spanish citizens.

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[1] The work of 15M individuals was clearly reflected by the self-descriptions people being 15M offered in chapters one and two of this thesis.

From within this turbulent space, following the 15M encampments and almost three years of mobilizations imbued by a 15M spirit, January of 2014 began with the appearance into the representative arena of a new political formation called *Podemos* (We can). Political science professor, Pablo Iglesias, led Podemos. In one day, aided by his popularity as a talk show guest in mainstream television stations and as a host of his own political show, Iglesias was able to collect 50,000 signatures in order to lead a "popular and open candidature" that would run in the European elections. Podemos presented a manifesto entitled: 'Making a move: Transforming indignation into political change'.[2] Since then Podemos has won sits in the European parliament; and in the October 2014 municipal elections although not standing directly, it supported local grassroots candidacies that won numerous town halls and seats in regional governments.[3]

Due to the fact that Podemos is gaining such prominence and is doing so very fast, it seems important to analyse it within the context of the four years of mobilization following the appearance of 15M. For this reason, in this chapter I attempt to critically analyse the phenomenon of entering the space of institutional representation through Podemos and within the context of a continuing 15M climate. My interviewing process in 2013, revealed how discussions within the 15M climate were prefiguring the creation of a party-movement of some kind. This is clearly portrayed by chapters one, two and four of this essay. Following from this, this chapter reflects on how the rise of the party-movement Podemos relates to 15M and the 15M climate.

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[2] Vargas, J. (2014) Pablo Iglesias consigue en un día los 50.000 apoyos que pedía para seguir adelante con Podemos, Publico.es (18/01/2014).
[3] The most notable of these being Guanyem Barcelona, the citizen platform led by anti-evictions activist Ada Colau in Barcelona and Ahora Madrid, led by ex-judge Manuela Carmela, which won town halls in Barcelona and Madrid respectively.

There exists a discourse arising out of Podemos supporters using a Gramscian imaginary to construct their understandings of 15M and the subsequent rise in Spain of party-movement Podemos. From this frame, 15M is viewed instrumentally as a means to gain political power and criticism is made of horizontal political practices being all talk and no action. This imaginary has gained a strong foothold in the Spanish and European left, as Podemos continues in its struggle to 'capture' (using language often used by the leaders of Podemos) the power of the institutions of representation of the state. Nevertheless, through my method of reciprocal elucidation, I am able to disclose the field of 15M (the phenomenon) in a way that shows it to be different from the way 15M appears in this frame. Aided by this method of reciprocal elucidation, in this essay I am able to present 15M as a political phenomenon in its own right that is overlooked by framings of 15M stemming from within this Gramscian imaginary. In addition, through this approach to 15M I am able to give another interpretation of Podemos, as potentially giving rise to a relationship of subordination (power-over) rather than a democratic relationship of equality (power-with). Podemos seems to be hijacking the process that had been picking up pace within the 15M climate. In this sense, there is perhaps a careless rush among leftist intellectuals to endorse Podemos without really realizing the potential losses, violences, and erasures that may be at stake.

When intellectuals work within state-centric research frameworks, as is the case with those defending the rise of Podemos from within a Gramscian imaginary, there is a tendency to reconstruct movements like 15M in a way that conceals the lived experience of 15M. This chapter aims in this sense to offer a different reading of 15M and Podemos as revealed by my method of reciprocal elucidation. I attempt this by presenting four sections. The *first* section of this chapter, 'Different approaches to

understanding the 15M-Podemos relationship', discusses this Gramascian imaginary and presents a different frame suggested by James Tully. Following my interviewing process I find Tully's frame much more helpful when trying to understand the relationship between Podemos and the 15M climate. The *second* section, 'Institutional political representation and civic-civil agonisms', deepens our understanding of the Tully frame for two kinds of citizenship (civic and civil) in a manner which can be helpful in our elucidations on the field of 15M and the rise of Podemos. The *third* section, 'The rise of Podemos', engages the vast literature that has developed in Spain around the rise of party-movement Podemos by members of Podemos, by individuals being 15M and by academic commentators. In this section I discuss in great detail how the rise of Podemos has been perceived from within the 15M climate. Finally, the *fourth* section, 'Podemos: A War of Position and the rise of a condottiere', reveals how a careful reading of Antonio Gramsci warns against precisely the kind of unequeal and authoritarian relationship (charismatic Condottiere) that state-centric theories discussed in the first section of this chapter uncritically enable. Considering the fact that most pro-Podemos theorists ground their analysis in Antonio Gramsci in one way or another, this is a valuable contribution.

The value of chapter as a whole is in the fact that it addresses a body of literature on horizontality, populism, the rise of verticality and the co-optation of the power relations into a relationship of subordination (power-over) rather than a democratic relationship of equality (power-with). Through the chapter, the mistrustful confluences that have been developing between civil and civic citizens around the issue of official institutional representation will be presented.

Different approaches to understanding the Podemos-15M relationship

Much of the criticism of Podemos in mainstream debate has come in regards to its populist positions. Nevertheless, for some inspired by the work of Ernesto Laclau, it seems reasonable to cautiously accept the populism of Podemos. It is understood as a viable political option for attaining institutional power in the current juncture faced by people in the Spanish State.

According to Laclau, despite the fact that a new institutionalism brought forth through a populist party will not break with the old institutionalism, it might compensate it with practices of popular power.[4] In this sense, expectations of change generated by the irruption of Podemos in the institutional arena are understandable. Nevertheless, the rise of this new party should be carefully scrutinized considering the fact that numerous actors from within 15M have been tirelessly working on generating confluence towards the articulation of a collective option that could enter institutions of representation. It is these attempts at confluence stemming from within a 15M climate that have made possible the irruption of Podemos in the institutional arena. In this sense, hearing some of these voices is a valuable contribution towards addressing the main question of this essay: *What is the phenomenon that calls itself 15M?* In their approach to Podemos and to the broader question of representation they reveal how the phenomenon that calls itself 15M addresses the question of political representation in the Spanish State.

Chantal Mouffe,[5] in her defence of agonistic confrontation as a necessary condition of vibrant democracies, counterpoises two different ways of envisioning radical politics. On the one hand, she speaks of a strategy of 'withdrawal from',

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[4] Ibid.

[5] CITSEE Research Project (22/06/2013) *'A vibrant democracy needs agonistic confrontation' - An interview with Chantal Mouffe*. See online: http://www.citsee.eu/interview/vibrant-democracy-needs-agonistic-confrontation-interview-chantal-mouffe

whose most prominent defenders she suggests are Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri[6].

On the other hand, she speaks of 'engagement with' as her own understanding about

how to be radical in politics in the western democratic context. Mouffe describes

'withdrawal from' as a position that understands being political as not engaging with

official institutions. Existing institutions cannot be changed, therefore, assemblies of

peoples must organize, and "try democracy in presence, in act."[7]

According to Mouffe, in 15M there are people "that express total rejection to

any kind of representation all together and yearn for a society reconciled with itself

through direct democracy [withdrawal from]."[8] Yet, she points out, that this position

is by no means the typical one held by those being 15M. As she puts it: "To present

all of the outrage as being the establishment of a democracy beyond representation is

to read these movements in a very unilateral way."[9] For Mouffe not only is there a lot

of people within 15M thinking about representation (engagement with), but in

addition she thinks that unless this step is made neoliberalism cannot really be

challenged. This is how Mouffe presents her observations:

> "Movements have helped to raise important issues and this can hopefully motivate people to
>
> call for an alternative, but this is only the beginning, to effectively transform power relations
>
> the new consciousness that arises out of those protests requires institutional channels."[10]

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[6] Interesting to note how Mouffe is placing Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt in the 'withdrawal from' approach to institutions when both Hardt and Negri are co-signers with Mouffe and others, of a document giving international support to Podemos.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Mouffe, C. (2013) *How to Interpret the Recent Protest Movements?: An Agonistic Approach*, at the 6th Subversive Festival: "The Utopia of Democracy" (06/05/2013). See online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4sWK2KRhBjo

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

I think the choice of the terms 'withdrawal from' and 'engagement with' exposes Mouffe's state-centric assumptions. I think in this sense that they limit our understandings of what 15M is and how it relates to Podemos. What I mean by this is that such terms in the way that Mouffe is using them presuppose that representative politics is primary and thus to not engage in it is to 'withdraw from' this primary site. Whereas 'engaging with' means that we are addressing the primary site of politics. According to Mouffe, these movements raise important issues, but the real political work begins when the representative option is addressed. This we can see in the quote mentioned above which suggests that after raising important issues, protest requires institutional channels. However, at least for the case of Spain and 15M, as the previous chapters of the thesis have demonstrated, nothing could be further from the truth. If one is to move around and orient themselves from the practices of 15M, one sees another world of political engagement. A world of direct self-government and mutual aid that in the Spanish State goes back at least one century and a half. As the first four chapters have shown, currently in Spain this alternative is experiencing a renaissance and is doing so whilst doing the work on the ground.

Borrowing Mouffe's terminology momentarily, what I have experienced whilst being within the 15M climate, is that people adopting a 'withdrawal from' attitude towards institutional representation entered cautiously 15M spaces. In fact, within the early days of the encampments they distanced themselves because they did not consider 15M to be radical enough. Those withdrawing from the official system (alter-system people), considered 15M as a reformist and/or naive space. They maintained their support to 15M but from a distance. In this sense, we see a lot of practices that are being learnt and understood by individuals being 15M that are directly stemming from shared experiences with those individuals practicing a

'withdrawal from' (in the Mouffe sense) type of politics. Nevertheless, it is clear that the majority of 'withdrawal from' networks of autonomous people that are widespread throughout the nations comprising the Spanish State, and which are coming from long traditions inside these territories, did not, and do not identify as being 15M. Instead, they sympathize and collaborate with (engage-with) civic and civil citizens working from within the 15M climate.[11]

In 15M, individuals are 'engaging with' in the Mouffe sense, in that they are addressing the question of institutional political representation. However, they are also 'engaging with' in a much broader sense. For this reason, I find more useful for understanding 15M, the 15M climate and Podemos' relationship with them, James Tully's distinction between civic and civil citizens. When thinking of those contributing from within these spaces, this distinction is very valuable in that it reveals the field of engagement within the 15M climate in a much more accurate manner.

In 'Freedom and Democracy in an Imperial Context', Tully refers to 'citizen participation' as "individual and collective engagement in and over the practices of governance in which humans find themselves."[12] He then goes on to describe how two types of citizens, civil and civic actually participate. Civil citizen participation he describes in the following manner:

> "Civil citizens participate by exercising their communicative powers in elections, political
>
> parties, deliberation in official public spheres and civil disobedience with the hopes of

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[11] It is important to mention that these autonomous networks do not feel as if they are 'withdrawing from', instead they see themselves as 'engaging with' different spaces of the political.

[12] Tully, J. (2014) 'Responses', in *Freedom and Democracy in an Imperial Context: Dialogues with James Tully*, edited by Robert Nichols and Jakeet Singh, London: Routledge, pages 223-224. For a lengthy discussion on this issue of how civic citizens participate in civil representative institutions and democratize them from within, see also James Tully's response to David Owen in Tully, J. (2014) *On Global Citizenship*: *James Tully in Dialogue*, London: Bloomsbury.

exercising influence power on elected representatives who exercise governmental power through legislative deliberation and lawmaking."[13]

Civic citizen participation on the other hand, Tully argues, happens when citizens "discuss and exercise powers of self-organization and self-government themselves (citizen-citizen relationships) prior to any separation of ruler and ruled or governor and citizen in representative practices of government."[14] According to Tully, the relationship between civic citizens and representation is as follows:

> "[A]ctivities of reasoning and acting together provide the ground of civic relationships of representative government in which citizens conditionally delegate some of their powers of self-government to representatives (citizen-governor relationships). These dialogical relationships of representation extend civic practices of democratic governance from the local to the state-centred and global. The relationships within institutions of modern representative government are acceptable insofar as they enable the exercise of civic freedom within and on them."[15]

In regards to the question of engaging with official institutions of political representation, the kind of 'engagement with' Mouffe refers to, there are multiple views and approaches presently engaged in dialogue. What is clear nevertheless, is that individuals being 15M are revealing the agonisms that arise between civic and civil citizens as they congregate and construct alternatives together. Within 15M the question is not about whether to engage or withdraw, but about why to engage, how to engage, whom to engage, and when to engage.

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[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid.

What the 15M climate has helped crystalize through my method of reciprocal elucidation, is a dialogical space in which and through which, civic and civil citizens are amongst many things collectively constructing new understandings on how to engage with official institutions. How should these institutions be treated in order to have a "real democracy now"? How important should their role be? When should they be engaged and why? These are the kinds of questions being asked. Individuals within the 15M climate are constructing alternatives, and these alternatives also address the institutional question. The main difference between civic and civil citizens working from within a 15M climate is the importance of institutional political representation in relation to all other socio-political activities. How representation needs to work is a second major point of discussion.

During the first weeks of 15M encampments millions of people across Spain defied electoral laws by congregating in public squares on the day of reflection prior to the municipal elections. Yet, they were unable to reach consensus on whether to recommend voting for alternative parties or abstaining from voting all together. From day one of 15M, the unresolved question of how to deal with institutions has been at the centre of the dialogue in public squares, virtual meeting spaces, and assemblies of different collectives, parties and movements. I would argue that the spirit of 15M has always been one of 'engagement-with' in the way that Mouffe describes this type of politics but also in a broader sense, as engaging with each other, with ourselves, and with all other living beings.

For Mouffe it is clear that 15M is an expression of the crisis of representative democracy. Nevertheless, what she is suggesting is that we ask ourselves whether it is representative democracy in whatever form that cannot work or the crisis is of this

existing expression of representative democracy?[16] I think this a very important question that we should entertain and which is certainly being asked within the 15M climate and within Podemos and other party-movements or confluences of the kind. This said, I do think much work still needs to be done in desclosing the field of 15M in relation to institutional political representation.

Institutional political representation and civic-civil agonisms

The questions mentioned above have raised to the surface certain complex agonisms that have generated fissures between civic and civil approaches toward representation. Within the 15M climate, these overlapping traditions are working through these in a dialogical manner. Some of these agonisms become apparent through reciprocal elucidation, and in this section I present the two I consider most important. The *first* agonism arises in regards to how the two traditions understand the way in which representation should be generated and should operate. The *second* agonism, relates to how each tradition understands the role of official representative institutions.

Regarding the *first* agonism (how should representation be generated and how should it operate?), the views of civic citizens and civil citizens within the 15M climate that I was engaged with*in* differ in the following manner. Civic citizens within this climate feel that representation should always be generated and should always operate in a horizontal manner. In this sense, in its most radical articulation, civic approaches within the 15M climate cannot envision any power structure which is not horizontal in nature (power-with). In other words, 15M civic approaches construct

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[16] CITSEE Research Project (22/06/2013) *'A vibrant democracy needs agonistic confrontation' - An interview with Chantal Mouffe*. See online: http://www.citsee.eu/interview/vibrant-democracy-needs-agonistic-confrontation-interview-chantal-mouffe

power structures through which decisions are always made via assemblies. These assemblies always move forward via absolute consensus. Even if someone is chosen to be a representative for particular issues, the role is always revocable through horizontal decision-making mechanisms. For these reasons, within the 15M climate one can quickly observe civic citizens encouraging anonymity and the constant rotation of visible figures. One also notices how although seeking to engage with the representative question, civic citizens within the 15M climate seek to change the way in which representation is approached. They do this through setting example via their engagement with existing representative institutions, and seeking to enact the changes they want to see in the institutions with which they are engaging.

In regards to this *first* agonism, civil citizens within the 15M climate understand representation in a very different manner to their civic brothers and sisters. Civil citizens are keen to incorporate into the arena of representation mechanisms that offer spaces for collective discussion and decision-making. Nevertheless, they seem always keen to take for granted that representation is central to the process of being political and that verticality is always required in order to attain political power. In this sense, it is often the case that within the 15M climate civil citizens are demanding visible leaders and are keen to promote these leaders into positions of power (power-over). In this manner, civil citizens being 15M hope their leaders will steer a winning process via traditional institutions of representation. From this civil approach (as I have observed it), it seems fair to say that civil citizens are primarily concerned with winning hegemony and attaining political power via elections. This is how they feel they can institute transformations that are deemed necessary in benefit of the rest of the population. This of course, is being done by civil citizen-leaders in a 'benevolent power-over' manner, instead of via the horizontal and 'nonviolent power-with' ways

enacted by fellow civic citizens. Civic citizens on the other hand, through their engagement with institutions attempt to transform the institutions and the process of representation (because for civic citizens means and ends need to align).

The *second* agonism that civic and civil citizens face, as they attempt to hold hands in order to engage with official institutions of representation revolves around the importance given to the official institutional process. For civil citizens, the institutional form of modern representative civil citizenship reveals the central way through which citizens and governors relate. In order for power relations to be altered, citizen attempts to transform society must be channelled through official institutions of representation. Chantal Mouffe's words quoted in page 232 of this chapter, offer a clear example of how civil citizens understand the centrality of institutions of representation. For Mouffe, movements that are not articulated through institutional channels are only the beginning of the process required to transform relations of power. As she puts it, "to effectively transform power relations the new consciousness that arises out of… protests requires institutional channels."[17]

In contrast to this view, for civic citizens this centrality of institutions of representation does not exist. Instead, institutions of representation are part of a multiplicity of interlinked and/or parallel processes. James Tully describes this idea in a clear and helpful manner. This is how he puts it:

> "Civic citizenship discloses the field in a much broader and pluralistic manner… The
> institutional form of modern representative civil citizenship appears as one type of governor-
> citizen relationship among many types, and even here civic citizens have a different history
> and representation of these institutions."[18]

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[17] See page 232 of this chapter.
[18] Ibid.

These two core agonisms presented above, are at the centre of relations between civic and civil citizens within the 15M climate. The agonisms surface as civic and civil citizens attempt to hold hands and address the question of institutional representation. Working together is therefore not a simple task but their relation is agonistic and not antagonistic. Civic and civil citizens do not see each other as enemies that need to be destroyed but as foe that must co-exist and co-operate in order to improve collectively their situation. Nevertheless, because of these agonisms it becomes difficult to build relationships of trust. On the one hand civil citizens within the 15M climate 'mistrust' the capacity or/and good judgment of those they are seeking to represent. On the other, civic citizens 'mistrust' the goodwill and/or vertical strategy of those seeking to be representatives[19].

The rise of Podemos

This section surveys how this agonostic mistrust between civic and civil citizens is reflected in the rise of Podemos and its relationality to 15M. It does this by working through the rise of Podemos chronologically from its inception to the time of writing as presented by numerous individuals working from within the 15M climate. This will offer a sense of how Podemos' populism and power-over methods

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[19] In a recent paper called 'Trust, Mistrust and Distrust in Diverse Societies', James Tully describes 'mistrust', in a manner that is useful. Tully's explanations are useful in order to describe the agonistic mistrust existing between civic and civil citizens engaging the question of institutional representation from within the 15M climate. According to Tully, whereas 'distrust' implies lack of trust, 'mistrust' is best defined in the following terms: ''Mistrust' is like 'misjudgement', 'misunderstand', 'misplace', 'misinterpret', 'misrepresent' and so on. It says that the partner appears to be untrustworthy, but it also implies the qualification that this judgment might be misplaced or based on a misunderstanding, and even that the person making the judgment hopes this is the case (for example, that the partner judged was acting out of character or in circumstances the judge does not know about). Even if the judgment is correct, the voicing of the judgment of mistrust is a conciliatory invitation to change: it leaves open and encourages the possibility that the partner judged will change his or her ways." See Tully, J. (2014) *Trust, Mistrust and Distrust in Diverse Societies* (unpublished paper), page 43.

are received by people working from within this climate. The rise of Podemos is subsequent to my interviewing trip around Spain. In this sense, information for this section stems from media and academic commentary by many of the voices that anonymously agreed to be intervieweed for this study. The section begins by revealing activities and dialogues that pre-figured the launch of Podemos.

Throughout 2013 and 2014, in some of the most mobilized spaces of the Spanish *demos* one of the central questions being asked revolved around how to deal with the issue of representation. Throughout this period a myriad of creative civic and civil initiatives, acts of disobedience, resistance and creation have flourished and have been creatively multiplying. We have witnessed numerous acts by the *Plataforma Stop Subidas Transporte* (Stop fare-hikes Platform), paralyzing the metro system in Barcelona.[20] We have seen patients in Barcelona's Bellvitge Hospital locked in their rooms in order to paralyze the closure of the centre.[21] We have seen early attempts at factory occupations inspired by experiences in Argentina. For example, in the Galician city of Ourense in 2013, workers at T-Solar were able to maintain a factory occupied for 129 days until a judge ordered their eviction.[22] At the same time, civic and civil citizens pressuring for change through the legal system have won important victories in the courts. In June of 2014, the country witnessed the first-ever sentence demanding that a bank return a reposed home to its owners because of abusive clauses

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[20] Solé Altimira, O. (2014) La plataforma Stop Subidas Transporte paraliza todas las líneas de metro, Elpais.com (29/01/2014). See online: http://ccaa.elpais.com/ccaa/2014/01/29/catalunya/1391028534_802512.html

[21] Kaosenlared.net (22/07/2014) *Ya son trece pacientes en Bellvitge que se atrincheran en sus camas para impedir el cierre de las plantas.* See online: http://2014.kaosenlared.net/component/k2/92558-barcelona-ya-son-trece-pacientes-en-bellvitge-que-se-atrincheran-en-sus-camas-para-impedir-el-cierre-de-las-plantas

[22] Cúneo, M. (2014) *Fábricas recuperadas en España, ¿por qué no?*, Diagonalperiodico.net (14/08/2014). See online: https://www.diagonalperiodico.net/global/23617-fabricas-recuperadas-espana-por-no.html

in the mortgage contract.[23] Also in June, another judge ordered that Bankia return 41,000 euros to an investor because of the bank's spreading of false information during its initial public offering of 2011.[24] As numerous experts have suggested, these court cases open the way for millions of people to potentially recover their savings and homes.

From January of 2012 until August of 2014, in Madrid alone 9,629 demonstrations had taken place.[25] The situation in Spain has been like a continuous march that began and will go on forever unless things change for the better. Mutual aid outside of official institutions has kept millions of people afloat as the Spanish State accelerated its destruction. Yet, the challenge has been to figure out how to approach institutions of representation through the practice of mutual aid. That is, with mutual aid being implicitly 'power-with' each other, how can mutual aid organizations 'engage-with' an electoral system that explicitly presents a 'power-over' form of institutionalization? How can mutual aid be genuinely represented in official institutions? With these questions at the forefront of collective efforts, from November of 2013 until December of 2014 magnanimous strides have been made by millions of citizens working together in order to develop a coherent approach to the question of institutional representation.

Even as early as September of 2013, José Luis Centella, secretary general of the PCE *Partido Comunista Español* (Spanish Communist Party) warned that

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[23] Lamarea.com (16/06/2014) *Un juez de Barcelona ordena la primera devolución de vivienda a una desahuciada.* See online: http://www.lamarea.com/2014/06/16/un-juez-de-barcelona-ordena-la-primera-devolucion-de-vivienda-una-desahuciada/

[24] Infolibre.es (30/06/2014) *Un juez de Mataró abre la vía civil para que miles de inversores puedan recuperar el dinero que enterraron en acciones de Bankia.* See online: http://www.infolibre.es/noticias/politica/2014/06/30/un_juez_mataro_abre_via_para_recuperar_los_000_millones_sepultados_salida_bolsa_bankia_19008_1012.html

[25] Abc.es (11/08/2014) *Descienden un 38 por ciento las manifestaciones en Madrid.* See online: http://www.abc.es/madrid/20140810/abci-descenso-manifestaciones-madrid-201408091647.html

monarchic bipartisanship would attempt to save itself at any cost.[26] By December of

2013, a debate had opened up in the political left about the model of state to be

defended. Three main axes steered the dialogue: First, how to fight for a republic;

second, how to approach territorial organization; and third, how to think about the

right to self-determination.[27] Closing 2013, *Espai en blanc* (Blank space) the Catalan

critical theory collective offered the text *Un esfuerzo más* (One more effort). In it, the

group expressed the following:

> "We need one more effort to preserve the opening of a new world that is already in this
>
> world… 'We go ever so slowly because we are going on forever' means that we refuse to
>
> close the openings that people are presenting with their struggles… Something has began and
>
> its political translation has come through the idea of a process; more specifically, constituent
>
> processes… We need a little more effort in order to avoid locking these processes in the one-
>
> dimensional political code of the electoral system and its electoral processes… We know that
>
> today's revolution does not start from zero. Maybe that is why we have already begun. Where
>
> we go from here will depend on the words we chose to draw the paths that we are going to
>
> follow and invent. It is not a question of discourse or narrative but a political question through
>
> which the actual battle of 'thought' is being played."[28]

By the end of 2013, there were clear indications that new political options

were emerging; many of which were coming from within 15M collective spaces.

Ahora tu Decides (Now You Decide) had polled people to see if a candidature

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[26] Eleconomista.es (21/09/2013) *El Partido Comunista avisa de que el "bipartidismo monárquico" tratará de salvarse "a cualquier precio".* See online: http://ecodiario.eleconomista.es/interstitial/volver/269617462/politica/noticias/5162106/09/13/El-Partido-Comunista-avisa-de-que-el-bipartidismo-monarquico-tratara-de-salvarse-a-cualquier-precio.html

[27] Rey, D. (2013) *Proceso constituyente, República y Estado Federal,* Luchadeclases.org (04/12/2013). See online: http://www.luchadeclases.org/inicio/118-izquierda-unida/1671-proceso-constituyente-republica-y-estado-federal.html

[28] Espaienblanc.net (03.09.2013) *Un esfuerzo más.* See online: http://www.espaienblanc.net/UN-ESFUERZO-MAS-UN-ESFORC-MES.html

stemming from social movements should be presented to the European elections of

May of 2014, and a decision had been made to present a 'citizen candidature'.[29]

Confluencia (Confluence),[30] a group that was formed with the objective of bringing

together collectives that had opted for engaging the institutional question, had its first

meeting in September of 2013 addressing the issue. *Alternativas desde abajo*

(Alternatives from below) in its conclusions document following a set of June

meetings, suggested that social movements should count with "loudspeakers" in

official institutions. This, it suggested, could be attained through open electoral

initiatives that are transparent and confluent in nature.[31] The *Consejo de la Juventud*

(Youth Council) had put out a call for 'steps towards a *frente amplio* (broad front)'.[32]

And the *Partido X* (X Party) had presented itself as a group of "normal and

anonymous citizens" with a program based on four pillars: Transparency; binding

referendums; executive and legislative citizen power; and a permanent right to a real

vote.[33]

In January of 2014, Podemos was launched. Madrilonia the highly respected

critical reflection collective, followed the Podemos announcement with a set of

reflections:

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[29] Lainformacion.com (03/10/13) *La plataforma 'Ahora tu decides', ligada al 15M, avanza en la creación de una "candidatura ciudadana" para las europeas*. See online: http://noticias.lainformacion.com/politica/elecciones-europeas/la-plataforma-ahora-tu-decides-ligada-al-15m-avanza-en-la-creacion-de-una-candidatura-ciudadana-para-las-europeas_h6jBOUL7Ff41YvMVa7cbA3/

[30] Here in reference to the title of this chapter we see how already in September of 2013 confluence is what many collectives are seeking.

[31] Nuevatribuna.es (08/09/2013) *Los indignados del 15-M se preparan para dar el paso a la política.* See online: http://www.nuevatribuna.es/articulo/espana/indignados-15-m-preparan-dar-paso-politica/20130908130404096210.html

[32] Barba, A. (2013) *Convocatoria: Nuevos pasos hacia el Frente Amplio*, Cronicapopular.es (09/09/2013). See online: http://www.cronicapopular.es/2013/09/convocatoria-nuevos-pasos-hacia-el-frente-amplio/

[33] Vargas, J. (2013) Partido X: *"Empecemos por lo más fácil: echémosles de ahí",* Publico.es (08/10/2013). See online: http://www.publico.es/actualidad/partido-x-empecemos-mas-facil.html

"Political structuring and sedimentation take time. We can convene that when we speak of politics, this mode of proceeding, of amassing in slow tempos, in addition to generating strong bonds and structures also generates high doses of impatience… It seems that this impatience is present in the launch of Podemos. We say impatience and not urgency, because urgency – the necessity of confronting the political dilemma of our time – is in the mind of many. However, one thing is to organize within this urgency and another is to try and organize around impatience. Since many in diverse places and tempos are thinking about this jump, organizing it, dedicating their soul to the process, many are also surprised at the apparition of Podemos. In some sense the game we were all thinking together has begun with a horse jumping the line of pawns."[34]

Still in January of 2014, we learnt that numerous members of the political party IA *Izquierda Anti-capitalista* (Anti-capitalist left) were disturbed about the way in which Podemos had come into being. Part of the executive committee of IA had met with Pablo Iglesias, members of the *Fundación CEPS* (CEPS Foundation), and members of *Juventud sin Futuro* (Youth without Future). They had made the decision to create Podemos without previous discussion with members of IA. The name Podemos came from the title of an internal document from IA. The document presented points to be worked on before the European elections. This document served to draft the initial Podemos manifesto.[35]

In the political magazine Rebelion.org, Miguel Álvarez explained how in parallel and prior to Podemos, IA had launched the project *Alternativas desde abajo* (Alternatives from below). This was an attempt to bring the culture of assemblies into official political representation. Álvarez described how for months everyone had been

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[34] Madrilonia.org (21/01/2013) *Algunas preguntas sobre Podemos e Izquierda Anticapitalista*. See online: http://www.madrilonia.org/2014/01/algunas-preguntas-sobre-podemos-e-izquierda-anticapitalista/

[35] Eldiario.es (21/01/2014) *Un boletín interno de Izquierda Anticapitalista preparó el terreno a Podemos*. See online: http://www.eldiario.es/politica/nacimiento-Podemos-candidatura-Pablo-Iglesias_0_220478302.html

tirelessly working on a Trojan horse to enter institutions. One morning everyone woke up to an unexpected reality: those they had been working shoulder-to-shoulder with were announcing on television a different political project with the same aim. Álvarez closes the article with the following words: "With mistrust we board this train, but we remain close to the emergency exit because change is so urgent that wasted time generates incalculable damage."[36]

By the end of January of 2014, Madrilonia published a second reflection regarding how to approach the paradox of representation. In it Fernando Guerrero, suggested that any new political party wanting to confront neoliberalism should focus on "permitting that the unpredictable, the unexpected and the innocent occupy the party's occupation and disorganize the party's organization." Guerrero asked the following question: Is a political party or organization possible that is born out of a process from below, by those below, and that once on top remains true to being from below?[37]

Podemos came into being and to those observing the phenomenon from outside of social movement spaces the project seemed like a fresh alternative. The creation of Podemos circles was announced. Political spaces in which citizens with absolute autonomy and without needing to renounce membership in other political parties could congregate to carve the way forward for this new political project.[38] In February of 2014, Pablo Iglesias linked Podemos to 15M in the following manner:

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[36] Álvarez, M. (2014) *Mover ficha desde abajo. Apoyos críticos al Podemos de Pablo Iglesias*, Rebelion.org (25/01/2014). In this quote we already see people involved talking about mistrust. See online: http://www.rebelion.org/noticia.php?id=179934

[37] Guerrero , F. (2014) *¿Sois los nuestros? ¿Estáis seguros?,* Madrilonia.org (29/01/2014). See online: http://www.madrilonia.org/2014/01/sois-los-nuestros-estais-seguros/

[38] Publico.es (24/01/2014) *Círculos Podemos.* See online: http://blogs.publico.es/pablo-iglesias/760/circulos-podemos/

"15M cannot be represented… If anything, we are represented by 15M."[39] Also in February, Antonio Aguiló contributed some caution in regards to the new party: "I see as convenient not falling into an electoral rush; deflating the media focus of the initiative and its leadership; amplifying the plurality of voices; and articulating a joint-strategy with similar initiatives and social movements."[40] By March of 2014, Madrilonia reflected once again on the project. This time the collective asked itself *Podemos pero que exactamente* (we can, but what exactly?). In its piece, despite confirming their support for the initiative, Madrilonia suggested that Podemos was not ready to take advantage of the opportunities opened up by 15M in this terminal crisis of the regime of 78.[41]

During March of 2014, *Movimiento por la Democracia* (Movement for Democracy) published an open letter regarding the general elections of 2015. In the letter it described its objective as "transforming the general elections into elections for constituent courts; a great citizens' constituent assembly that could lead to a new democratic pact."[42] In a second letter, this time addressing the issue of the municipal elections of 2015, the movement added the following reflection:

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[39] Machuca, P. (2014) *Entrevista a Pablo Iglesias: "No es izquierda o derecha, es dictadura o democracia",* Huffingtonpost.es (16/02/2014). See online: http://www.huffingtonpost.es/2014/02/16/pablo-iglesias-entrevista-podemos_n_4787408.html

[40] Vargas, J. (2014) *"En Europa no hay democracia, hay fascismo electoral" Entrevista a Antoni Aguiló*, Publico.es (15/03/2014). See online: http://www.publico.es/politica/europa-no-hay-democracia-hay.html

[41] Rodriguez, M. et al. (2014) *Podemos, pero qué exactamente,* Madrilonia.org (12/03/2014). See online: http://www.madrilonia.org/2014/03/podemos-pero-que-exactamente/

[42] Eldiario.es (12/03/2014) *El Movimiento por la Democracia presenta su hoja de ruta para un proceso constituyente.* See online: http://www.eldiario.es/politica/Movimiento-Democracia-presenta-proceso-constituyente_0_237977208.html

"As a demand of our times there is no other legitimate form of democracy, than that which

grows out of citizens deliberating; organization between equals; and the direct control of

institutions."[43]

In April of 2014, philosopher Amador Fernández-Savater offered his thoughts on the

political move towards institutional representation:

"State-centric discourse speaks of the need to move 'from the social to the political'. As if

what happened in public squares was not political. However this is not about moving from

something (inferior) to something (superior). If anything it is about opening yet another

plane… Multi-layered, multi-channel revolution… There is no privileged space setting

rhythms, positions, or the meaning of the action to the rest… What exist are a plurality of

tempos, spaces and subjects, all precious and necessary… A new type of political party can be

one more point in this constellation."[44]

In May of 2014, Arturo Puente in his blog *Síntesis ni Análisis* (Synthesis nor

Analysis) suggested that in order to understand the phenomenon opened up by

Podemos in social movements, it might help to momentarily remove our 15M lenses:

"With the inauguration of the electoral stage the rules are different. We now seek results not

ways of doing. Meeting objectives is more important than creating new political spaces.

Sometimes these objectives are perverse, which is why we abandoned the institutional front.

Sometimes newly created political spaces are useless, which is why we are returning to the

institutional."[45]

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[43] Movimientodemocracia.net (31/03/2014) *La Carta por Madrid: A por las municipals.* See online:
http://movimientodemocracia.net/2014/03/31/la-carta-por-madrid-a-por-las-municipales/
[44] Fernández-Savater, A. (2014) *Notas para una política no estadocéntrica,* Eldiario.es (11/04/2014).
See online: http://www.eldiario.es/interferencias/Notas-politica-estadocentrica_6_248535164.html
[45] Sintesisnianalisis.com (27/05/2014) *Podemos y el repliegue del 15M.* See online:
http://sintesisnianalisis.com/2014/05/27/podemos-y-el-repliegue-del-15m/

The European elections of May of 2014 showed the decay of the political regime in Spain. There was almost 55% abstention. The bipartisanship of PP and PSOE lost three of every five voters and newly formed parties Partido X and Podemos obtained 100,000 votes and 1.25 million votes and five parliamentary seats respectively.[46] Reflecting on the situation following the European elections, Madrilonia pointed out that those critical of Podemos now had the option of pressuring from the outside so that social movement elements could enter the organization or they could opt to participate directly in the tool that has become the institutional jack:

> "The point is to 'movementalize' Podemos. We need to push against the unavoidable consolidation of the party structure. We need to bet on a kind of political organization, which although necessary cannot remain merely an electoral tool."[47]

Following the European elections Podemos became a national phenomenon. At that moment Political Scientist Raimundo Viejo highlighted that in the previous Catalan elections the CUP *Candidatura d'Unitat Popular* (Popular Unity Candidature) had already carved a winning electoral path. As Viejo cautioned: "Podemos can be new as a State-wide phenomenon, but in order to situate it, we must approximate it taking into account the on-going wave of mobilization."[48]

By June of 2014, the founders of Podemos were facing strong internal criticism for non-democratic practices. Numerous members of Podemos were

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[46] Madrilonia.org (28/05/2014) *Lo que las Europeas abren.* See online: http://www.madrilonia.org/2014/05/lo-que-las-europeas-abren/
[47] Ibid.
[48] Viejo, R. (2014) *Podemos, punta de un iceberg,* Eldiario.es (04/06/2014). Raimundo Viejo is a political adviser to David Fernández, who is the leader of CUP. Nevertheless, having observed Podemos and CUP, I believe his statement is correct. See online: http://www.eldiario.es/contrapoder/Podemos-elecciones-movimientos_sociales_6_267433295.html

suggesting that internal practices of the party were in contradiction with the party's outward discourse.[49] In response to these criticisms, Political Science professor and founding member of Podemos, Juan Carlos Monedero, responded with the following clear message: "Maybe this has to break. Maybe inside there are two incompatible models… If we continue with these discourses maybe our fate will be that of 15M. We were radically democratic, but radically inoperative."[50]

Podemos did not have to be operative for very long before strong criticism mounted regarding its workings. José Miguel Fernández-Layos explained how following the European elections he visited the square in front of the *Reina Sofía* (Queen Sofia) Museum in Madrid. Podemos was celebrating its victory. He described the feeling of being in a 15M-like space, seeing people he had met at the square occupations. Everything felt 15M except a few chants that caught him by surprise: *Que sí, que sí nos representan* (yes they do, yes they do represent us), and *¡Presidente, presidente, presidente!* (President, president, president!). He offered the following reflection:

> "15M has not only had unexpected mutations, but seems to have also mated with creatures of a different kind. In some cases the ways of these creatures are very new, in others a little older. Whoever thinks this is the point of arrival should think again. It seems that mutations will continue, jumps forward or into the abyss, experiments, life carving its path."[51]

Whilst in the Spanish State Podemos continued to grow and amass criticism on the International front it kept gaining support for its project. By June of 2014

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[49] JOSÉ Precedo, J. (2014) *Las bases de Podemos se enfrentan a sus fundadores para exigir democracia interna*, Elpais.com (09/06/2014). See online: http://politica.elpais.com/politica/2014/06/09/actualidad/1402295920_514605.html

[50] Ibid.

[51] Fernández-Layos, J. M. (03/06/2014) *Todos los 15M que sus ojos no ven,* Diagonalperiodico.net See online: https://www.diagonalperiodico.net/global/23113-15m-sus-ojos-no-ven.html

intellectuals like Wendy Brown, Judith Butler, Noam Chomsky, Costas Douzinas, Eduardo Galeano, Michael Hardt, Naomi Klein, David McNally, Chantal Mouffe, Antonio Negri, Slavoj Žižek and Jacques Rancière had signed a document in support of the initiative.[52] Juan Carlos Monedero was adamant about the fact that Podemos would govern the country and in regards to the party's inner organization he presented a clear position: "There are no magic solutions. You have two, or three solutions: Trusting always and fully in assemblies; trusting in a vanguard; or searching for mechanisms that work between both spaces. The latter is what we are trying to do."[53]

In July of 2014, John Holloway suggested in regards to Podemos that it could improve the situation, but that exiting capitalism still remained the real challenge." According to Holloway:

"Any government of this type must channel through institutions the aspirations of social struggles and somehow find conciliation between societal anger and the need for capital reproduction… This inevitably implies participating in the aggression of capital"[54]

By August of 2014, according to CIS *Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas* (Centre for Sociological Research), Podemos had already become the third political party in Spain with 15.3% of the vote.[55] Newspaper Público.es referred to the data in the following manner:

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[52] See online the list of international supporters at: http://apoyointernacionalapodemos.wordpress.com.

[53] Batalla Cueto, P. (2014) "Es evidente que vamos a gobernar este país", Asturias24.es (07/07/2014). See online: http://www.asturias24.es/secciones/politica/noticias/es-evidente-que-vamos-a-gobernar-este-pais/1404666352

[54] Fernández-Savater, A. (2014) John Holloway: "Podemos o Syriza pueden mejorar las cosas, pero el desafío es salir del capitalism", Eldiario.es (30/07/2014). See online: http://www.eldiario.es/interferencias/John_Holloway_Podemos_Syriza_capitalismo_6_287031315.html

[55] Publico.es (04/08/2014) *Podemos es ya la tercera fuerza y el PP aumenta suventaja con el PSOE, según el CIS.* See online: http://www.publico.es/politica/ya-tercera-fuerza-y-pp.html

"State oligarchies and oligarchies of the EU have two preventative options: Denaturalizing and domesticating the new political leaders via bribery and threats of all kinds, or impeding their rise to power via coalition governments. This can either be done in a technocratic manner, or directly via a *coup d'état*."[56]

In September of 2014, Javier Gallego writing from the online newspaper ElDiario.es, pointed out that Podemos was generating the same excitement as the PSOE did in 1982. According to Gallego like with the PSOE, Podemos was being forgiven for its mistakes: "its lack of definition; its contradictions; its slips and silences". Gallego remembered how the outcome of 1982 was deep frustration, and for this reason he hoped that Podemos would navigate through the process without arrogance. If they could do that, Gallego thought that perhaps they could avoid a deep fall from which mobilized citizens might take thirty years to recover.[57]

Whilst demands for more internal democracy within Podemos kept mounting, in an interview with journalist Orencio Osuna from Nuevatribuna.es, Pablo Iglesias offered the way forward as seen by the *Podemos* executive:

"The most viable way, with all its contradictions and difficulties, is that in electoral terms we put an end to the political system of the regime of 1978… If we arrive to a situation equivalent to that occurring in Greece, new possibilities for change will open up. Ultimately it will open up the way for a constituent process that can change the political foundations of our country… We have not created Podemos so that some people can feel good engaged in discussion, we have created Podemos to change the country and we will have to adapt the organization to that goal."[58]

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[56] Ibid.

[57] Gallego, J. (2014) *Todos los caminos llevan a Podemos,* Eldiario.es (07/09/2014). See online: http://www.eldiario.es/zonacritica/caminos-llevan-Podemos_6_299980007.html

[58] Osuna, O. (2014) *"El cambio político es posible en España y Podemos será determinante",* Nuevatribuna.es (14/09/2014). See online: http://www.nuevatribuna.es/articulo/espana/cambio-politico-espana-posible-y-podemos-sera-determinante/20140914120019107102.html

At around the same time, University of Cordoba professor Ángel Calle Collado described the need for 'citizenry-parties' like Podemos to have a vision that integrates complexity, by being a *Ágora* for debate and at the same time for political and social action. According to Calle Collado, "without these traits it is difficult to think of Podemos as being an emerging and interdependent part of the cycle of protest anchored in the radicalization of democracy."[59]

By October of 2014, it was revealed that the draft presented by Pablo Iglesias for 'Ethical Practices' of Podemos included a clause, which would bar members of other political parties from running in elections for executive posts in Podemos. This in effect would bar members of IA that had co-founded Podemos from leading the new party. Member of IA and political science and sociology professor Jaime Pastor was critical of this move: "This decision is serious because we are a co-founding party; nobody can deny that those who have contributed to the birth of Podemos are now being negated their right to be in the organization as a party."[60] Still in October of 2014, Soso de Toro in ElDiario.es pointed out that what was moving those supporting Podemos was not the seeking of a new politics, but being able to punish those in charge of the old politics: "We are still dealing with an end of epoch. It shows the desperation caused by the moral rupture of a society."[61]

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[59] Calle Collado, A. (2014) *De los Partidos-Ciudadanía a los Círculos Sociales: Podemos en la encrucijada*, Tercerainformacion.es (15/09/2014). See online: http://www.tercerainformacion.es/spip.php?article73971

[60] Torrús, A. (2014) *El borrador ético de Pablo Iglesias excluiría a Izquierda Anticapitalista de los órganos de dirección,* Cuartopoder.es (06/10/2014). See online: http://www.cuartopoder.es/alsoldelacalle/2014/10/06/el-borrador-etico-de-pablo-iglesias-excluiria-izquierda-anticapitalista-de-los-organos-de-direccion/2998

[61] de Toro, S. (2014) *Quiebra moral, putrefacción y desesperación,* Eldiario.es (29/10/2014). See online: http://www.eldiario.es/zonacritica/Quiebra-moral-putrefaccion-desesperacion_6_318878135.html

By November of 2014, Víctor Alonso Rocafort, political theory professor at the University of Alicante wrote the following in regards to Podemos:

> "Podemos is now a vertical political party, with almost all its power concentrated in the figure of the General Secretary; whom without a doubt will be Pablo Iglesias… He has also chosen directly the 62 individuals that will go in the list for the citizen council. We know what will be the outcome and it does not matter who is in the list. It is his list. He has even chosen the 'Guarantees Committee' that will have to control the executive. No words can describe this. Being more comfortable in the terrain of adulation than in the terrain of critique is always dangerous… To any person choosing to be an adviser to princes – currently the only *parrhesia* possible in Podemos – I would ask that they do not ask for a just monarch, and specially not for a *politólogo rey* (political scientist king)."[62]

Still in November, Alberto Garzón, a young politician from IU *Izquierda Unida* (United Left) described the calculated ideological ambiguity used to bring together broad segments of the population used by Podemos. According to Garzón, this ideological ambiguity might attract many people but it will ultimately fail to convince.[63] Garzón failed to understand that populism does not need to 'convince'; its aim is to attract. Generating emotions via a frame of us against 'them' it is able to win elections. For this reason, as the polls seemed to be showing Podemos might be the most voted party in the general elections of 2015. According to the CIS, Podemos might obtain 27,7% of the votes.[64] Also according to Metroscopia, by November of 2014 Pablo Iglesias had become the most valued politician in the country.[65]

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[62] Alonso Rocafort, V. (2014) *La Carta VII y la fundación de Podemos,* Eldiario.es (8/11/2014). See online: http://www.eldiario.es/zonacritica/Carta-VII-fundacion-Podemos_6_322377765.html

[63] Garzón, A. (2014) *La estrategia política ante una sociedad en descomposición.* Lamarea.com (10/11/2014). See online: http://www.lamarea.com/2014/11/10/la-estrategia-politica-ante-una-sociedad-en-descomposicion/

[64] Bolaño, T. and Moreno, F. (2014) *El CIS anuncia un terremoto: Podemos, primera fuerza en intención directa de voto*, Cronicaglobal.com (29/10/2014). See online:

The success of Podemos, considering its short history is impressive, it seems set to become the Syriza of Spain. What I mean by this is that Podemos is currently positioning itself as the leftist social democrat option in Spain, poised to combat neoliberal austerity. Podemos is without a doubt populist, nevertheless, in their messaging they claim to be the social democrat option because they know that this position can be well received in the country.[66] After winning the general elections Syriza is attempting to combat neoliberal austerity in the manner suggested above. It seems that this is the line that Podemos wants to follow. The profile of the leaders is similar in that in both the case of Podemos and of Syriza they come from the academic environment, and share affinity in choice of intellectuals that inspire their projects (Gramsci, Laclau and Mouffe being high on the list).

Pablo Simón, in November of 2014 in the political blog Politikon.es, reflected on the fact that by now it was clear that Political Scientists with a deep experience in assemblies and political parties directed Podemos. This according to Simón allowed them to configure the rules of the party as to control it via a top-down approach.[67] For many who are critically observing from within the Spanish State, it is apparent that many of the practices of Podemos have nothing new. In fact, they reflect much of what millions of people collectively denounced on May of 2011 through that public expression now referred to as 15M. For this reason, one of the deeply troubling aspects of the rapid rise of Podemos has been to observe how uncritically many are

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http://www.cronicaglobal.com/es/notices/2014/10/el-cis-anuncia-un-terremoto-podemos-primera-fuerza-en-intencion-directa-de-voto-12559.php

[65] Elconfidencial.com (02/11/2014) *La 'semana negra' de la corrupción tiene un ganador: Podemos.* See online: http://www.elconfidencial.com/espana/2014-11-02/la-semana-negra-de-la-corrupcion-tiene-un-ganador-podemos_433856/

[66] Professor Michelle Bonner, who has done extensive research in Argentina has pointed out to me how in that country populism has undermined social democracy. As she describes it, "they are not necessarily the same thing even if the rhetoric may be similar".

[67] Simón, P. (2014) *La vieja elección de Podemos*, Politikon.es (24/11/2014). See online: http://politikon.es/2014/11/24/la-vieja-eleccion-de-podemos/

dismissing as unimportant the shadowy and questionable approaches carried out by the executive of this new party, in its climb towards obtaining institutional power.

Podemos: A War of Position and the rise of a condottiere

It is theoretical frames that present 15M as instrumental to Podemos, which allows for an unequal and authoritarian Podemos-15M relationship (charismatic Condottiere) to arise. Most pro-Podemos voices tend to make this move. In most cases their analysis is grounded in the work of Antonio Gramsci in one way or another. Chantal Mouffe explains very clearly how Gramsci can be useful when approaching the question of representation.

In an interview conducted as part of the CITSEE Research Project based at University of Edinburgh, Chantal Mouffe, in trying to explain her use of the concept of 'engagement with' (presented in the first part of this chapter), refers to the work of Antonio Gramsci. She suggests that 'engagement with' institutions of representation, is equivalent to what Gramsci referred to as a 'war of position'. As she explains it, through a war of position we "target specific institutions in order to transform them… It's not a total revolution, that's not possible, it's 'a war of position' in order to transform the existing institutions."[68]

Gramsci, in his prison notebooks, when speaking of a war of position first refers to it in terms of military warfare, and then moves the concept into the realm of politics. In military warfare, a war of position according to Gramsci takes place in the following manner:

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[68] CITSEE Research Project (22/06/2013) *'A vibrant democracy needs agonistic confrontation' - An interview with Chantal Mouffe.* See online: http://www.citsee.eu/interview/vibrant-democracy-needs-agonistic-confrontation-interview-chantal-mouffe

"A war of position is not, constituted simply by the actual trenches, but by the whole organizational and industrial system of the territory which lies to the rear of the army in the field. It is imposed notably by the… armed strength which can be concentrated at a particular spot, as well as by the abundance of supplies which make possible the swift replacement of material lost after an enemy breakthrough or a retreat."[69]

 In the political front, the superstructures of civil society for Gramsci are like the "trench-system" of warfare. In this sense, if we think of the 15M climate of today and understand that current conditions (mainly the power of the Spanish State and financial capital) have imposed a war of position, then following Gramsci's logic, 15M would have been like "a fierce artillery attack [that] seemed to have destroyed the enemy's entire defensive system, whereas in fact it had only destroyed the outer perimeter."[70]

Gramsci, writing about a different time period explains how an economic crisis like the economic depression that began in the Spanish State in 2008 does not give citizens the "ability to organize with lighting speed in time and in space; still less can it endow them with fighting spirit."[71] In addition, Gramsci also explains how these crises do not demoralize the defenders. They simply force defenders to use their remaining strengths to force a war of position. He phrases it in the following manner:

"[T]hey do not abandon their positions, even among the ruins, nor do they lose faith in their own strength or their own future. Of course, things do not remain exactly as they were."[72]

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[69] Gramsci, A. (2005) *Selections from the prison notebooks of Antonio Gramsci,* edited by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, New York: International Publishers, page 234.
[70] Idem, page 235.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid.

For Grasmci, when a conflict becomes a war of position we have entered "a culminating phase in the political-historical situation, since in politics the 'war of position', once won, is decisive definitively."[73] The unprecedented necessity to concentrate hegemony, forces defendants to practice a more interventionist form of government; and the state, and financial elites need to focus on avoiding internal disintegration.[74] In spite of this, in order to take advantage of the situation and to fight effectively such a war of position, those seeking to challenge the state need to be strategic. They are facing a daunting task. Drawing from Gramsci, Chantal Mouffe suggests that a war of position in today's modern democratic states requires engaging creatively with institutional channels in order to transform them.

With the rise of Podemos certain currents within the European intellectual left are suggesting that the creative project necessary for confronting the question of representation has arrived. Recently, Boaventura de Sousa Santos presented an article called 'The Podemos Wave'. In it, he claims that Podemos "constitutes the biggest political innovation in Europe since the end of the Cold War."[75] He then adds, that the new party-movement does not show any visible traces of the Cold War. And suggests that this is "the end result of a learning process originated in the South and which eventually made it possible to creatively channel the outrage that ran through the streets of Spain."[76] For de Sousa Santos, Podemos is proof of the fact that although "partisan politics must have faces, it is not made of faces."[77] In the internal life of Podemos, according to de Sousa Santos we find the genetic code of the

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[73] Idem, page 239.
[74] Ibid.
[75] de Sousa Santos, B. (2014) *The Podemos wave*, Telesurtv.net (06/12/2014). See online: http://www.telesurtv.net/english/opinion/The-Podemos-Wave-20141206-0025.html
[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid.

"complementarity between participatory and representative democracy that ought to guide the workings of the political system."[78]

It has become clear to me following the interviewing process and analyzing the news archive I have been constructing since the apparition of 15M, that the current social, political and economic situation in the Spanish State resembles a Gramscian war of position. In this sense, from within the 15M climate that I have experienced, engaging with institutions of representation (as Mouffe suggests) is seen as a necessity in order to be strategic and creative. In the case of Podemos, the civil citizens that have proposed themselves as representatives in the institutional arena have presented their proposal within the 15M climate as a necessary war of position. Civic citizens have opted to engage this proposal in hope that this war of position can be won. Nevertheless, the previous section has already revealed that much work needs to be done with*in* Podemos if this option is to 'be the change'.

It would be encouraging and hopeful for me if I could bring myself to agree with recent descriptions of Podemos presented by Boaventura de Sousa Santos. However, observing acts by the executive of Podemos and remembering these civic-civil tensions in previous spirals of cooperation, I hold certain reservations. I believe that close proximity to the founders of the party and perhaps a certain distance from 'other' voices within the 15M climate have magnified in the eyes of de Sousa Santos (and other European left public intellectuals) the achievements of Podemos and its newness. At the same time such a position has also diminished the severity of mistakes and bad habits revealed by the party executive.

When de Sousa Santos suggests that Podemos shows no signs of the cold war I believe he is right. However, Podemos does instead show some of the

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[78] Ibid.

untrustworthiness of civil party-leaders towards civil and civic allies, which George

Orwell wrote about in regards to the Spanish Civil War in a *Homage to Catalonia.* In

1937, this untrustworthiness culminated in what Orwell describes as the May Events

of 1937.[79] Orwell was describing how power-over forces in the Republican war effort

were feeling threatened by the power-with ways of their anarchist allies. Due to this

there were vicious attacks against anarchists and the eventual outlawing and

restriction of certain factions. Of course in the present juncture, we are far from the

antagonism required in order to lead to events such as those of 1937. In addition

Podemos is yet to 'capture' the power of the state. Nevertheless, careful trust building

is perhaps what can avoid similar events from ever taking place.

Civil and civic relationality in regards to institutional representation has

historically, and from the inception of this particular spiral of creative and new

cooperative mutual aid that Podemos executives are aiming to steer, started from a

position of agonistic mistrust. In this sense, it is in the interest of Spanish citizens that

this mistrust can become trust, instead of antagonistic distrust. As James Tully

suggests: "Trust is the aspect of these social relationships that renders them 'sociable'

(*socialitas*) rather than unsociable or anti-social."[80] I raise this caution, because

Boaventura de Sousa Santos remarks that Podemos shows that partisan politics must

have faces, but it is not made up of faces (page 258 of this chapter). Yet, in the run up

to the European elections Podemos revealed its face. After having decided through its

citizen circles the logo of the party to be used in the electoral ballot for the European

elections, party executives changed it without a previous collective dialogue. Instead

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[79] In a *Homage to Catalonia*, Orwell describes the clashes and street battles (mainly centred in Barcelona) that took place between the third and eight of May of 1937 between factions on the Republican side of the Spanish Civil War. Much of the effort was geared towards disempowering the self-organized militias and the strong positions in politics acquired by anarchist organizations. Power-over forms of politics were defending themselves from the growing power of power-with modes of being. See Orwell, G. (1952) *Homage to Catalonia*, London: Harcourt.

[80] Tully, J. (2014) *Trust, Mistrust and Distrust in Diverse Societies* (unpublished paper), page 6.

of the agreed upon logo of Podemos, the party executive presented a ballot to the registry of the General Directorate of Interior Politics, which was simply the face of Pablo Iglesias. Executives of the party argued that this was done in order to allow the party to benefit from Pablo Iglesias' fame.[81] This was an important power-over move, because the whole creation of Podemos was at the time using 15M languages of description for its formation. In this sense, it was shocking to see so much personalization and solo decision-making stemming from a collective experience claiming to be horizontal.

It might well be that Boaventura de Sousa Santos is right, when he suggests that Podemos shows in its genetic code the "complementarity between participatory and representative democracy that ought to guide the workings of the political system." (page 259 of this chapter) Perhaps the choice of ballot, together with the numerous questionable decisions made by Podemos executives and presented in the previous section of this chapter, are only part of the necessary growing pains of a new political experiment. One can only hope that this is the case, for without a doubt, the severity of situation being faced by millions of people in the Spanish State requires worthwhile strategic moves imbued in an 'ethics or ethos of trust'.[82]

The 15M climate has generated infinite networks of mutual aid, examples of these have been presented throughout this essay. It seems plausible to speak of a war of position being fought in the Spanish social, political and economic arenas. Existing networks of mutual aid are attempting to hold hands in order to face such a war of position. Clearly, Podemos crystalizes the most successful approach to date of an

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[81] Álvarez, I. (2014) *Críticas a Podemos por la elección del rostro de Pablo Iglesias para el logo,* 20minutos.es (24/04/2014). See online: http://www.20minutos.es/noticia/2120972/0/podemos-logo/polemica-pablo-iglesias/cara-rostro-criticas/

[82] According to James Tully this ethics or ethos of trust guides the ways in which members of a relationship exercise judgments of trust and mistrust. See Tully, J. (2014) *Trust, Mistrust and Distrust in Diverse Societies* (unpublished paper), page 1.

alternative in the Spanish State to the question of representation. Nevertheless, the apparition of Podemos constitutes an unexpected disillusionment in the way that party-movement executives have chosen to execute their plans. It also constitutes a disappointment in the way in which they have related with these existing networks of mutual aid. Because of these attitudes, current agonistic mistrust between civil and civic citizens risks becoming an antagonistic distrust, which impedes attempts at holding hands in approaching the current paradox of institutional representation.

We can cautiously accept Podemos' empty signifiers (ambiguity in the positions expressed by party executives as part of a seemingly leftist populist option).[83] Perhaps we can also entertain the idea that Ernesto Laclau is right when he suggests, that "once we have a series of unsatisfied demands, these must crystalize symbolically around a leader."[84] Nevertheless, if this is the case, at the very least we must demand from the Podemos executive, a trustworthiness that inspires us to cooperate and catapult them into the leadership of our power-over channels of representation. In addition, if we opt to press ahead with this option we must be aware of the fact that what Podemos seems to have brought forth into current events in the Spanish State, is the figure of the *condottiere*. Drawing from Niccolò Machiavelli, Gramsci describes the *condottiere* as the person "who represents plastically and 'anthropomorphically' the symbol of the 'collective will.'"[85]

The dialogical approximation towards 15M that I have attempted throughout this essay, leads me to believe that individuals within the 15M climate seem to be working towards a total transformation of society. Institutional representation is for

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[83] Laclau, E. (1996) *Emancipation(s),* Verso: New York, page 36.
[84] Laclau, E. (2012) *El populismo en América Latina está creando nuevas formas de legitimidad política,* conference in Quito, Ecuador. Notes by Fernando Arrellano Ortiz available online at: http://www.cronicon.net/paginas/edicanter/Ediciones72/NOTA01.htm.
[85] Gramsci, A. (2005) *Selections from the prison notebooks of Antonio Gramsci,* edited by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, New York: International Publishers, page 125.

those imbued by the 15M climate only one more plane. As Amador Fernández-Savater suggests: "There is no privileged space setting rhythms, positions, or the meaning of the action to the rest… A new type of political party can be one more point in this constellation" (page 247 of this chapter). For this reason, if my reading of Pablo Iglesias (General Secretary of Podemos) as a *condottiere* is right, and we are to take note of Gramsci's concerns and reflect on them from our current predicament; it seems, that following the tremendous advancements we have made imbued in this 15M climate, Pablo Iglesias and the executive of Podemos risk limiting our possibilities for social transformation.

Gramsci's reflections on the figure of the *condottiere* can perhaps serve to contribute to our ongoing 15M dialogical reflections on the issue of representation. If we are to pay attention to Gramsci, we can begin to see the opportunities and risks we face moving forward within the current context. Can Podemos support a reconstitution of the Spanish State? Is this something that a *condottiere* like Pablo Iglesias can provide? Gramsci's words offer something to think about as we move forward:

> "In the modern world, only those historico-political actions which are immediate and imminent, characterized by the necessity for lightning speed, can be incarnated mythically by a concrete individual. Such speed can only be made necessary by a great and imminent danger, a great danger which precisely fans passion and fanaticism suddenly to a white heat, and annihilates the critical sense and the corrosive irony which are able to destroy the 'charismatic' character of the *condottiere*… But an improvised action of such a kind, by its very nature, cannot have a long-term and organic character. It will in almost all cases be

appropriate to restoration and reorganization, but not to the founding of new States or new national and social structures… It will be defensive rather than capable of original creation."[86]

Gramsci reflects on how even if a project like Podemos is victorious, it will not create another world but simply duplicate the present. This is the message that we observe running through Mahatma Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* and Richard Gregg's *Power of Nonviolence.*[87] What is interesting about the quote is that even he, who is a state-centric theorist, understands the limitations of this power-over approach to politics. Nevertheless, despite seeing this, Gramsci's concept of a War of Position fails to grasp the magnitude of civic alternatives and in this sense reciprocal elucidation helps fill this gap.

Closing remarks

Through the first and second sections of this chapter I focused on removing the centrality of representative institutions. This was key in recovering the infrastructure of power-with organisations, which through state-centric analysis seems to drop out of the picture. This infrastructure (which has been revealed through all five chapters thus far) when thought about from a state-centric approach is seen, at best, as 'discussion groups' – a sort of proto-civil citizenry. In this sense, such an erasure limits possible alternative strategies. It does this by channeling all energies towards getting into the power-over infrastructure of the state and trying to exercise it without respecting existing networks of mutual aid. Since the alternative infrastructures are not seen or heard, for state-centric theorists such as Mouffe and other Podemos supporters there is no infrastructural alternative. My expansion of

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[86] Idem, pages 129-130.
[87] See Gandhi, M. (2009) *Hind Swaraj and other writings*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; and Gregg, R. B. (1960) *The Power of Nonviolence*, Canton: Greenleaf Books.

Mouffe's 'engagement with' concept via the use of James Tully's civic and civil descriptions has eliminated this blind spot; and thus contributes to enriching our understanding of that which calls 15M and activity evolving within a 15M climate.

Once the centrality of representative instiutions was removed section three surveyed perceptions of Podemos stemming from within the 15M climate. Finally section four brought Antonio Gramsci into the discussion. This was done in order to warn theorists using his work in support of political projects like Podemos, to be aware of the limitations he himself saw with such approaches.

Through the world of power-with and mutual aid of the civic sisters of 15M (revealed to us through this essay) we can see that when they engage-with the police and courts or with Podemos, they are engaging-from or from-within a whole infrastructure of mutual aid organisations. This infrastructure is broad, connected, historical and inter-generational. It presents opposition to the power-over infrastructure of the Spanish state and it is different in kind to the organisation presented by the state. In this sense, insofar as it is a war of engagement of some kind, then the two parties are organised differently and in fact engage differently (nonviolently versus repressively). This is the field of struggle and all the nonviolent theorists have presented the world in this manner[88].

The Spanish State seems to be at a critical historical juncture. Civil-revolutionary political theorists and engaged civil citizens are arguing that the way out of this reality is through a confluence of forces channelled, under leadership, towards attening institutional control. Their assumption seems to be that actors must seize

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[88] For examples on this nonviolent tradition see: Gregg, R. B. (1960) *The Power of Nonviolence*, Canton: Greenleaf Books. Huxley, A. (1941) *Ends and Means: An Enquiry into the Nature of Ideals and into the Methods employed for their Realization*, London: Chatto & Windus. Gandhi, M. (2008) *The Essential Writings,* ed. Judith M. Brown, Oxford: Oxford University Press. Merton, T. (2003) *The New Man*, New York: Bloomsbury Publishing. The ideas of these thinkers will be introduced in chapter six of the essay.

'power-over' and exercise it in a kind of 'crisis-time' frame. The 15M sisters are speaking of a different temporality. One of "amassing in slow tempos" (page 245). Through this slow temporality we amass knowledges, practices, bonds and victories; all these together eventually lead toward tipping points. In a recent book on Cesar Chavez,[89] Antonio Orosco critizes this 'crisis-time', and sees it even in the workings of Martin Luther King Jr. According to Orosco, this 'crisis-time' blocks the 'long-time' that is necessary to make a real transformation. This argument I believe is revealed through the findings from this chapter, and in this sense I think this text vindicates the power of the 'ever-so-slowly' time of 15M sisters. "'We go ever so slowly because we are going on forever' means that we refuse to close the openings that people are presenting with their struggles" (page 243 of this chapter).

I think this chapter offers amazing vindications of the dialogical power-with approach of the public philosophy I am seeking to practice. Through it, at least in the Spanish case, we have displaced the state as the centre of politics and broadened the space of that which is political. Through this move, the chapter has helped reveal and dissolve the paradox that state-centred political theorists find themselves in. With their assumptions about the primacy of representative institutions and leaders on the one hand and the powerlessness of the power-with direct democrats on the other, state-centric theories are blind to the multiplicity of politics in Spain. As this chapter has revealed, this paradox is dissolved once dialogue opens up to include the practices and knowledges of engaged civic citzens. Such opening up of the dialogue reveals civic understandings regarding the way representation should be approached. For engaged civic citizens the political space of representation is just one space within a constellation of spaces through which politics takes place.

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[89] Orosco, J. (2008) *Cesar Chavez and the Common Sense of Nonviolence*, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

With this conception of the political (as understood from within the 15M climate), the essay now moves to the following chapter. As a final chapter, chapter six presents the pardox of a 'democracy-to-come' that has crystalized in Spain since the appearance of 15M. It also presents two hypotheses drawn from my reciprocal elucidation dialogues with*in* 15M. These two hypotheses are helpful when thinking about how to overcome the paradox that will be described. Finally, the chapter brings the essay to a close via some remarks regarding this research with*in* 15M.

– Chapter six –

The paradox of a 'democracy-to-come'[1]

"I wished that nothing should set my work apart or make it pleasing except the variety of its material and the gravity of its contents." *Niccolo Machiavelli*

Opening remarks

We live in times during which members of constitutional democracies are constituted and constitute themselves as citizens in shifting ways that standard theories have failed to illuminate.[2] Nikolas Kompridis in speaking of philosophy suggests that one begins to philosophize when things have become obscure. "Philosophy begins from the experience that we are lost,"[3] says Kompridis. He then adds: "philosophy must struggle against its knowingness."[4]

When thinking with 15M, I have attempted to learn from the experience of being lost. My interest was in discovering what individuals being 15M felt was relevant knowledge. I was always interested in finding out what interviewees felt needed to be known and found out;[5] the way I chose to do this was through dialogues of reciprocal elucidation. *Caminamos preguntando* (walking we ask questions) the Zapatista saying goes. If we are seeking to understand 15M, it is better to attempt this through participation and not abstraction. If we participate "[a] different kind of

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[1] I speak of the paradox of 'democracy-to-come', as it is widely used in social sciences, because I think it is the responsibility of public philosophers to acknowledge the fact that even those countries, which claim to be democratic, are really not enacting democracy. From the perspective of monological western political theory it is claimed that the West shows the democracy that others should follow, but there is an extensive array of political thought that presents democracy in a very different manner. Specifically I am thinking of those traditions that think of democracy as 'being democracy-here-and-now'. In this sense I am writing this chapter against the conventions of western political theory.

[2] Tully, J. (2008) *Public philosophy in a New Key, Volume one Democracy and Civic Freedom,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, page 151.

[3] Kompridis, N. (2013) 'Philosophy, Crisis and Democracy: What Do They Have to Do with Each Other?', in *Philosophy and Crisis: Responding to Challenges to Ways of Life in the Contemporary World.* Ioannina, Greece, July 28-30, 2013.

[4] Ibid.

[5] I am grateful to Alex Robb and Tim Smiths for the numerous conversations we have been able to share in regards to how to approach 15M.

consciousness is possible among us, a participatory consciousness."[6] Through

dialogue "each person is participating, is partaking of the whole meaning of the group

and also taking part in it."[7] In this sense, I am hoping that this essay has presented a

glimpse into what a participatory consciousness of and within 15M can begin to look

like. I am particularily hopeful that this participatory consciousness has helped to

approximate us to some answers regarding the question of what is the phenomenon

that calls itself 15M.

Through the dialogue that I have been a part of within 15M, all the

participants have been "making something in common."[8] And in suspending my

opinions and listening to everyone else's, I have been able to appreciate different

meanings. I accept that there has been authority in my role as researcher and in the

final selection of opinions that I have presented. Nevertheless, the aim of the project

has always been to eliminate from these dialogues the principles of authority and

hierarchy. In this sense, the way I have used dialogue has been as a "collective way of

opening up judgments and assumptions."[9] Through their judgments and assumptions

individuals being 15M have revealed to us who they are, what they are doing, and

what they are doing it for. They have also shared with us their traditions and the

futures they are co-constructing. Finally, they have helped us understand from their

perspectives what is a party-movement like Podemos and how it relates to 15M.

Through reciprocal elucidation this essay has been able to "attend to the

strange multiplicity of political voices and activities [going on within 15M] without

distorting or disqualifying them in the very way we approach them."[10] According to

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[6] Bohm, D. (2004) *On Dialogue*, New York: Routledge, page xiii.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Idem., page 3.
[9] Idem., page 53.
[10] Idem., page 5.

Hannah Arendt, the paradox of the modern situation is that "[o]ur quest for meaning is at the same time prompted and frustrated by our inability to originate meaning."[11] For Arendt meaning comes as a result of understanding; and "[t]rue understanding does not tire of interminable dialogue and 'vicious circles,' because it trusts that imagination eventually will catch at least a glimpse of the always frightening light of truth."[12] As Arendt suggests, "only in the freedom of our speaking with one another does the world, as that about which we speak, emerge in its objectivity and visibility from all sides."[13] It is in this light that engaging in the kinds of dialogues this essay has entertained becomes indispensable if we are to understand phenomenons like 15M.

The dialogical technique is not something new in political philosophy. As James Tully highlights, in both Islamic and Western cultures it can be traced back to Plato's dialogues.[14] What is key in this approach according to Tully is that once mastered, it allows us to reason 'perspectivally' (here Tully is using Nietzsche's language to describe this ability).[15] The dialogical process allows insurgent knowledges that seek to change the terms and values under which we all live to surface and be heard. This serves to unsettle dominant accounts; and at the same time, as Oscar Guardiola-Rivera points out, acts as an experimental exercise producing other accounts. Accounts "that would go beyond the criticism of the *status quo*, seeking to inspire action to change it."[16]

The account that has been revealed of 15M through this essay has presented a

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[11] Arendt, H. (2005) *Essays in Understanding*, 1930-1954, New York: Schocken Books, page 346.
[12] Idem., page 355.
[13] Arendt, H. (2005) *The Promise of Politics,* edited and with an Introduction by Jerome Kohn, New York: Schocken Books, page 165.
[14] For a history of dialogical political philosophy from Socrates to Hobbes, Tully recommends Skinner, Q. (1996) *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
[15] Idem., page 546.
[16] Guardiola-Rivera, O. (2012) 'A Jurisprudence of Indignation', *Law Critique*, Number 23 pages 253–270.

peek into 15M's complex and networked multiplicity. Through 'perspicuous representation' or thick description of 15M by means of reciprocal elucidation, the essay revealed some of the constantly mutating practices within 15M. It also brought to the surface the numerous agonisms, differences and convergences that exist between different 15Ms (chapters one and two). Through the presentation of the multifariousness of 15M via this dialogical approach, the essay also excavated ways of being and events that inspire and/or mark individuals being 15M. Through this approach origins and antecedents of 15M were revealed. These are important because they show very clearly that 15M did not appear out of thin air or with the invention of social media. 15M has deep 'routes' and 'roots' in over a century of collective practices of dissent which offer an alternative history of our present. This history of the present shows existing cooperatives and a cooperative spirit, both of which have survived and have animated generations of engaged citizens (chapter three).

The essay has also provided a glimps into the kind of future individuals being 15M are trying to construct by being the future they want to see. This has contributed to our phenomenology of 15M valuable insights about the 15M sisterhood's long-term thinking and constructing, and its deep grasp of the challenges and opportunities faced by Spanish citizens today (chapter four). Finally, the essay has also addressed a body of literature on horizontality, populism, the rise of verticality and the co-optation of two types of power relations into a relationship of subordination (power-over) rather than a democratic relationship of equality (power-with). By expanding Chantal Mouffe's 'engagement with' concept via the use of James Tully's civic and civil descriptions, the essay eliminated a theoretical blind-spot, which facilitates such subordination (chapter five).

Having achieved all the above in the previous chapters, in this concluding

chapter what the essay aims for is to address a paradox that in a certain sense reverberates the *raison d'être* of 15M. This is an important paradox of our times, the never-ending search for democracy via non-democratic means without acknowledging that it cannot be attained non-democratically. Following from this, the chapter presents first the paradox of a democracy-to-come, and then two hypotheses which if reflected on can help overcome this paradox. *First*, the 'Goya Hypothesis', which acts as a cautionary tale pointing out that when elites attempt to steer 'societies in movement' towards institutional politics of the kind instituted by those defending the *status quo*, power-over methods leave leaders who employ them without reliable bases of accountability. And *second* the 'Ever-so-slowly hypothesis', which suggests that individuals being 15M remind us through their actions that in order for democracy to be enacted, both their way of being (power-with) and temporality (one step at a time) have to be taken into account. The first hypothesis crystalized through chapter five, the second has been the mantra of the essay throughout the chapters. The essay's title '*Vamos lentos porque vamos lejos*' (We go ever so slowly because we are going on forever) plays tribute to this hypothesis.

The paradox of a 'democracy-to-come'

In today's context, Nikolas Kompridis suggest that we are "living in the midst of a triumphant but not entirely secure neoliberal order."[17] It is true that governments continue in their hollowing-out processes to displace politics and democracy. It is also true that they bring into being what Kompridis describes as "post- political and post-

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[17] Kompridis, N. (2014) 'Founding Political Critique in a Post-Political World: Towards a Renewal of Utopian Energies', in Albena Azmanova and Mihaela Mihai (editors), *Reclaiming Democracy: Judgment, Responsibility and the Right to Politics*. New York: Routledge, page 1.

democratic forms of governance."[18] Nevertheless, as Pierre Rosanvallon suggests, "regimes claiming to be democratic come in for vigorous criticism almost everywhere."[19] Charles Taylor believes that this is due to the fact that through this hollowing-out process, democracy is "becoming unbelievable, breeding a sense of cynicism, which leads people to opt out of citizenship."[20]

We are living in dark times, times in which those who sit in public squares defending (by enacting) that democracy must be horizontal and dialogical, are treated (by elites) as criminals and are ridiculed whilst being thought of as idealists with no clue about how the world really functions. Depending on the kind of regime within which citizens are enacting such expressive shows of democracy, the level of brutality received from security forces varies in intensity. In Barcelona,[21] for example, such people expose themselves to being identified by police; perhaps beaten or/and arrested; and there is also a chance that a rubber bullet from a police rifle can cost an innocent democracy-enacting citizen an eye.

During these dark times, even many who claim to be friends and allies of those enacting democracy, consider them to be a lost cause. Slavoj Zizek thinks that we should "avoid the temptation of the narcissism of the lost cause: it is too easy to admire the sublime beauty of uprisings doomed to fail".[22] In reference to collective presences such as 15M, Zizek then adds: "they express an authentic rage which is not

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[18] Ibid.

[19] Rosanvallon, P. (2008) *Counter-democracy: Politics in an Age of Distrust* (The Seeley Lectures), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Page 1.

[20] Taylor, C. (2014) *Some Crises of Democracy*, Victoria Colloquium, University of Victoria, November 28th 2014. Here Taylor is referring to citizens leaving institutional forms of citizenship enactment. Of course many people leave those institutional forms and enact citizenship through other spaces.

[21] Elpais.es (09/05/2014) *Protestor lost eye as result of police rubber bullet, Barcelona court rules.* See online: http://elpais.com/elpais/2014/05/09/inenglish/1399653275_244898.html

[22] Zizek, S (2012) *How the Occupy Movement Can Confront a Capitalist System That Defies Reform*, Alternet.org (30/04/2012). See online: http://www.alternet.org/story/155206/zizek%3A_how_the_occupy_movement_can_confront_a_capitalist_system_that_defies_reform

able to transform itself into a minimal positive program of socio-political change.

They express a spirit of revolt without revolution."[23] Chantal Mouffe, in support of

Zizek's view and presenting 15M as a social movement suggests the following:

> "The absence of a real political strategy amongst the movement calling for *democracia real ya*
> indicates that they are still envisaging the political from the liberal perspective, impeding them
> from apprehending the nature of the political."[24]

One would think it rather ironic that when faced with collective presences

whose political strategy is to align means with ends (i.e. in seeking democracy they

enact it), numerous contemporary and classical theorists fail to understand the

language being spoken and therefore misinterpret the real magnitude of what is being

enacted. Chapter five presented a list of public intellectuals supporting Podemos (page

250). Most of these have clearly state-centric understandings. In this sense they miss

the power of what is being enacted with 15M. After having been with 15M sisters, I

believe these theorists see failure where there is effectiveness. When this effectiveness

is 'tamed' or 'silenced' they then tell us that we have finally matured and have

entered the political process of representative institutions. As Hannah Arendt

beautifully expressed it:

> "Our prejudices invade our thoughts; they throw the baby out with the bathwater, confuse
> politics with what would put an end to politics, and present that very catastrophe as if it were
> inherent in the nature of things and thus inevitable."[25]

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[23] Ibid.

[24] Mouffe, C. (2013) How to Interpret the Recent Protest Movements?: An Agonistic Approach, at the 6th Subersive Festival: "The Utopia of Democracy" (06/05/2013). See online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4sWK2KRhBjo

[25] Arendt, H. (2005) *The Promise of Politics*, Edited and with an Introduction by Jerome Kohn, New York: Schocken Books, page 134.

It would seem that the tragedy of our times – these times of war, destruction, and bitter suffering for billions of people – is that we are trapped in Machiavellian thought. It was Machiavelli after all that gave advice to princes along the following lines:

> "For there is such a distance between how one lives and how one ought to live, that anyone who abandons what is done for what ought to be done achieves his downfall rather than his preservation."[26]

It seems that due to this prevalent (or at the very least hegemonic) mind-set, as societies we have accepted that we can obtain democracy by undemocratic means. In fact we seem to convince ourselves (rather absurdly), that we must obtain democracy in this manner. It is because of this fallacy that I think we are unable to see insurgencies such as 15M as exemplars of hope. As the enactment of transcending that which has become the paradox of our times. The democracy we seek and seem never able to attain. As Benjamin Arditi suggests, "insurgencies are connectors, passageways between the existing world and something else to come."[27]

Two slogans of 15M in those early days in the squares across Spain reflect clearly 15M's 'real political strategy' and the spirit of this 'democratic revolution'. They also offer a glimpse into the actuality of a world that might come (as they are enacting it). The first slogan goes as follows: *Me gustas cuando votas, porque estás como ausente* (I like you when you vote because it is as if you were absent)[28].

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[26] Machiavelli, N. (2008) *The Prince,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, page 53.
[27] Arditi, B. (2012) 'The politics of vanishing mediators of the indignados in 2011', Forthcoming in *JOMEC, Journal of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies*.
[28] '15-M y las redes sociales', Sociología: 4° curso Grupo único, asignatura optativa: Movimientos sociales. *Universidad de La Laguna Facultad de Ciencias Políticas y sociales* 2011/2012.

Through these words those being 15M are suggesting that by depositing all our hopes in parliamentary elections we seem absent from politics. The second slogan reads as follows: *Nuestros sueños no caben en vuestras urnas* (Our dreams do not fit in your ballot box).[29] With this phrase those being 15M are telling us that their dreams are guiding their political action and that this action cannot be limited by the ballot box.

The response from elites on both the left and the right to these kinds of ideas has been to try to neutralize the expansive potential of 15M. As Amador Fernández-Savater explains it:

> "Neutralizing the expansive potential of 15M requires that 15M is assigned an identity 'they are this', 'they want this'. Politicians and the media pressure 15M to become a 'valid interlocutor' with its proposals, programs and alternatives. They know that such an identity no longer asks questions and instead occupies a space in the game (or aspires to do so). It becomes a predictable factor in political calculations and the balance of power [power-over]."[30]

Whether from the left or the right, and even in new 'party-movements' like Podemos, there is always it seems gestures that hint at attempts to disempower civic-democratic initiatives such as 15M. These events in which democracy is enacted by the many, seem to generate rejection from the few that think of themselves as elites of some variety. These few usually end up in their struggles for power, manufacturing the consent of citizens in a manner that steers them towards the civil-democratic space of institutional representation.

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[29] Ibid.

[30] Fernández-Savater, A. (2012) "El nacimiento de un nuevo poder social", *Hispanic Review,* Volume 80, Number 4: pages 667-682. Square brackets are my addition.

Nevertheless, what I must point out and I think has been sufficiently documented in the previous chapters of this essay, is that an event took place across the Spanish State starting May 15th of 2011. As Hannah Arendt reminds us "[e]vents, by definition, are occurrences that interrupt routine processes and routine procedures".[31] Since that date, the social world as it had been thought of in the collective imaginary of Spanish citizens has been collapsing as new worlds are being constructed without excessive concretization. Collective presences of numerous kinds (different *demoi*) are coming out of anonymity in collective shouts of indignation, silent communion, and power-with collective co-creation. This reality has been sufficiently documented throughout the chapters of this essay. It clearly reveals that individuals being 15M in their practice and thought are addressing the paradox of a democracy-to-come by being democratic in the here and now.

15M has crystalized at a critical juncture for Spanish citizens, the existence of "more than one form of knowledge and, therefore, of ignorance."[32] In addition, the appearance of 15M has revealed the fact that "different cultures and the social practices they ground have different rules of social time, different temporal codes."[33] 15M has demonstrated through its complex multiplicity that simplification when describing complex systems acts as an authoritarian move. The 15M climate has opened up a new paradigm in Western conceptions of how to enact democracy. In this sense, I am confident that public philosophy stemming from within the numerous networked sisterhoods engaged in continual reciprocal elucidation and co-creation, is going to shed new light on elements of what 15M and the subsequent 15M climate

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[31] Arendt, H. (1972) 'On Violence' in *Crises of the Republic*, San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Company, page 117.
[32] de Sousa Santos, B. (2006) *The rise of the global left: The World Social Forum and beyond*, London: Zed Books, page 34.
[33] Ibid.

have contributed (and are contributing) to the fate of democracy in the Spanish State. And in this sense, to the paradox of a 'democracy-to-come' we find ourselves in.

Two hypotheses drawn from this case study

In thinking of the term hypothesis in its ancient usage, by which hypothesis referred to a summary of the plot of a classical drama;[34] in this section I present two hypotheses that I am confident can summarize important findings derived from this dialogical exploration into and with*in* 15M. I am confident that if thought about carefully these two hypotheses can help in overcoming the paradox of a 'democracy-to-come'. The *first,* I call the 'Goya Hypothesis'. The *second*, I have labelled the 'Ever-so-slowly, every step must embody the ends hypothesis'.

1. Goya Hypothesis

In chapter five of this dissertation we were able to discover what perhaps is the most original of the theses found in this study. When elites attempt to steer 'societies in movement' towards institutional politics of the kind instituted by those defending the *status quo*, power-over methods leave leaders who employ them without reliable bases of accountability; spiraling negative implications flow out of this reality.

The findings in chapter five have revealed that the rise of 'party-movement' Podemos is parasitic on 15M and potentially destructive of it. If Podemos gains power through power-over means, there is a risk that it will govern in a similar manner to that of current state representatives Podemos executives are so critical of. Such a statement is best understood by thinking along with Aldous Huxley and his reflections in *Ends and Means*. As if speaking of the political theorists and political scientists

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[34] Hilborn, R. and Mangel, M. (1997) *The Ecological Detective: Confronting Models with Data,* Princeton: Princeton University Press, page 24.

managing and/or promoting Podemos, Huxley writes in 1941 the following in regards

to theories regarding State power developed by some 'revolutionary thinkers':

"[Revolutionary thinkers] are concerned to prove that the people at the head of their favourite

political party are precisely the people who ought to wield power – to wield it just as

ruthlessly as the tyrants in office at the moment."[35]

As chapters one and two of this thesis have revealed, 15M came into being

and organized and exercised power together. Apart from showing great resilience in a

challenging struggle against the violence of the state, 15M has been effective in all

sorts of horizontal, short and long-term ways. 15M individuals were able to occupy

squares across the country for months. Once the decision was made to move the

encampments, 15M individuals were able to migrate activity to neighbourhoods and

expand from new spaces. 15M individuals in some instances joined other projects; in

others they helped in the confluence of projects; and in others still, they were able to

offer spaces from which to struggle for individuals without prior activist involvement.

Whilst this has been going on, thousands of demonstrations with participation

by hundreds of thousands and millions of people have been self-organized from

spaces imbued by this 15M climate. 15M individuals have been able to organize in

order to take to court some of the biggest fraudsters of this 'economic crisis'.

Thousands of evictions due to repossession have been stopped. Thanks to citizen-lead

initiatives, thousands of people have been able to recover savings swindled by the

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[35] Huxley, A. (1941) *Ends and Means: An Enquiry into the Nature of Ideals and into the Methods employed for their Realization*, London: Chatto & Windus, page 57. As part of the research for this dissertation I interviewed the most prominent leaders of Podemos (at the time of interviewing this new party-movement did not exist). During interviewing, one of Podemos's well-known public figures said to me the following: "There are ten people who need to govern this country; we all know who we are." Considering what chapter five has revealed about the rise of Podemos, I find this comment unfortunate and highly disturbing.

now bailed-out banks. At the same time 15M assemblies have continued in cities, towns and villages across the Spanish State. All this effectiveness, as this essay I am confident supports, has been possible because of the way in which 15M has organized; because of pre-existing horizontal organisations that it has been able to draw on; and because of its tolerance of different projects in different parts of the country. Social media was important, but the ground of the effectiveness of 15M both in short term initiatives and long term projects, has been the mode of organizing and of being-together that individuals being 15M have enacted.

As was suggested in chapter five, the huge civic cooperative base of 15M made possible the new 'party-movement' Podemos. Yet, as was clearly revealed by chapters one, two and four of this text 15M was not built up with Podemos as its purpose. The 15M climate may have made possible the emergence of Podemos, nevertheless, Podemos is very different to 15M. Organizations such as Podemos are not the meaning or significance of 15M; nor are they the aim or *raison d'etre* of those being 15M. 15M is not an instrumental 'mobilization' in order to gain power-over through a party-movement like Podemos. This has been the assumption of mobilization theorists and of grand political theorists throughout the almost four years in which the Spanish State has been affected by a 15M climate. The list of political theorists working along these lines is ample. Some of these have been presented in chapter five. Counter to these assumptions, in chapters one and two when 15M transgendered sisters were asked what 15M is, the majority of responses reflected the following: *15M is a mode of being in the world with others and exercising power together*. This is without a doubt the main argument of the thesis and the reason why interviewing – deep listening to – individuals being 15M has played such a prominent role throughout the essay.

In chapter five, we were able to see how Podemos is a different form of organization to 15M. Podemos is a power-over form of organization within the world of power politics. In this sense, I think it is fair to suggest that Podemos is parasitic on 15M and can be very destructive towards 15M if whilst growing it undermines power-with practices and ideas. As has been shown in chapter five, Podemos violates the means-ends relationships essential to 15M beingness in two very specific ways: *First*, it mistakenly claims it can bring about power-with organizations (or continue power-with organizing) by means of power-over methods. And *second*, it acts in 'crisis time' rather than in the 'ever-so-slow' temporality of being the change in each step we take; this has been a key feature of being 15M.

Because of this violation of means and ends carried out by Podemos, the 'party-movement' could become a threat to the 'being' (power-with) and 'time' (ever-so-slow temporality of being the change) of 15M. The charismatic leaders of Podemos and those political theorists legitimating the project are excited about the prospects of change presented by such an initiative. Nevertheless, a key argument of this essay is that if we enter into a study of Spain's current 15M climate in a non-dialogical manner, we might miss some of the risks presented by enacting power-over strategies for attaining political power whilst undermining power-with ways. Chapter five aimed to elucidate on this issue. Working through chapter five might have helped raise alarms and trigger further analysis into this process. If we observe the rise of Podemos with its power-over and crisis-time view of radical politics, it becomes apparent that through these means the party-movement risks its own future and the future of those it seeks to represent. What I mean by this is that there is a risk that Podemos in dealing with 15M (and other networks of horizontal power-with mutual aid) in such a manner; "neither recognizes nor understands [15M], but, rather, feeds

on and destroys [15M], and, in so doing, defeats itself."[36]

Hannah Arendt in *On Violence* speaks of those who wanting to attain or maintain power through power-over methods risks devouring their own children[37]. Arendt's analysis together with the findings of this study reveals that power-over is certainly capable of devouring both its parents and its children. As Tully points out in his reading of Hannah Arendt's *On Violence*; in her understanding "power-over form of power has a boomerang effect on those who use it, gradually undermining the democratic power-with on which their own authority ultimately rests."[38] It is because of this devouring of both parents and children that I opt to call this hypothesis the Goya hypothesis.

From 1820 until 1823, Francisco Goya worked on a painting titled *Saturn Devouring One of his Children*. In the painting Goya is representing Kronos devouring one of his sons. Having learnt from his parents Ouranos and Gaia that he is destined to be overthrown by his own son and aware of the fact that his children are immortal, as they are born he devours them. After having witnessed Kronos devouring five of her sons, Rheia (the mother of Kronos' children) is determined to hide the sixth. In this sense, when Zeus is born she hides him and hands Kronos a stone wrapped in clothes in place of the baby. Kronos swallows the stone without noticing, and when Zeus is old enough, he confronts his father and forces him to disgorge the children he has swallowed.[39] Kronos devoured his children to be safe, but his hidden, safe, and resentful child comes back to the defeat him. Zeus takes claim of his rightful place; yet, he does so by power-over means. Through this move, he

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[36] James Tully discussing Hannah Arendt's *On Violence* in Oklahoma 2011 (unpublished paper)
[37] Arendt, H. (1972) 'On Violence', in *Crises of the Republic*, San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Company, page 154.
[38] James Tully discussing Hannah Arendt's *On Violence* in Oklahoma 2011. (unpublished paper)
[39] March, J. (2009) *The Penguin Book of Classical Myths*, London: Penguin Books, pages 39- 40.

propels forward for one more generation, a growing vicious cycle of violent domination.

In light of this Goyan representation of Kronos devouring one of his children, and having presented the rise of Podemos in chapter five, it seems to me that we can speak of a Goya hypothesis gestating within the Spanish State. Civil power-over politicians are attempting to steer a move within Spain's 15M climate towards official institutional representation. The form of power-over that exists in representative institutions such as the Spanish institutions rests on power-with in the broader society's lifeworld and is parasitic on it; eating it away (hollowing out). In the Spanish case, the Goya hypothesis is really a cautionary tale (this Goya hypothesis is not a determinant law: the iron law of oligarchy and repression). This tale serves as a warning for members of Podemos, encouraging them to work out a more respectful relationship of mutual accountability with 15M (and other networks of nonviolent and horizontanal mutual aid). The type of power over politics that Podemos is enacting, in other contexts and with other actors, has been known to destroy bonds of sociality altogether. When this has happened the society has become atomised and dysfunctional.

In the case of Spain, as this essay has shown, 15M continues to exist and is actually quite strong. In this sense, power-over practices of Podemos have not destroyed 15M despite serious agonisms they have given rise to. Nevertheless, what is clear is that there is a tendency of power-over movements to destroy their base. Chapter five showed how Podemos is taking steps in this direction. In this sense, the party-movement should learn to radically rethink its relationship with its base. The hypothesis that power-over is parasitic on and can be destructive of power-with

communities is Hannah Arendt's thesis in *On Violence*.[40] Power for Arendt grows out of "the human ability not just to act but to act in concert."[41] If a group that has made power actual fractures, then the power vanishes since it is not the property of a sole individual. Many are conscious of the need to transcend the *status quo*, and in Spain different *demoi* are in movement and self-organizing to face such a struggle. Yet, as ever-so-slow and nonviolent power-with practices are being enacted, Podemos and other party-movements seem to be attempting to co-opt horizontality exemplars. This move seems like an attempt to instrumentalize them towards the attainment of power-over vertical structures of representative government.

Because of this trend, which we observed in chapter five of the essay, it seems appropriate to advice Podemos (and all those seeking social transformation via elections through power-over means) to work towards making their relationships of representation with 15M communities (and others) more representative of, and accountable to, an engaged citizenry (and electorate). Hannah Arendt suggests in *On Violence*, that it is possible that a more democratic form of ongoing accountable and revocable-by-the-base form of representation can come into being. Nevertheless, in order for this to be the case, civic and civil organizations need to be understood as being complementary. If this happens, together they can preclude the iron law of oligarchy.

In the case of Spain and in order to avoid this Goya hypothesis from developing further, it will take both engaged citizens practicing power-with ways and Podemos participants enacting power-over methods, to act in concert and hold hands. In *Ends and Means*, Aldous Huxley quotes a revealing passage from a pamphlet written by Maria Montessori. In it she writes: "In the midst of these adaptations and

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[40] Arendt, H. (1972) 'On Violence' in *Crises of the Republic*, San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Company.
[41] Idem., page 143.

many others which set up a permanent inferiority complex, is born the spirit of devotion – not to say of idolatry – to the *condottieri*, the leaders."[42] If we are to change the *status quo* and build free societies we are going to have to overcome this spirit of devotion. If we are able to do this, the Goya Hypothesis will not materialize since as citizens we will realize that "[d]ictatorial short cuts cannot conceivably take us to our destination."[43] As Huxley says in agreement with Tully, Gandhi, Gregg, Arendt, and Young: "We must march directly towards the goal; if we turn our backs to it we shall merely increase the distance which separates us from the place to which we wish to go."[44]

Perhaps if Podemos happens to win the country's general elections, those enacting power-with will need to keep close proximity to Mahatma Gandhi's view on representative politics. For Gandhi 'consent through elections' is never enough to govern the conduct of elected representatives. In addition, people have to be ready to exercise mass nonviolent civil disobedience in order to 'govern their governors' whenever they abuse the power conditionally delegated to them.[45] It might be the case that with Podemos in power, 15M will need to play this role. However, this is a huge responsibility on 15M that 15M sister might or might not take on.

When Barack Obama became president of the United States of America, community-based organisations that had tirelessly worked for him to attain his power-over position became bitterly disappointed. Soon they realized that he was taken over by professional lobbyists of the banking industry and by the Pentagon's military

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[42] Huxley, A. (1941) *Ends and Means: An Enquiry into the Nature of Ideals and into the Methods employed for their Realization*, London: Chatto & Windus, page 182.
[43] Idem., page 63.
[44] Ibid.
[45] This theme runs through Gandhi's writings, in Hind Swaraj it is ever present. For a good overview of Gandhi's thought see: Gandhi, M. (2008) *The Essential Writings,* ed. Judith M. Brown, Oxford: Oxford University Press. The analysis on Gandhi presented to make this point in the text, stems from dialogue with James Tully on how Richard Gregg understood Gandhi's position on representation.

industrial complex.[46] These community-based organisations at this point wished that they had a strategy of non-cooperation that would hold him to his promises. Nevertheless, they failed to produce one. In Egypt we witnessed how after the removal of Hosni Mubarak the power-with base that had made his fall possible had no control over the situation.[47] In Greece, according to dialogues I have maintained with activists on the ground, power-with channels with Syriza (the now governing party) are rapidly closing.[48]

This Goya hypothesis is gaining strength in Spain at the time of writing. In this sense and learning from events in other countries, it seems sensible to suggest to those practicing power-with politics to prepare for a possible situation in which Podemos governs. If that becomes a reality, engaged power-with citizens would do well to 'govern the governors'. It may even be possible for engaged citizens practicing power-with (such as the 15M sisters) to govern the conduct of Podemos once in power. If this is the case, then acting in concert and holding hands, civil and civic citizens might be able to reform the relationship between the government and the people. Doing so, in a democratic and more accountable manner.

The tragedy of the Goya Hypothesis is that if it continues without being checked and redirected (through a joint effort from those enacting power-over practices and those behaving in power-with ways), it risks distancing the Spanish demos from those visions of possible futures that 15M individuals have been enacting

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[46] For a sense of the feeling towards Obama coming from community-based networks see: Frank, T. (24/08/2014) *Cornel West: "He posed as a progressive and turned out to be counterfeit. We ended up with a Wall Street presidency, a drone presidency"*, Salon.com. See online: http://www.salon.com/2014/08/24/cornel_west_he_posed_as_a_progressive_and_turned_out_to_be_counterfeit_we_ended_up_with_a_wall_street_presidency_a_drone_presidency/

[47] To get a sense of the situation being lived in post-Mubarak Egypt see: Mock, G. (27/06/2014) *How Egypt's New Regime is Silencing Civil Society*, Amnestyusa.org. See online: http://blog.amnestyusa.org/middle-east/how-egypts-new-regime-is-silencing-civil-society/

[48] For a good description of how Syriza is operating in Greece and its effects on power-with networks, see: Karyotis, T. and Broumas, A. (12/10/2014) *Los movimientos sociales frente al ascenso de Syriza y la izquierda parlamentaria*, Diagonalperiodico.net. See online: https://www.diagonalperiodico.net/la-plaza/24233-movimientos-sociales-frente-al-ascenso-syriza-y-la-izquierda-parlamentaria.html

(these were presented in chapter four). Visions, which transmit a possible paradigm shift in the way in which our societies function and are understood. If we are to democratize our hollowed-out democratic institutions, the vicious cycle of the Goya Hypothesis is going to need to turn into a virtuous cycle of power-with social transformation.

2. Ever-so-slowly, every step must embody the ends hypothesis

As the second hypothesis of this thesis, I would like to reflect on what has been the mantra of the essay all along, and without a doubt is the main hypothesis of this study. The Ever-so-slowly, every step must embody the ends hypothesis. In the previous section we discussed the Goya hypothesis as a precautionary tale. This tale warned of the risks of reading events going on in Spain without paying attention to the following points. *First*, remembering not to overlook the means-ends logic of acting 'ever-so-slowly'. And *second*, not ignoring that democracy must be brought about by democratic means to be effective. The tale aimed to remind Podemos executives and political theorists supporting the project to not ignore the valuable lessons revealed by the activity of 15M sisters. Through their actions individuals being 15M remind us that both the way of being (power-with) and the temporality (one step at a time) have to be taken into account if we are to enact democracy.

Richard Gregg suggests that "[s]ociety is a system of many complex forces in mobile equilibrium, and at various times the balance is delicate."[49] Because of this delicate balance, Gregg argues that minute forces have the ability to alter this (by comparison) very large system. In fact, Gregg points out that at times "tiny forces

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[49] Gregg, R. B. (1960) *The Power of Nonviolence*, Canton: Greenleaf Books, page 114.

affect the great mass by an accumulation."[50] What Gregg means by this, is that at times "[s]timuli far below what is called 'the threshold of response,' when sufficiently repeated may cause an accumulative 'stair-case effect.'"[51] These stair-case effects of stimuli that Gregg describes are often quite powerful. This essay has revealed how 15M slow-time has had immediate effects in the present. These immediate effects lie in the fact that the day-to-day life of 15M is democratic. But in addition, it has immediate effects in a second sense. In that the little, nonviolent, democratic, horizontal, power-with steps that individuals being 15M have taken (and are taking), are having kaleidoscopic transformative effects that can lead to unpredictable tipping-points.

Throughout the essay but particularly in chapter one, chapter two and chapter four, the ever-so-slowly, every step must embody the ends way of being of 15M has crystalized. In addition, through the multilogue presented throughout the essay, we have been able to observe the ability of the 15M sisterhood to adapt to and evolve within an ever-changing and ever-more repressive environment. 15M's effectiveness and continuity suggest that the objection that the ever-so-slowly approach is "ineffective" is based on a false assumption: namely, that social change can be brought about by cause-effect means that are unrelated to their ends. Instead through the way of being of 15M sisters and the numerous outcomes of their efforts, we are able to see (as highlighted above) *two* very important features of this ever-so-slow, means in alignment with ends way of being. *First*, it brings about real effects in each step, and *second*, it sets in motion cumulative effects that may bring about tipping points.

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[50] Ibid.
[51] Idem. Here Gregg is referring to the work of Max Verworn. See Verworn, M. (1913) *Irritability*, New Haven: Yale University Press, pages 209-234.

Individuals being 15M are governing themselves in numerous ways that supersede our current structures of representative government. In particular, individuals being 15M are doing this by aligning means and ends and acting in an ever-so-slow manner. 15M sisters are creating their own complex system (in the form of a set of counter-conducts), which interacts within and alters the complex system of society. Counter-conducts of 15M, offer us a sense of hope in that the *status quo* is actually being transcended. This I say in alignment with the following argument coming from Hannah Arendt:

> "Since the end of human action, as distinct from the end products of fabrication, can never be reliably predicted, the means used to achieve political goals are more often than not of greater relevance to the future world than the intended goals."[52]

In the case of Spain, the cumulative effects of 15M are visible and they have been presented throughout this essay. For example, it is clear that Podemos would not exist if it were not for the climate generated by 15M. Podemos leaders are the first to make such a claim. By being ethical (practicing freedom informed by reflection)[53] 15M sisters are transforming what Mahatma Gandhi referred to as 'nominal' democracy, into what he described as complete or integral democracy *(purna swaraj)*[54]. The size and reach of 15M's integral democracy varies in accordance to the number of people enacting it at a particular moment in time. Yet, as the essay chapters

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[52] Arendt, H. (1972) 'On Violence', in *Crises of the Republic*, San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Company, page 106.

[53] In *On the government of the living*, Michel Foucault writes the following in regards to ethics: "Yes, for what is ethics, if not the practice of freedom, the conscious [*réfléchie*] practice of freedom?... Freedom is the ontological condition of ethics. But ethics is the considered form that freedom takes when it is informed by reflection." See Foucault, M. (1994) 'On the government of the living' in P. Rabinow (ed), *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, Volume One, London: Penguin Books, page 284.

[54] See Pantham, T. (1983) 'Thinking with Mahatma Gandhi: Beyond Liberal Democracy', *Political Theory*, Volume 11, Number 2 (May, 1983), page 165.

have shown, without a doubt individuals being 15M are enacting what Gandhi would have referred to as integral democracy. I say that 15M sisters are bringing forth this integral democracy, in that in their acting together they are being "both co-subjects and co-authors of the relations of power through which they coordinate their collective action."[55] Individuals being 15M are successful and effective in this process because of the "practices of freedom in their everyday relationships with themselves, others and the environment."[56] Adding to this, through their practices, 15M sisters are bringing into being an 'abyss of freedom' (language used by Arendt and picked up by Tully). By this what I am referring to is that through their practices of freedom they are initiating "other events that cannot be predicted or controlled".[57]

In their ways of being, 15M sisters are behaving in a similar manner to that of the Wintu people of north-central California. Rebecca Solnit in *A field guide to getting lost*, describes how in the language and cultural imagination of the Wintu; "the self only exists in reference to the rest of the world, no you without mountains, without sun, without sky."[58] Similarly, individuals being 15M understand that their power comes from acting in concert and from understanding that in their horizontal togetherness they reclaim their wholeness. The power-with of their oneness is a silent power. As Richard Gregg reminds us, "[i]n nature, the most important forces are silent."[59] Because of this silence, Gregg suggests that "[a]side from their ultimate results, those forces in themselves are not dramatic or adequately appreciated by the majority of mankind."[60] Nevertheless, "despite the slowness of human recognition",[61]

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[55] Tully, J. (2013) *Global Order and Disorder in the History of Political Thought* ,Senate House, University of London (June 3-4 2013)

[56] Tully, J. (2013) *Thinking Along With Feminism and the Abyss of Freedom* (Unpublished paper), page 18.

[57] Idem., page 6.

[58] Solnit, R. (2006) *A field guide to getting lost*, London: Canongate, page 17.

[59] Gregg, R. B. (1960) *The Power of Nonviolence*, Canton: Greenleaf Books, page 113.

[60] Ibid.

the nonviolent and nondramatic power-with of 15M sisters is enacting powerful changes in our practices and understandings of democracy.

It is true that the slowness of this 'means and ends in alignment' approach to social transformation discourages many political actors. Nevertheless, as Richard Gregg reminds us "[t]he lack of immediate victory does not prove the inefficiency of the method. The discouragement proves only a failure to understand the process."[62] In this sense, in the case of Spain, whilst commentators debate the inefficiency of the ways of being of 15M, the sisters are building "relationships of 'mutual aid' or mutual enlightenment."[63] In their deeply diverse sisterhood, they are negotiating over complex norms of recognition and interaction relevant to their everyday activities. In this sense, they are enacting a powerful kind of 'conviviality'.[64] By this I mean a way of relating between humans (and humans and non-humans), which although seeing a rebirth in the way of being of 15M, "is as old as the first self-organising human community".[65] James Tully describes the kind of relationship built by 15M sisters, as "the everyday type of power relationship that, in countless varieties, creates and sustains society and sociability, and underlies all other types of power relationship."[66]

In *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*, Peter Kropotkin describes this power relationship we are seeing today enacted by the 15M sisterhood. He refers to it as mutual aid. Kropotkin points out, that despite the systematic destruction of mutual aid institutions over the centuries "the nucleus of mutual-support institutions, habits, and customs remains alive with the millions."[67] These millions, Kropotkin argues, not only

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[61] Ibid.
[62] Idem., page 118.
[63] Tully, J. *Thinking Along With Feminism and the Abyss of Freedom* (Unpublished paper), page 11.
[64] Tully, J. (2008) *Public philosophy in a New Key. Volume one: Democracy and Civic Freedom*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, page 313.
[65] Tully, J. (2014) *Trust, Mistrust and Distrust in Diverse Societies* (unpublished paper), page 10.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Kropotkin, P. (2006) *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*, New York: Dover Publications, page 215.

enact mutual aid institutions, but also "endeavour to reconstitute them where they have ceased to exist".[68] In *Blessed Unrest: How the Largest Movement in the World Came into Being and Why No One Saw It Coming,* Paul Hawken seems to support Kropotkin's claim. Hawken argues that today these mutual aid networks constitute the largest informal, symbiotic fellowship of engaged citizens in the world.[69] As Hawken puts it, it makes up a network of "ordinary and some-not so-ordinary individuals willing to confront despair, power, and incalculable odds in an attempt to restore some semblance of grace, justice, and beauty to this world."[70]

Through the dialogical encounter that has been this essay, the 15M sisterhood has revealed the healthy existence of mutual aid institutionality within the Spanish State. The presence and expansion in Spain of this way of being in symbiotic fellowship between engaged citizens is good news for sisters around the world facing the numerous challenges of our age. 15M sisters are demonstrating that both way of being (power-with) and temporality (one step at a time) have to be taken into account if we are to enact democracy. I am confident that the findings of this research lend support to those arguing that means and ends must align and that change must be ever-so-slow if we are to live as democrats in democratic societies. I am also hopeful that through this essay, I have managed to crystalize the numerous ways in which 15M individuals have brought about real effects in their every-step. It has been the intent of these pages, to shed some light on how the cumulative effect of sisterhood activity within the current 15M climate in Spain, might be propelling us forward towards a tipping point in the *status quo*.

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[68] Idem., page 189.
[69] Hawken , P. (2007). *Blessed Unrest: How the Largest Movement in the World Came into Being and Why No One Saw It Coming.* New York: Viking Press.
[70] Idem., page 4.

Closing Remarks

As the economic crisis began in Spain, representatives of the Spanish state did not hesitate to set aside democratic and legal institutions in order to exercise authoritarian power. This power-over state repression was aimed at protecting the *status quo* and the programs of austerity being imposed on the population (ample evidence supporting this statement is provided in the appendix to this essay on page 313). This behaviour is in alignment with the general thesis suggesting that European and Western representative governments tied to unregulated capitalist development and the war machine necessary to protect them, will 'hollow-out' democratic institutions whenever they feel the need to do so.

There is nothing exceptional about the Spanish State in this regard. Of course, there is uniqueness in the Spanish scenario given its recent Civil War; its forty years of dictatorship; and its relative short span of democracy. The separation between dictatorship and democracy in Spain has never really been fully attained, the line has always been blurry. I think the ghost of dictatorship has been ever-present in the pages of this essay stemming from dialogues with 15M participants. In this sense, in the case of Spain what is being hollowed-out is an already extremely hollow democracy. Nevertheless, we are seeing how across European and Western representative governments the hollowing-out of democracy is taking place. In each country this hollowing-out follows a particular 'local' process and adapts to 'local' conditions.

In the case of Spain, 15M sisters have come together in opposition to such hollowing-out. Through their actions they have helped crystalize the actions of those holding decision-making positions in power-over representative government. The responses received by those enacting democracy in Spain from those governing the

country, is indicative of the regression towards authoritarian rule that is being experienced under the guise of hollow democratic institutions. Alessandro Pizzorno has suggested that due to this hollowing-out process, secular democracy is being challenged. Populations less likely to take for granted its moral legitimacy and the superiority of the policy and societal outcomes it guarantees are rebelling.[71] Nadia Urbinati points out that this hollowing-out is creating a situation by which all that citizens can do is make noise and observe what elites say and do.[72] In 2011, John McCormick coined the term Machiavellian democracy to describe this kind of scenario.[73] However, irrelevant of how we term it, what is clear is that through this process official channels are revealing their ineffectiveness and limitations as spaces from which citizens can exercise citizenship. This is what James Tully and others refer to as the "democratic deficit."[74]

Learning with individuals being 15M about their struggles has revealed this democratic deficit in the Spanish State. The dialogue reveals that in the Spanish State the kinds of societal reformulations that are needed in order to overcome the challenges we as citizens face, are not going to stem from governmental action. The government might follow if pressured. Nevertheless, engaged citizens acting in concert are the ones currently initiating the kind of work needed. Etienne de La Boetie reminds us, that "it has always happened that tyrants, in order to strengthen their power, have made every effort to train their people not only in obedience and servility toward themselves, but also in adoration."[75] With this as precautionary wisdom, it

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[71] Vaccari, C. (2012) *Conference Report: Democracy and Dissent*, La Pietra Dialogues, International roundtable, New York University Florence April 17, 2012.
[72] Ibid.
[73] McCormick, J. (2011) *Machiavellian Democracy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
[74] Tully, J. (2013) *Global Disorder and Two Responses,* Global Order and Disorder in the History of Political Thought, Senate House, University of London (June 3-4 2013)
[75] de La Boetie, E. (1975) *The Politics of Obedience: The Discourse of Voluntary Servitude*, Montreal: Black Rose Books, page 69.

would seem reasonable to argue that if as citizens we are to have a chance at conviviality, we are going to need to engage in the kinds of activities that 15M sisters are putting forth. What individuals being 15M are presenting are perhaps exemplars to 'follow without imitating' (here I am borrowing from Nietzsche).[76] 15m sisters remind us to overcome our adoration, obedience and servility to those elites guaranteeing the *status quo*. Hegemons will always as James Tully points out, allow the weaker parties to have a "limited say and hand in the relationship".[77] In spite of this, ultimately the hegemon will interact to retain "the final say and upper hand."[78]

The lessons that we can learn from the 15M climate that began in May 15th of 2011 vary in accordance to our position in the situation. Those in governmental power-over positions should pay close attention to the history of the Spanish State and to events taking place within the country today. Perhaps from their analysis they will understand that in their power-over struggles they might be devouring themselves, as they seem to be devouring Spanish citizens. Elites that are claiming to present an alternative to the *status quo* (I am thinking here of Podemos and other party-movement initiatives) should also be cautious of reproducing the same structures of domination they are claiming to oppose. Perhaps from learning of the way of being of 15M sisters, executives in Podemos can redefine their own ways of being. In this sense, they might perhaps begin to enact relationships between citizens on power-with, dialogical, accountable-to-the-base relationships of intersubjective love. As of today, Podemos executives are behaving in the manner that Hannah Arendt suggests professional revolutionaries usually behave. That is, they are not making the

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[76] Nietzsche, F. (1914) 'Schopenhauer as Educator', in *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*, edited by Oscar Levy, New York: McMillan Company.
[77] Tully, J. (2014) *Trust, Mistrust and Distrust in Diverse Societies* (unpublished paper), page 11.
[78] Ibid.

revolution, but instead are "rising to power after it has broken out"[79]. According to Arendt, their rise to power "lies less in their theories and mental or organizational preparation than in the simple fact that their names are the only ones which are publicly known."[80] If elites in Podemos want to be, in an Arendtian sense, a part of the 'not yet' instead of the 'no longer' they are going to need to play the role of sisters instead of that of oppressive fathers.

Finally, in the case of those being sisters and enacting their multiple, dialogical, horizontal, and nonviolent power-with ways, perhaps the lesson we can derive from such an essay as this one, is that we should pay more attention to those who mock us. Barbara Demming suggests that when we are being mocked we are having our thought and practice caricatured. As Demming further explains, although this caricature reveals the ignorance of those mocking our nonviolent, power-with approach, "it reveals, too, a great deal about our own failure to carry experiments with it far enough" (the extent of 15M experimentation was revealed through chapters one, two, four and five).[81]

One cannot predict what the Spanish State of a near future will look like. 15M sisters claim they are not being represented by elites in power. New elites are trying to claim this power through telling Spanish citizens that they are doing so to return power to the people. This has been shown by this study to be contradictory to their actions in numerous ways. Hannah Arendt suggests in *On Violence* that there might be room for a democratic form of representation that embodies power-with to a sufficient extent. Richard Gregg suggests that such a government might work. If it is to have a chance, however, Gregg suggests that these people need to be "born with a

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[79] Arendt. H. (2000) *The Portable Hannah Arendt*, Edited with an Introduction by Peter Baehr, New York: Penguin Books, page 520.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Deming, B. (1971) *Revolution and Equilibrium*, New York: Grossman Publishers, page 218.

keen ability to understand human relationships and a capacity for organizing and stimulating people".[82] With people like this, Gregg suggests that it could work; if they can govern exercising such a position of power "without pride, selfishness or coercion, and in a sincere and pure spirit of service."[83] According to Mahatma Gandhi, for such a government to be constructive and nonviolent, its organization must be structured as an oceanic circle rather than a pyramid.[84] These are optimistic, yet cautious acknowledgments of the possibility of an ethical representative government. They give hope to those of us living under systems of representative oppression. This hope can be further enhanced by lived experiences such as 15M. Nevertheless, if we are to have representatives during this much needed virtuous cycle of societal regeneration, we are going to have to dispel prejudices and start from a position of friendship. For Hannah Arendt, such a friendship will only be born out of equality.[85] If we are to get to this friendship amongst equals, I think the experiences of being 15M in Spain can be useful. They seem to reveal that we are going to need what was referred to in a Nomis Foundation Workshop, as 'ecosystemic thinking' or 'unalienated thinking'. David Kahane suggested in this encounter, that such a way of thinking, which allows for friendship amongst equals to evolve will be required in order to be able to transcend our vicious social system. According to Kahane, through unalienated thinking we might be able to coordinate action "across subaltern socioecosystems, legal struggles, and within representative systems to move beyond

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[82] Gregg, R. B. (1960) *The Power of Nonviolence*, Canton: Greenleaf Books, page 133.

[83] Ibid.

[84] This is how Gandhi explains this kind of government: "Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble – sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units." See Gandhi, M. (1942) *Democracy: Real and Deceptive*, compiled by R. K. Prabhu, Ahmedabad: Navajivan, pages 73-74.

[85] Arendt, H. (2005) *The Promise of Politics*, Edited and with an Introduction by Jerome Kohn, New York: Schocken Books, page 101.

our hegemonic, unsustainable and vicious social system."[86]

At present, the Spanish State is still imbued by the 15M climate that has permeated through this essay. In this sense, unalienated thinking as described above, is gaining popularity. Nevertheless, whilst thought and action continue to propel us forward in our creative expansion, it would seem important to think about our practices; our means and ends; and the temporality of our activities. This essay has presented understandings and meanings stemming from a dialogue with*in* the 15M sisterhood. We have heard the voices of those being 15M. They have explained to us how 15M has developed from their particular points of view. The sisters have given us their own interpretation of their struggles and of historical struggles with*in* the Spanish State. Through working with 15M sisters we have been able to project possible futures for Spain. The essay has also given us a preliminary look into the new phenomenon of the party-movement. In Spain this is perhaps best represented today by Podemos. Through this method of reciprocal elucidation we have also been able to present two hypotheses which if understood can help in overcoming the paradox of a 'democracy-to-come'.

As I close this study, the social, political and economic situation faced by citizens in Spain shows no signs of improvement. Yet, cooperative citizens continue to surprise with their creative power-with mutual aid. It is because of the irruption of 15M into the political arena of the country, that the once hegemonic *Cultura de la Transición* (Culture of the Transition) has been broken. As Amador Fernández-Savater writes: "the culture of the transition is perceived every-less as protection and

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[86] Kahane, D. (2014) *Climate deliberation in claimed and invited spaces*, Nomis Foundation Workshop on Nature and Value, London, June 23 2014.

ever-more as the source of contemporary dangers."[87] This displacement of hegemonic

thought is a tremendous success achieved by citizens acting in concert. If we are to

think about 15M in alignment with Hannah Arendt, it is not unconceivable to think of

15M just as we would think of a miracle. That is, in the sense that "every new

beginning is by nature a miracle when seen and experienced from the standpoint of

the processes it necessarily interrupts."[88]

15M has interrupted Spain's *status quo*, these engaged sisters have done so

through going ever-so-slowly with the aim of going on forever. Through their activity

they are "stimulating their interdependent neighbours to reciprocate – and thus to

grow, diversify and co-evolve together in ever-widening circles."[89] In this sense, it

seems fair to claim as James Tully might suggest, that the 15M sisterhood is

"autopoietic, symbiotic and symbiogenetic".[90]

A reading of Hannah Arendt's *The Human Condition*, would suggest that due

to the fact that actions have no end we might not be able to predict the outcome of the

actions of those being 15M. As she expresses through this no-end to action, "[t]he

process of a single deed can quite literally endure throughout time until mankind itself

has come to an end."[91] Thinking along with Arendt, it might be easy to understand

how for those of us not being 15M, the deeds of 15M sisters might be

incomprehensible. Yet, it would seem following her logic on this issue, that the

sisterhood in its going ever-so-slowly in order to go on forever approach seems to be

bringing into Spanish politics Arendt's understanding of the temporality of deeds. In

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[87] Fernández- Savater, A. (2012) "El nacimiento de un nuevo poder social", *Hispanic Review,* Volume 80, Number 4 (2012): pages 667-682.

[88] Arendt, H. (2005) *The Promise of Politics*, Edited and with an Introduction by Jerome Kohn, New York: Schocken Books, page 112.

[89] Tully, J. (2014) *Reconciliation Here on Earth*, College of Sustainability and King's College Dalhousie University, March 20 2014, page 28.

[90] Ibid.

[91] Arendt, H. (1958) *The Human Condition*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, page 233.

this sense, it could be that our paradox of a 'democracy-to-come' might eventually be overcome, even though the process might be ever-so-slow and be going on forever.

There are infinite multi-causal factors that we cannot know about, nothing is set on stone. The electoral race is picking up speed in the country. Occupied social centres continue to be closed through violent evictions. In the meantime, the mistrustful relationship between civil and civic citizens approaching the institutional question continues to be woven. Despite the cautionary tale of the Goya Hypothesis, the irruption of Podemos into the electoral arena marks yet another tipping point; the institutionality enacted via the country's transition to democracy is for the first time being seriously challenged from within. If now attention can be paid to the 'ever-so-slow hypothesis' we might understand the role of electoral politics from a different and more inclusive frame. As this chapter has revealed, the problem of treating grass-roots organisations as instrumental means to gain political power rather than ongoing and intergenerational forms of cooperative organisations in their own right (and as the basis of representative institutions in practice), has been a central problem throughout the 20th century and a whole body of critical literature has developed around it. It is not new; there is a whole century of practice and reflection on it. Nevertheless a historic opportunity has opened up for these ideas and practices as Spain finds itself immersed in a 15M climate.

Since this committed multilogue began in the Spanish State with the event which is May 15th of 2011, different peoples have been entering and exiting dialogue due to a variety of reasons. Trust, mistrust and distrusts are ever-present in this agonistic societal conversation. Most of us are in the conversation now, in some way or another. 15M and the multiple possibles opened up since and by 15M, are now discussed in hairdressers; bars; television shows; newspapers; parliaments; bread

shops; and in taxi cabs. 15M is ever-present in the collective imagination of Spanish citizens when thinking about the past, the present and the future of our society. We have changed the world and we are yet to realize our achievements (as numerous individuals being 15M mentioned during interviewing). We are living in what Hannah Arendt describes as the time of "no longer and not yet"[92], what she explains as a kind of "historic no man's land"[93]. In it "the decline of the old, and the birth of the new" are coexisting.[94] In this sense our old ways might be blinding us and depriving us of enjoying the leap forward humanity is perhaps making. The collective silence of May 15th of 2011 marked a tipping point. It would seem from my dialogical engagement with 15M sisters, as if multiple *demoi* in Spain are gathering momentum and building themselves up towards a kind of communion that is not momentary but continual.

The phenomenon that calls itself 15M, presents a whole infrastructure of mutual aid organisations. This infrastructure is broad, connected, historical and inter-generational. It presents opposition to the power-over infrastructure of the Spanish State and it is different in kind to the organisation presented by the state. In this sense, insofar as it is a war of engagement of some kind as theorists discussed in chapter five are claiming, then the two parties are organised differently and in fact engage differently (nonviolently versus repressively). This is the field of struggle and all the nonviolent theorists have presented the world in this manner.

The 15M climate feels and looks like a complex; mutating and dialogic; collective and cooperative; agonistic and transformative climate. 15M is enacting a *mode of being in the world with others and exercising power together*. Through its mode of being, 15M is offering alternatives to the hollowing-out of democracy that is

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[92] Hannah, A. (2005) Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954, New York: Schocken Books, page 158.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid.

being enacted with the aim of maintaining the *status quo*. Along these lines, 15M is also presenting an alternative power-with approach, to the power-over attempts towards social, political and economic transformation enacted by projects like Podemos. Through its practices, theories, and multiple traditions and futures, the phenomenon that calls itself 15M reveals the meaning of the 15M slogan *vamos lentos porque vamos lejos* (we go ever-so-slowly because we are going on forever).

Torneria de Can Poeti, Les Planes d'Hostoles, July 15th 2015

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Appendix

This appendix attempts to present an approximation to the political, economic and social reality of Spain. It attempts to do this by presenting macro-economic, macro-political, and macro-social data. This data is indicative of the state of the country. It is also indicative of the direction taken by elites in positions of institutional representation in order to steer the State forward. I include this in the appendix instead of the main body of the essay. I do this because although it is useful information for the reader, it is not the main purpose of this essay to elucidate on state actions. The aim of the essay is to understand that which refairs to itself as 15M.

Spanish Leviathan[1]

From November 2013 until the time of writing in December 2014, the brutal attack on democratic rights by the State has been unprecedented. At least umprecedented during this short post-dictatorial period of democracy that started in the late 1970s. In contrast, the response by civil and civic citizens attempting to hold hands whilst struggling together from the country's streets has been exemplary. The aim of this section is to shed light on this struggle. I chose to focus mainly on 2014 because this is the year that follows my interviewing in 2013. Whereas the main body of the essay reveals how much has been done from within the 15M climate since the interviewing process came to an end, here we can see how different state actors have responded.

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[1] Here I am thinking of Spain through the lens of Thomas Hobbes's Leviathan. Hobbes concluded in his *Leviathan*, that once low-intensity democratic institutions are established so too is absolute authority. In this sense he states: "[B]ecause every subject is by this institution author of all the actions, and judgments of the sovereign instituted; it follows, that whatsoever he doth, it can be no injury to any of his subjects; nor ought he to be by any of them accused of injustice." Hobbes, T. (2008) *Leviathan or The Matter, Forme and Power of a Common Wealth Ecclesiasticall and Civil,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, page 118.

This descriptive media analysis is divided into *five* areas; each dealing with a particular issue of importance (together with their evolution); from November 2013 until December 2014. In this sense, this text is divided into the following themes: First it begins with *The State of Spain*. Second, it follows with *Citizens as enemies*. Third, it presents *Sovereignty and the right to self-determination*. Fourth, it brings forth *Mounting tensions*, and finally five, it ends with *Crisis of the Monarchy*.

1. *The state of Spain*

Months before my interviewing came to an end in November 2013, Joan Subirats, professor of political science at the University of Barcelona, published an article that appeared in the newspaper ElPais. In it Subirats described the situation in Spain in the following manner: "The moment is approaching in which demanding a democratic political life will be an insurrectional act; an act of revolution."[2] As a large part of the Spanish population has learnt from stories told through the media over the last year, the country is in a state of permanent emergency. By the end of 2013, this permanent state of emergency had already reached a level of officially undeclared national tragedy. By September of 2013, Unicef was reporting that 27.2% of infants in Spain were living in poverty. This was attributed to a 65% reduction in public expenditure for basic social services.[3] According to Intermón Oxfam, if austerity measures continued along the same path, by the year 2025, 20 million people (42% of the population) would be poor. The Oxfam report, with an introduction by Nobel prize in economics laureate Joseph Stiglitz, highlighted that already by the end of 2012, more than 12 million people (27% of the population) were living in poverty. In

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[2] Subirats, J. (2013) *La democracia como revolución*, Elpais.com (28/07/2013).
[3] Huffingtonpost.es (21/09/2013) *Malnutrición infantil en España:"Jamás había visto casos tan desgarradores como este año."*

addition, the report pointed out that more than half a million new people in Spain

crossed the poverty line every year.[4]

By December of 2013, The Lancet was reporting that the Spanish Government

had undermined the principle of universal health care coverage. The magazine

suggested this had been achieve by enacting a Royal Decree limiting access to free

services. The report pointed out, that this contradicted the UN resolution urging

governments to move towards universal access to affordable and quality health-care.[5]

Reflecting on The Lancet report, The Economist ensued by asking whether Spain was

on the verge of a health crisis. The magazine cited Elena Urdaneta, from Doctors of

the World, describing the policy's unfairness and its extreme danger to public health.[6]

The year 2013 came to a close and Human Rights Watch informed us that

austerity measures were destroying the lives of those most vulnerable.[7] We also learnt,

that during the financial downturn, Spain's poorest were the most affected among

OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) nations. Whilst

the wealthiest 10% saw their incomes fall by 1%; for the poorest 10% income fell

14%.[8] According to a report from Spain's National Statistics Institute, over one

million people in the country had not had a job since 2010. In the country 'very long

term unemployment' (more than three years without work) had risen by more than

500% since 2007.[9]

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[4] Esteso Pove, M. J. (2013) *Cada año aumenta en 525.000 las personas que viven bajo el umbral de la pobreza*, Diagonalperiodico.net (02/10/2013).
[5] Legido, H. et al. (2013) *Erosion of universal health coverage in Spain,* The Lancet, Volume 382, Issue 9909, Page 1977, 14 December 2013.
[6] Economist.com (16/12/2013) *Is Spain on the verge of a public health-care crisis?*
[7] Elpais.com (21/01/2014) *Human Rights Watch afirma que "los recortes destruyen a los más vulnerables".*
[8] Burgen, S. (2014) *Spain's poor affected the most among OECD nations in financial downturn,* Theguardian.com (18/03/2014).
[9] Rt.com (30/05/2014) '*National disaster': Spain sees 500% rise in 'very long-term unemployment'.*

In 2014, we learnt that Spain was the leading European country in youth unemployment. A 53.8% unemployment rate amongst those under 25.[10] We also learnt that in the year 2013 alone, 49,600 families had lost their homes through repossession.[11] Ada Colau, the most visible spokesperson of the PAH referred to this as "the normalization of barbarism."[12] By the end of June of 2014, 26,500 more families had already lost their homes in the first six months of 2014 alone.[13] In addition, we learnt from Cáritas, that 66% of the population in the country was affected by social exclusion (whether in regards to employment, housing, health and/or education).[14] From the *Centro de Acogida Assís* (Assís homeless shelter) in Barcelona we learnt that every five days a homeless person was dying in Spain.[15] From Oxfam we discovered that all this was happening as the country presented the second-highest inequality in Europe. With the richest 1% owning as much wealth as 70% of the population and the twenty richest people in the country having increased their wealth by 15.5 billion dollars in one year alone.[16]

Amidst this social genocide, people living in the Spanish State began to repeatedly hear stories in the media about racketeers running the country. The Group of States against corruption (GRECO), of the council of Europe, published a report in which it warned of the grave loss of credibility suffered by Spain's official institutions. This, it suggested, was due to the numerous corruption scandals sweeping the country. The same report stated that the independence of the CGPJ *Consejo General del Poder Judicial* (General Council of the Judiciary) could not be

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[10] Eldiario.es (29/08/2014) *España vuelve a ser líder del paro juvenil líder del paro juvenil en Europa.*
[11] Eldiario.es (19/05/2014) *50.000 familias perdieron su casa en 2013, un 11% más que en 2012.*
[12] Publico.es (16/03/2014) *Ada Colau: "En España se está normalizando la barbarie.*
[13] Publico.es (13/11/2014) *Más de 26.500 familias perdieron su casa en los seis primeros meses de 2014.*
[14] Publico.es (28/10/2014) *El 66% de la población española está afectado por laexclusión social.*
[15] 20minutos.es (13/11/2014) *Cada cinco días muere una persona sin hogar en España.*
[16] Neurope.eu (31/10/2014) *The richest one percent of Spaniards have as much wealth as 70 percent of the entire population Spain second highest inequality in the EU.*

guaranteed, and that this needed to be corrected.[17] In a different report, this time

published by the European Commission, it turned out that 95% of the people polled

by the Commission saw corruption as well rooted in the country, and 63% felt directly

affected by it.[18] According to the CGPJ, there were 1700 open judicial proceedings

related to corruption. Already 500 individuals had been charged and only a little over

twenty had served some time in prison.[19] In addition, according to Chief of Police

Ignacio Cosidó, the police had 82 active operations dealing with political corruption,

which affected over 1000 people.[20]

By October of 2014, corruption had spiralled out of control. It turned out that

the biggest banking bailout in the history of Spain (22.4 billion euros thus far) had

partially been used to finance the undeclared expenses of 83 advisors and executives

of the bank.[21] By using 'black' credit cards (no-limit credit cards kept hidden from the

bank's official accounts) these advisors and executives had spent between themselves

15 million euros in ten years.[22] To add insult to injury, it turned out that one of the

people who benefited from these cards, ex-cabinet chief of the Treasury Department

José María Buenaventura, first resigned following the scandal, and then took up new

employment in the *Servicio de Auditoria Interna de la Agencia Tributaria* (Internal

Auditing Services of the Treasury Department). From this new post he would be

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[17] Publico.es (15/01/2014) *El Consejo de Europa reclama un mayor control de los diputados y duda de la independencia del CGPJ.*

[18] Queralt, J. (2014) *La corrupción está en la política*, Eldiario.es (22/02/2014).

[19] Europapress.es (20/04/2014) *Radiografía de la corrupción en España: cerca de 1.700 causas, más de 500 imputados y sólo una veintena en prisión.*

[20] Duva, J. (2014) *La policía tiene 82 casos de corrupción política que afectan a 1.000 personas, Elpais.com* (11/06/2014).

[21] The Bailout was given to Bankia. Bankia is a branch of Banco Financiero de Ahorros (Financial Savings Bank), which came into being in December of 2010 in order to try and stabilize the banking system by merging the most stressed savings banks in the country. Caja Madrid, Bancaja, La Caja de Canarias, Caja Ávila, Caixa Laietana, Caja Segovia, y Caja Rioja. The bailout was financed by the FROB *Fondo de reestructuración ordenada bancaria* (Orderly bank restructuring fund), and the FROB now owns 100% of the entity. For more information visit Bankia online at bankia.com.

[22] 20minutos.es (04/10/2014) *El escándalo de las 'tarjetas B' de Caja Madrid: qué es, de dónde surge y a quiénes afecta.*

overseeing tax inspectors from the only department within the agency, with full access to all the agency's databases.[23]

During October, the Spanish population also learnt, that 75% of the ministers serving during the PP government of Jose María Aznar (1996-2004) were in some way affected by judicial proceedings related to corruption.[24] In addition, before the month could come to a close, a new corruption scandal surfaced. This time fifty-one people were arrested in *Operación Púnica*, which tracked 250 million euros in illicit public works programs. This corruption ring included members of four different political parties PP, PSOE, IU, and UDM *Unión demócrata Madrileña (Democratic Union of Madrid)*. Ex-secretary General of the PP in Madrid, Francisco Granados was amongst the defendants.[25]

By November of 2014, Transparency International's Global Corruption Barometer revealed that Spain was eighth in their ranking of countries with the most corrupt political parties.[26] That same month, five associations of prosecutors and judges warned that corruption could cause the collapse of rule of law in Spain.[27] In addition, we also learnt, from judge Pablo Ruz's (instructor of the Gürtel case) court order, that the PP had financed itself using funds traced to illegal activity.[28] According to the court order, the relationship between the PP and the corruption ring was

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[23] Elboletin.com (10/10/2014) *Un implicado en el escándalo de las 'tarjetas b' de Caja Madrid pasa a vigilar a los inspectores de Hacienda.*

[24] Publico.es (21/10/2014) *El 75% del Gobierno Aznar está imputado, cobró sobresueldos o duerme en prisión.*

[25] Expansion.com (28/10/2014) *Los 51 detenidos en la 'Operación Púnica' contra la corrupción empiezan hoy a declarar ante el juez.*

[26] Bolsamania.com (01/11/2014) *España, octavo país del mundo con los partidos políticos más corruptos, según Transparencia Internacional.*

[27] Upfiscales.com (05/11/2014) *Comunicado conjunto de 5 asociaciones fiscales y judiciales condenando la corrupción y pidiendo regeneración democrática.*

[28] The Gürtel case is a judicial investigation started by judge Baltasar Garzón, the examining magistrate of the *Juzgado Central de Instrucción No. 5* (the court which investigates the most important criminal cases in Spain). Following his suspension as a judge in 2010 on a charge of exceeding his authority in his investigation into Francoist crimes against humanity, he received a second suspension for having violated lawyer-client privilege in the Gürtel case. The money lost to public finances in this case amounts to over 120 million euros.

symbiotic rather than parasitic.[29]

2. *Citizens as enemies*

Most children of post-dictatorial Spain grew up being told that their country was free, that they were part of the 'free-world'. Parents and grandparents had suffered a dictatorship, but new generations were born into democracy; they benefited from having their human rights recognized and were able to enjoy freedom of speech. For millions of young Spanish people, May 15th of 2011 served to shatter that illusion. For those most critical in the older generations that had lived the civil war and those that had lived the dictatorship, May 15th served as a reminder of the customary ruthlessness and aggressiveness of the Spanish State since its inception. When millions of citizens went out into the streets demanding *Democracia real ya!* (Real democracy now!), the state's genealogical attachment to a centuries old tradition of empire and to a recent and brutal dictatorship led it to respond with batons, rubber bullets, arrests, and fines. Many citizens realized then that if they expressed disagreement with official policy and/or practices they became enemies of the state.

By September of 2013, over one thousand sanctions for disorders and disobedience had been handed to individuals being 15M. Out of these, only five had been ruled and four had been favourable to those accused.[30] By October of 2013, the Human Rights Commissar of the Council of Europe, Nils Muiznieks, concluded in an investigation that "in demonstrations against austerity in 2011 and 2012 there was an excessive use of force by the security forces, which shed light on on-going human

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[29] Publico.es (11/11/2014) *La Audiencia confirma que el PP pudo lucrarse através de la trama Gürtel.*
[30] Malvar, A. (2013) *Cristina Cifuentes pierde en los juzgados su cuarta batalla contra el 15-M,* Cuartopoder.es (14/09/2013).

rights violations."[31] According to the commissar, the investigative team was surprised with the situation they found on Spanish streets, in police stations, in prisons, and in CIE's *Centros de Internamiento para Extranjeros* (Foreigner Internment Centres).[32] Also in October, Madrid's city council presented a draft for a new series of regulations (a new coexistence ordinance), which according to The Independent newspaper constituted "Madrid's biggest clampdown since General Franco."[33]

By the month of November of 2013, José María Blanco, the Director of the *Centro de Análisis y Prospectiva de la Guardia Civil* (Centre for Analysis and Perspective of the Civil Guards) warned that bad times were coming for civil liberties: "Very bad times… we are embarked on an unstoppable process through which we will have surveillance cameras everywhere."[34] He then added, that more Spanish streets would soon have sensors installed that would determine the number of people congregated in specific places so that risks of conflict could be predicted.[35] At the same time, we learnt from the SUP *Sindicato Unificado de la Policia* (Unified Police Union) that the UIP *Unidades de Intervención Policial* (Police Intervention Units) were training riot police to fire at citizens and not towards the ground as established in official protocol.[36]

2013 came to a close, with the news that a new law on private security that was seeking parliamentary approval would allow private security companies to patrol commercial city streets, ask citizens for identification, conduct searches, and make

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[31] Giménez, L. (2013) *El Consejo de Europa llama la atención al Gobierno por el "excesivo uso de la fuerza" en las protestas,* Publico.es (09/10/2013).
[32] Ibid.
[33] Fotheringham, A. (2013) *Buskers, pimps and plant-lovers beware: This is Madrid's biggest crackdown since General Franco,* The Independent (09/10/2013).
[34] Insurgente.org (28/11/2013) *Guardia Civil: "Vienen malos tiempos para la privacidad de las libertades, muy malos tiempos".*
[35] Ibid.
[36] Elconfidencial.com (28/11/2012) *El SUP denuncia adiestramiento a antidisturbios para disparar directamente a los ciudadanos.*

arrests.[37] According to the Unified Police Union and UFP *Unión Federal de Policía* (Federal Union of Police) this move was a masked privatization of police. The biggest concern raised by these police unions was that in the new law no limits were specified for the sharing of data from state security forces to private security companies.[38]

In regards to police repression, 2014 started in the most damaging manner possible for a democratic state. Felip Puig, *Consejero de Interior de la Generalidad de Cataluña* (Counsellor of the Interior of the Catalan Generality) from 2010-2012, acknowledged that Cesicat *Centre de Seguretat de la Informació de Catalunya* (Catalan Information Security Centre) created files on activists and social movements for the Catalan police based on tracked Twitter information.[39] Along these lines, for the first time in Spain, a woman was convicted of enticing terror over Twitter.[40]

By 2014 it had become evident that the Spanish State had opted for repression as a way forward. For example, following an official request from Madrid's City Hall to the national government to prohibit protests in the centre of the city, it was only the State Attorney that declared this an unviable option.[41] In the form of another example, at around the same time, the government invited members of OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) to leave the country. This was as a consequence of their attempts to evaluate the right to reunion and demonstration in Spain during *Jaque al Rey* (Check), an event denouncing the monarchy.[42] Official responses to the OSCE were all in line with thoughts expressed by Esperanza Aguirre, President of the

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[37] Olmo, J. M. (2013) *Otra vuelta de tuerca: los vigilantes privados podrán identificar y detener en plena calle,* Elconfidencial.com (29/11/2013).

[38] Vozpopuli.com (01/12/2013) *El gobierno aprueba el proyecto de ley de seguridad privada.*

[39] Carranco, R. (2014) *Puig admite que el Cesicat elaboró 50 informes sobre activistas,* Elpais.com (25/01/2014).

[40] Minder, R. (2014) *In a First for Spain, a Woman Is Convicted of Inciting Terror Over Twitter,* Nytimes.com (22/02/2014).

[41] García Gallo, R. (2014) *La Abogacía del Estado rechaza cerrar a las protestas el centro de las ciudades,* Elpais.com (28/03/2014).

[42] Del Pino, D. (2013) *El Gobierno invita a irse a seis observadores de la OSCE que querían supervisar 'Jaque al rey',* Publico.es (27/09/2013).

Partido Popular in the Community of Madrid. She publicly questioned who these

gentlemen of the OSCE thought they were, coming to inspect Spanish police as if

Spain was a banana republic.[43] Nevertheless, on the streets, police behaviour had

become so vicious that even firefighters in Madrid felt persecuted and harassed by

police and they accused politicians of using tactics bordering illegality.[44]

In May of 2014, the Minister of Defence, Pedro Morenés, announced that the

time had come to normalize the presence of military personnel on Spanish streets.[45]

By June of 2014, the Ministry of the Interior had identified two new anarcho-terrorists

organizations, COAP *Comando Okupa Armado de Paciencia* (Squatter Commando

Armed with Patience) and CAPH *Célula Armada de Putas Histérica*s (Armed Cell of

Hysterical Bitches). With the excuse of a potential terror threat, the Ministry of the

Interior had requested that a judge contact the video sharing company Vimeo in New

York in order to identify members of these theatre-based nonviolent groups. These

groups were parodying terrorist imaginary in videos aimed at ridiculing State

repression.[46]

By July of 2014, it looked as though the courts could begin to uphold social

rights. For example, the National High Court absolved 19 people who had been

accused of crimes against high state institutions when in 2011 thousands of

individuals being 15M blocked all accesses to the Catalan Parliament as new austerity

measures where about to be approved.[47] In addition, Carlos Domenech, judge of the

TSJ *Tribunal Superior de Justicia de Catalunya* (Catalan Supreme Court), in a study

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[43] Publico.es (01/04/2014) *Aguirre critica que la OSCE "vigile" a los antidisturbios como si España fuese "una república bananera"*.

[44] Eldiario.es (31/01/2014) *Los bomberos de Madrid dicen "basta"*.

[45] Yometiroalmonte.es (30/05/2014) *El ministro de Defensa quiere "normalizar" la presencia de militares uniformados en las calles*.

[46] Espiaenelcongreso.com (21/06/2014) *Tenía que llegar: Interior identifica a COAP y CAPH como nuevos grupos de "terrorismo anarquista" en España*.

[47] Águeda, P. (2014) *La Audiencia Nacional avala "cierto exceso" en las protestas para que sean eficaces,* Eldiario.es (07/07/2014).

analysing new labour laws,[48] claimed that this legislation was clearly disproportionate

and of late-francoist origins. Domenech added, that it reprimanded people for carrying

out their legitimate right to strike.[49]

Unfortunately, these positive moves were quickly drowned in a myriad of

attacks against people's rights. By August of 2014, the Ministry of the Interior was

warning that police could take people's cameras in protests or in any other situation in

which agents felt they could be used to commit a crime.[50] Also in August, the Partido

Popular agreed to request that autonomous communities in Spain ban civil servants

from going on strike.[51] By September, The Guardian newspaper reminded us that the

Spanish government was readying for an autumn of discontent with the purchase of

one million euros worth of riot gear for police.[52] In October, we learnt that the public

prosecutor was requesting 74 years of prison sentences to be divided between 14

people that were arrested in the demonstrations that marked the beginning of 15M in

2011.[53] Also in October of 2014, police stopped the demonstration *Rodea el Congreso*

(Surround Congress) by bringing out batons as people began their march shouting:

"Monarchy is not democracy, it is dictatorship and corruption."[54] In addition, that

same month, we learnt from a proposal for protocol between universities and the

government that police would soon be able to enter university campuses without

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[48] *Real Decreto-ley 3/2014, de 28 de febrero, de medidas urgentes para el fomento del empleo y la contratación indefinida*. Available online at: boe.es/boe/dias/2014/03/01/pdfs/BOE-A-2014-2220.pdf.
[49] Diariojuridico.com (21/08/2014) *Un Juez del TSJ catalán tacha catalán tacha la reforma la reforma laboral de laboral de 'tardo 'tardo franquista' franquista'.*
[50] Eldiario.es (10/08/2014) *Interior advierte de que la Policía podrá incautar cámaras en manifestaciones.*
[51] Iniciativadebate.org (27/08/2014) *El PP pedirá a sus autonomías que impidan las protestas de funcionarios aplicando el Estatuto del Cargo Público.*
[52] Kassam, A. (2014) *Spain prepares for an autumn of discontent by buying €1m of riot gear*, Theguardian.com (08/09/2014).
[53] García, J. (2014) *La Fiscalía pide 74 años para los 14 detenidos en la manifestación que dio inicio al 15M*, Diagonalperiodico.net (02/10/2014).
[54] Cuartopoder.es (04/10/2014) *La Policía impide a porrazos la protesta de la Coordinadora 25S contra la Monarquía.*

previous consent from the vice-chancellor's office.[55] By November of 2014, stories in

the media were telling us that 19 people had been arrested in 11 provinces of Spain

for statements in support of terrorism in Facebook and Twitter.[56]

During the time that these repressive measures were being instituted by state

institutions, two major pieces of legislation were undergoing the necessary process in

order to be approved: First, a reform of the Penal Code, and second, a modification of

the Citizen Security Law. According to Amnesty International, the reform of the

Penal Code that arrived to Congress in September of 2013, presented serious and

unjustified restrictions to the rights of freedom of speech and freedom of reunion. It

also made more invisible migrant people and refused to take note of international

recommendations in the area of terrorism.[57] Legal experts in Spain warned that the

reform of the Penal Code was moving it in the direction of what is referred to as

"Enemy Penal Law". A Penal Code that seeks to punish not what one does, but what

one might do based on who the government considers they are.[58]

The proposal for a new Citizen Security Law, is otherwise referred to as "*ley*

de patada en la boca" (kick in the mouth law), "*ley antiprotesta*" (anti-protest law),

"*ley mordaza*" (clamp law), "*ley anti-15M*" (anti-15M law), or "*ley Fernández*"

(Fernández law in reference to the Minister of the Interior Jorge Fernández Díaz)[59].

By November of 2013, the Spanish citizenry learned that under this new law offenses

and insults to Spain, its autonomous communities, local entities, and their institutions,

symbols and anthems would be punished with fines ranging from 1,000 euros to

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[55] Europapress.es (28/10/2014) *La Policía podrá entrar en el campus sin permiso de rector.*
[56] Europapress.es (06/11/2014) *19 detenidos y dos imputados por apología del terrorismo en las redes sociales 'Operación Araña'.*
[57] Amnesty.org (11/04/2014) *El proyecto de Código Penal pone en riesgo el derecho a la libertad de expresión y reunión pacífica y se olvida de los crímenes de derecho internacional.*
[58] Sanz de Bremond, E. and Trillo, N. Nuevas formas de represión: de la modificación del Código Penal a la modificación de la Ley de Seguridad Ciudadana, Diagonalperiodico.net (25/11/2013).
[59] Eldiario.es (27/11/2013) *¿Quién teme al manifestante feroz?*

30,000 euros. This would mean for example, that an insult to a police officer could cost citizens 30,000 euros. These fines would be administrative fines rather than fines set by the courts. Therefore, if a police officer said that a citizen had insulted her or him, the citizen would just receive a fine via mail.[60] In addition, we learnt that recording a police officer doing her or his job, being a part of a *escrache* (where individuals get together to follow politicians everywhere that they go), or demonstrating in front of Parliament without permission could be sanctioned with fines of up to 600,000 euros.[61] According to Concha Caballero, writing from the newspaper *El País,* this law was not a left or right issue. Instead the new law opened up a debate regarding the choice between an authoritarian state and a democracy.[62] For Richard Seymour of The Guardian newspaper, this protest law was about reorganizing the state in an authoritarian direction; as "part of a longer-term project to contain democracy while retaining a minimum of democratic legitimacy."[63]

By December of 2013 the Human Rights Commissar for the Council of Europe, Nils Muiznieks, was expressing deep concern in regards to the impact of such a law on the fundamental rights of Spanish citizens. Muiznieks was seeking someone to convince him about the fact that a 600,000 euros fine for demonstrating in front governmental institutions without authorization was balanced[64]. By February of 2014, the CGPJ *Consejo General del Poder Judicial* (General Council of the Judiciary) was questioning the constitutionality of the proposal for a new law; it requested that it

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[60] Eldiario.es (30/11/2013) *Guía práctica para manifestantes bajo la nueva Ley de Seguridad Ciudadana.*

[61] Sanz de Bremond, E. and Trillo, N. (2013) *Nuevas formas de represión: de la modificación del Código Penal a la modificación de la Ley de Seguridad Ciudadana,* Diagonalperiodico.net (25/11/2013); Current Spanish law states that demonstrations have to be informed to the pertinent authorities, it is not permission that is required. Nevertheless, when the authorities are informed certain conditions are placed.

[62] Caballero, C. (2013) *10 cosas que estarán prohIdemas,* Elpais.com (15/12/2013)

[63] Seymour, R. (2013) *From Quebec to Spain, anti-protest laws are threatening true democracy*, Theguardian.com (25/11/2013).

[64] Escribano Claramunt, E. (2013) *El Consejo de Europa considera que la 'Ley Fernández' es "desproporcionada",* Elpais.com (03/12/2013).

either be abandoned or redrafted.[65] By March of 2014, the CGPJ in a final report, considered the draft law to be unconstitutional and constituent of what is referred to as penal law of dangerousness whereby security becomes more important than individual rights.[66]

In July of 2014, Carlos Carnicer, the president of the General Council of Spanish Lawyers, agreed on the unconstitutionality of the draft law[67] and lawyer Jaume Asens described the draft law as a covert state of exception.[68] That same month, Gaspar Llamazares, Federal co-spokesperson for IU, called for "a democratic insurrection and civil disobedience" against the Citizen Security Law.[69] By October of 2014, Amnesty International was warning that through changes to the Citizen Security law, the government was attempting to make amendments to immigration law and these would allow the government to refuse migrants and refugees at borders without corresponding legal guarantees. Amnesty International described this move as the Spanish government trying to legalize what is illegal in international law.[70] Also during October, Greenpeace joined the opposition to the Citizen Security law. Miguel Ángel Soto, spokesperson for Greenpeace Spain denounced that "such a broad and deep change in legislation could not be approved without dialogue or consensus."[71] Nevertheless, despite such rejections, the government accelerated the process of approval. It closed in congress the period for modifications and thus moved the re-

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[65] Diagonalperiodico.net (26/02/2014) *Un informe del CGPJ apunta a la inconstitucionalidad de la nueva Ley de Seguridad Ciudadana.*

[66] Hernández, J. A. (2014) *El Poder Judicial censura el proyecto de la 'ley Fernández' por "inconstitucional",* Elpais.com (27/03/2014).

[67] Publico.es (11/07/2014) *Jueces, fiscales y abogados, contra la 'Ley Mordaza'.*

[68] Publico.es (11/07/2014) *Entrevista Jaume Asens: El Gobierno busca aplicar un estado de excepción encubierto.*

[69] Nuevatribuna.es (11/07/2014) *Llamazares llama a la insurrección democrática y a la desobediencia civil contra la 'Ley Mordaza'.*

[70] Nuevatribuna.es (28/10/2014) *"El PP pretende legalizar lo que es ilegal en el derecho internacional".*

[71] M.greenp (30/10/2014) *Greenpeace denuncia la tramitación exprés del proyecto de Ley de Seguridad Ciudadana.*

drafted law one step closer to being approved.[72] Finally, on July 1st 2015, the new law became operative.[73]

3. *Sovereignty and the right to self-determination*

From 2009 until 2011, unofficial referendums took place in hundreds of Catalan towns, 555 in total.[74] On September 11th of 2012 (Catalonia's National Day), an estimated two million people marched in Barcelona demanding the independence of Catalonia under the slogan "Catalonia, new state in Europe."[75] Following this event, Artur Mas, President of the Catalan Government and member of CIU *Convergència i Unió* (Convergence and Union), called early elections. He also reached an "Agreement for Freedom"[76] with ERC *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* (Catalan Republican Left).[77] On January 23rd of 2013, the Catalan Parliament approved the "Declaration of Sovereignty and of the Right to Decide of the Catalan People"[78] On December 12th of 2013, the Catalan Government announced the day of the referendum as November 9th of 2014.[79] A few days later, former Prime Minister of Spain José María Aznar compared the Catalan referendum to ETA, the Basque separatists terrorist organization. He suggested both were seeking to destroy the pact of coexistence reached through the constitution of 1978.[80] By March of 2014,

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[72] Nosomosdelito.net (21/10/2014) *El gobierno acelera los tramites de la ley Mordaza en el congreso.*
[73] Elmundo.es (01/07/2015) *Las 44 conductas que se multan en la nueva 'ley mordaza'.*
[74] Fernández, D. (2014) *Esperando a Godot…,* Madrilonia.org (12/11/2014).
[75] Aldia.cat (11/09/2012) *La marxa comença a caminar sota el lema 'Catalunya, nou Estat d'Europa'*
[76] See online full agreement at: esquerra.cat/pacte/pacte.pdf.
[77] Libertaddigital.com (19/12/2012) *Mas y Junqueras firman el acuerdo de gobierno en Cataluña.*
[78] See online at: 10.gencat.cat/gencat/binaris/declaration_of_sovereignty_tcm34-239795.pdf.
[79] Goodman, A. (2013) *Political parties announce date for vote on Catalonia Independence,* CNN.com (12/12/2013).
[80] Gómez, M. *Aznar cree que España "no se romperá" y compara el referéndum catalán con ETA,* Eldiario.es (16/12/2013).

the Spanish Constitutional Court had declared illegal both the Catalan Declaration of Sovereignty and the possibility of Catalonia holding a referendum.[81]

As the date of the referendum approached, Spain's Foreign Minister, José Manuel García-Margallo suggested that Catalan autonomy could be suspended if the government deemed it necessary in order to block the referendum.[82] At around the same time, Spain's General Council of the Judiciary started proceedings against judge Santiago Vidal. These were in response to his declarations in support of independence and for having, together with others, begun to draft a Catalan Constitution.[83]

During the month of October, people in Spain learnt from newspaper *El Confidencial* that the Guardia Civil was planning to send 800 officers to Catalonia on the eve of the 9th of November. These officers would be in charge of removing any polling boxes setup across Catalonia for the referendum.[84] This kind of official response was being planned, despite the fact that according to opinion polls 70% of Catalans were in favour of a referendum.[85] Eventually, the referendum was conducted as a non-binding unofficial referendum on November 9th and 2.3 million people voted in an act of civil disobedience.[86] Although it was unofficial, it counted with the support of 96% of town councils and with the support of almost 4,000 entities united in the *Pacto Nacional por el Derecho a Decidir* (National Pact for the Right to Decide).[87] Following the success of the vote, the president of the Catalan Government,

[81] Martialay, A. (2014) *El Constitucional tumba la declaración de soberanía del Parlamento catalán*, Libertaddigital.com (25/03/2014).

[82] Rt.com (16/09/2014) *Ministro de Exteriores de España plantea la posibilidad de suspender la autonomía catalana.*

[83] Brunet, J. M. (2014) *El CGPJ expedienta y estudia suspender al juez Santiago Vidal por redactar una Constitución catalana Política*, Lavanguardia.com (09/10/2014).

[84] Elconfidencialdigital.com (09/10/2014) *Interior enviará a 800 guardias civiles a Cataluña para retirar las urnas.*

[85] Telam.com.ar (03.10.2014) *Más del 70 por ciento de los catalanes apoya la celebración del referéndum soberanista.*

[86] Directa.cat (10/11/2014) *Mes de 2300000 personas voten en el 9N en un acte masiu de desobediencia.*

[87] Fernández, D. (2014) *Esperando a Godot…,* Madrilonia.org (12/11/2014).

Artur Mas, asked Mariano Rajoy, Prime Minister of Spain, to allow for a definitive

referendum to be held: "We want to decide peacefully, freely and democratically. We

do not want to do so against Spain."[88]

Whilst events in Catalonia were taking place, in the Basque Country, a parallel

process was shaping up. Already by the end of 2013, PNV *Partido Nacionalista*

Vasco (Basque Nationalist Party) delivered on its campaign promise and presented in

the Basque Parliament a non-binding proposition to revisit the 1979 *Estatuto de*

Gernika (Gernika Statute).[89] The aim of the proposition was to work together with

other parliamentary groups, in order to draft a new political pact that would be

proposed to the population via referendum.[90] By June of 2014, parliamentarian Oskar

Matute of EH Bildu *Euskal Herria Bildu* (Gather the Basque Country) declared that

the time had arrived "for a democratic rupture in which there is no room for

negotiations with the crown."[91] Three months later, in September of 2014, the terrorist

group ETA asked the Basque people to emulate Scotland and Catalonia in order to

achieve independence. According to ETA, there exists an ever-growing alliance in

favour of the right to decide and a national debate should be initiated to reach a broad

national pact, which determines when and under what conditions a unilateral

constituent process will be carried out.[92]

4. *Mounting tensions*

From November 2013 until December of 2014, three events took place in the

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[88] Elboletin.com (10/11/2014) *Mas dice que el 9N ha sido un "éxito total" y pide a Rajoy un referéndum "definitivo".*

[89] Legislation by which the Basque Country attained self-government as an autonomous community of Spain.

[90] Publico.es (26/12/2013) *El PNV también plantea un referéndum para un nuevo estatus de Euskadi.*

[91] Eleconomista.es (02/06/2014) *EH Bildu dice que es un tiempo para la "ruptura democrática, donde no caben las negociaciones con la Corona.*

[92] Publico.es (27/09/2014) *ETA pide emular a Escocia y Catalunya aprovechando "la amplia alianza" por el derecho a decidir.*

Spanish State that served as indicators of the mounting tensions between numerous

demoi and official institutions of political representation. These events are the

Marchas de la Dignidad (Dignity Marches), the conflict in the neighbourhood of

Gamonal in the city of Burgos, and the conflict surrounding Can Vies (an occupied

and self-managed social centre in the neighbourhood of Sants, in Barcelona).

Dignity Marches

      It was in September of 2013 that a Dignity March began in Andalucía

demanding the creation of 25,000 jobs.[93] By January of 2014 numerous organizations

had converged into what they referred to as Dignity Marches. These marches, through

different columns, would meet in Madrid on March 22nd of 2014. They would meet in

order to bring together all the protests across the country in a one-day demonstration

in the capital city.[94] On March 22nd, after months of walking, a mass demonstration

took place in Madrid with over two million participants.[95] Before the event was over

clashes initiated by police erupted. While organizers were reading manifestos, *La

Solfónica* (choir born with 15M) was singing from a stage, and thousands of people

remained on the streets, the police began to charge.[96] "People raised their hands, *La

Solfónica* stopped singing. The choir raised their violins and scores, and everyone

together began to shout: 'These are our weapons.'"[97] The police continued their

[93] Kaosenlared.net (05/09/2013) *Segundo comunicado de la #MarchaDignidad #SinMiedo.*
[94] Tercerainformacion.es (24/01/2014) *Marchas por la dignidad. Ocho columnas caminarán contra las políticas del Gobierno al servicio de la troika.*
[95] See Wiki.15m.cc, *Madrid 22-M, Marchas de la Dignidad.*
[96] Eldiario.es (22/03/2014) *La Policía carga con miles de personas en las calles durante los actos de las Marchas de la Dignidad.*
[97] Eldiario.es (23/03/2014) *22M: Canto de la Libertad con disparos de fondo.*

charge. Rubber bullets were fired. A riot broke out; the evening ended with 24 people arrested and 101 people hurt.[98]

Gamonal

Gamonal is a working class neighbourhood in the city of Burgos. On January 10th of 2014, demonstrations and riots took place there. These were in opposition to a Town Hall decision to spend 8.5 million euros on replacing the main road of the neighbourhood with a boulevard and an underground car park. The time the construction would take, the fact that free parking space on the street would disappear, and anger at the fact that the contract was going to a powerful and corrupt businessman led to the neighbourhood saying enough.[99] Demonstrations and riots took place from January 10th until January 17th. Garbage containers were burnt, and the construction site together with numerous bank branches were destroyed. Hundreds of police officers tried to impose a curfew and 46 people were arrested.[100]

Support for the protests in Gamonal quickly spread throughout Spain. In Madrid, streets filled up as with 15M in 2011. This time demonstrators headed to the headquarters of the Partido Popular. Once there, demonstrators were met by riot police that opted to charge against the crowd leading to a night of urban confrontation between security forces and a reduced number of demonstrators.[101] In Barcelona demonstrators supporting the neighbours of Gamonal had to face riot police. For the first time ever, Catalan police used water canons to disperse the crowd after

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[98] Rtve.es (23.03.2014) *Al menos 24 detenidos y 101 heridos al término de las 'Marchas por la Dignidad' en Madrid.*
[99] Diagonalperiodico.net (12/01/2014) *Crónica de un conflicto anunciado: el bulevar de Gamonal en Burgos.*
[100] Diariodenavarra.es (15/01/2014) *Un total de 44 de los 46 detenidos vive en Burgos y ninguno tiene antecedents.*
[101] Hernanz, C. (2014) *Gamonal reactiva el espíritu del 15-M*, Elconfidencial.com (16/01/2014).

demonstrators confronted police in the neighbourhood of *el Raval*.[102] Eventually the

Mayor of Burgos, Javier Lacalle of the Partido Popular, announced the project had

been called off. In the newspaper *El Mundo*, Lorenzo Silva asked himself whether the

fires in Burgos were the first signs of Spanish society awakening to the drums of

revolution.[103]

Can Vies

   Can Vies is an occupied social centre in the Barcelona neighbourhood of

Sants; it was occupied in 1997. The occupation was an action demanding cultural and

political spaces in which people could meet. Since then it had become one of the

pillars of neighbourhood activities. On May 26th 2014, with a large riot police

presence and demolition teams, the city's Town Hall began eviction of the building

together with its demolition. Thousands of people congregated around Can Vies to try

and stop this and riots began, which quickly spread across the city. Solidarity marches

were organized in numerous cities across Spain.[104] On May 31st, Town Hall was

forced to stop the demolition of the building and hundreds of people in an act of

spontaneous mutual aid began its reconstruction.[105] Gemma Galdón, Political Science

professor at the University of Barcelona, described the incident in the following

manner: "Everyone knew that touching Can Vies would hit a nerve."[106] According to

Political Scientist Joan Subirats, "Can Vies has symbolic capital. Imagining that they

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[102] 324.cat (18/01/2014) *Els Mossos usen per primer cop canons de so per dissoldre manifestants.*
[103] Silva, L. (2014) *Burgos revolution*, Elmundo.es (12/01/2014).
[104] Rtve.es (28/05/2014) *Continúan los incidentes violentos en Barcelona por el desalojo de 'okupas' en Can Vies.*
[105] See online at: canvies.barrisants.org.
[106] Blanchar, C. (2014) *Un referente de la Barcelona popular*, Elpais.com (29/05/2014).

were only touching a social centre and being unaware of its roots was a big mistake. It shows a lack of knowledge of the city."[107]

One of the more disturbing events during the conflict of Can Vies was a police action that was recorded on video by journalist Noa Morales. Morales' video shows Catalan police, the *Mossos d'Esquadra* (Squaddies), rounding up 225 people on the street. Police proceeded to photograph their identity cards, forced them to put on hoods that did not belong to them, and then photographed them wearing these hoods before releasing them.[108] In addition, many of the people who were arrested during the Can Vies incidents were banned by judges from attending demonstrations; months later the Provincial High Court in Barcelona revoked the decision. According to the magistrates, this measure had no legal hold and crystalized "worrisome signs of democratic abnormality."[109]

5. *Crisis of the Monarchy*

The Monarchy is the most opaque institution of the Spanish State. In 2011, Iñaki Urdangarin married to princess Cristina de Borbón was accused of corruption in the Nóos case.[110] Since then, the social standing of the Spanish monarchy has severely deteriorated. A brief analysis of the period comprising November 2013 to December 2014 clearly makes this reality palpable. Throughout this time, all the institutions of the Spanish State, aided by the mainstream media, have been working tirelessly towards protecting and stabilizing the Monarchy.

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[107] Ibid.

[108] Publico.es (01/06/2014) *Los Mossos obligaron a los detenidos a cubrirse con capuchas.*

[109] García, J. (2014) *La Audiencia revoca por antidemocrática la prohibición de acudir a manifestaciones*, Elpais.com (05/09/2014).

[110] Manresa, A. (2011) *El juez levanta el secreto e imputa a Iñaki Urdangarin*, Elpais.com (29/12/2011).

On April of 2014, the Ministry of Justice informed the Spanish public that

Queen Sofia, Prince Felipe (heir to the throne), and his wife Leticia would be given

the judicial privilege of being granted immunity. This move to guarantee that the

Supreme Court could only ever try them was thought a necessary step, considering

their immunity was not contemplated in the existing constitution.[111] Also in April,

plaintiffs in an Argentinian trial for crimes of the Franco regime requested that King

Juan Carlos testify. They wanted his testimony, as the person responsible for the

continuity of Francoism following Franco's death and until the approval of the

democratic constitution of 1978[112]. By May of 2014, according to the *Instituto Sondea*

Investigación Social, 85% of Spanish citizens believed that the Royal Family was

involved in corruption scandals. 75% admitted that the monarchic institution inspired

in them little or no trust.[113]

On June 2nd of 2014, the abdication of King Juan Carlos I was announced in

favour of his son Felipe. He would become King Felipe VI.[114] Within minutes,

numerous associations, political parties, and collectives were demanding a

referendum. A vote so that the population could decide between a republic and a

parliamentary monarchy.[115] Within hours 44 cities across Spain witnessed a citizen led

initiative called *Referéndum Ya* (Referendum Now). There were demonstrations in

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[111] Eldiario.es (04/04/2014) *El Gobierno concede a la reina y los príncipes el privilegio judicial de ser aforados.*

[112] Elcomunista.net (15/04/2014) *Demandan al rey Juan Carlos para que declare en Argentina por los crímenes del franquismo.*

[113] Aduriz, I. (2014) *El 85% de los españoles cree que la familia real está implicada en casos de corrupción*, Publico.es (15/05/2014).

[114] On June 18th an organic law regulating the abdication was published in the Official State Bulletin, making the abdication effective and Felipe taking reign. See: *Ley Orgánica 3/2014, de 18 de junio, por la que se hace efectiva la abdicación de Su Majestad el Rey Don Juan Carlos I de Borbón.* Agencia Estatal Boletín Oficial del Estado (19/07/2014).

[115] Eldiario.es (02/06/2014) *Mapa "Referéndum Ya": convocatorias en decenas de ciudades tras la abdicación del rey.*

most cities, and improvised polling stations being set up in public squares.[116] Josep

Maria Antentas, Sociology professor at the UAB *Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona*

(Autonomous University of Barcelona), described the situation in the following

manner: "Not daring to fight for the *im*possible would be a fatal error. All or nothing,

this is a fight to the death. Both endings are possible. Rolling into the abyss, it is not

clear who will fall; them or us, their democracy or ours."[117]

     Faced with clear signs of social discontent regarding news of an abdication

that would be followed by a coronation, the Ministry of the Interior announced that it

expected 'heated' weeks. It demanded extreme vigilance. On this note, the Directorate

General of Police requested that all police headquarters follow with special attention

communications in social networking sites.[118] In an editorial in the newspaper

ElDiario.es titled *Una democracia donde votar es tabú* (a democracy in which voting

is taboo), the director of the newspaper, Ignacio Escolar, offered the following

reflection:

> "We did not vote for the bailout of the banks. We did not vote for the express reform of the
>
> constitution. We do not let Catalans vote; and for political elites the mere thought of asking
>
> Spanish people if they prefer (or not) that the head of state can leave his post as an
>
> inheritance… is also taboo."[119]

    Polls in the days following the abdication showed a dismal reality for the

Spanish Monarchy. 54% of respondents of ElConfidencial.com felt that the abdication

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[116] Cadenaser.com (02/06/2014) *Concentraciones en más de 40 ciudades por el referéndum sobre la Monarquía.*

[117] Antentas, J. M. (2014) *Juego de Tronos. Abdicación y procesos constituyentes,* Publico.es (02/06/2014).

[118] Olmo, J. A. (2014) *Interior se prepara para unas semanas 'calientes' y ordena extremar la vigilancia,* Elconfidencial.com (03/06/2014)

[119] Escolar, I. (2014) *Una democracia donde votar es tabú,* Eldiario.es (03/06/2014)

would not save the crown. 95% of the respondents of Publico.es and ElDiario.es

demanded a referendum. And 96% of the respondents of Infolibre demanded that Juan

Carlos inform of his private wealth following 39 years as King.[120] Javier Gallego, of

the radio station Cadena Ser, reflected the following in regards to the abdication:

> "The King and his courtesans want us to believe that Felipe is the renovation the country has
> been demanding, that his reign will clean the sewer in which we are swimming. Most
> untenable, they want us to believe that the hereditary title of a medieval institution that was
> restored by a dictator, is the most democratic thing in the world."[121]

A few days after the abdication, Spanish citizens learnt that the legendary

satirical magazine *El Jueves* (Thursday) had changed the cover of its magazine. This

had caused it to reach stores one day late. Despite official spokespeople denying any

form of pressure, numerous longstanding collaborators of the magazine abandoned it

repudiation. The image that was originally intended for the cover of the magazine was

a drawing of King Juan Carlos with a cloths peg on his nose and holding with a pair

of tongs, the crown full of excrement that he is about to place on the head of his

kneeling son.[122]

By June 7th, newspaper El País published its Metroscopia poll, which had

found that 62% of Spanish citizens would be in favour of a referendum on the model

of state.[123] According to Javier Pérez Royo, Professor of Constitutional Law at the

University of Sevilla, "the political system born from the death of Franco becomes

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[120] Espiaenelcongreso.com (04/06/2014) *Zarzuela logra suprimir encuestas en los periódicos y ocultar las protestas en toda España contra Felipe VI.*
[121] JGallego, J. (2014) *Los reyes son los padres*, Cadenaser.com (04/06/2014).
[122] Eldiario.es (05/06/2014) *El Jueves retira 60.000 ejemplares con una portada sobre la a...una portada sobre la abdicación del rey*.
[123] Garea, F. (2014) *La mayoría de españoles desea una consulta sobre el modelo de Estado*, Elpais.com (07/06/2014).

every day less of a 'transition to democracy' and more of a 'restoration of the

Monarchy.'"[124]

By June 18th, Spanish citizens learnt that according to the Directorate General

of Police, citizens could not exhibit republican flags or symbols during the King's

post-coronation drive across Madrid.[125] At the same time, citizens also learnt that the

TSJM *Tribunal Superior de Justicia de Madrid* (High Court of Madrid) had approved

a ban on a Republican demonstration. The demonstration was intended for the day of

the proclamation, and it was to take place at Puerta del Sol.[126] On June 19th, during the

coronation, three people were arrested for carrying republican flags.[127] At the same

time, people showing Francoist flags were simply told to put them away.[128]

* Statistics and quantitative date presented in this appendix come from multiple sources. Some of the

sources are not as respected as others. However, I have chosen to maintain this broadness because it is

representative of the array of sources from which individuals 15M are retrieving the data to analyze the

current social, political and economic context.

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[124] Pérez Royo, J. (2014) *Reflexión urgente,* Andalucesdiario.es (09/06/2014).
[125] Eldiario.es (18/06/2014) *La Policía impedirá exhibir banderas republicanas ante la comitiva real.*
[126] Eldiario.es (18/06/2014) *El TSJM avala la prohibición de la celebración de una manifestación republicana este jueves.*
[127] Publico.es (19/06/2014) *La Policía detiene a tres personas por llevar banderas republicanas.*
[128] Lopez de Miguel, A. (2014) *Hemos sacado las banderas republicanas y se hanlanzado a placarnos,* Publico.es (19/06/2014).